Jack Tier, Volume 1

James Fenimore Cooper

Table of Contents

Jack Tier, Volume 1

James Fenimore Cooper

JACK TIER; OR THE FLORIDA REEF. BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE PILOT," "RED ROVER," "TWO ADMIRALS," "WING AND WING," "MILES WALLINGFORD," ETC.

Ay, now I am in Arden; the more fool

I; when I was at home I was in a better place; but

Travellers must be content.

As You Like It IN TWO VOLUMES. VOL. I.

PREFACE.

This work has already appeared in Graham's Magazine, under the title of "Rose Budd." The change of name is solely the act of the author, and arises from a conviction that the appellation given in this publication is more appropriate than the one laid aside. The necessity of writing to a name, instead of getting it from the incidents of the book itself, has been the cause of this departure from the ordinary rules.

When this book was commenced, it was generally supposed that the Mexican war would end, after a few months of hostilities. Such was never the opinion of the writer. He has ever looked forward to a protracted struggle; and, now that Congress has begun to interfere, sees as little probability of its termination, as on the day it commenced. Whence honourable gentlemen have derived their notions of the constitution, when they advance the doctrine that Congress is anAmerican Aulic council, empowered to encumber the movements of armies, and, as old Blucher expressed it in reference to the diplomacy of Europe, "to spoil with the pen the work achieved by the sword," it is difficult to say more than this, that they do not get them from the constitution itself. It has generally been supposed that the present executive was created in order to avoid the very evils of a distracted and divided council, which this new construction has a direct tendency to revive. But a presidential election has ever proved, and probably will ever prove, stronger than any written fundamental law.

We have had occasion to refer often to Mexico in these pages. It has been our aim to do so in a kind spirit; for, while we have never doubted that the factions which have possessed themselves of the government in that country have done us great wrong, wrong that would have justified a much earlier appeal to arms, we have always regarded the class of Mexicans who alone can properly be termed the 'people,' as mild, amiable, and disposed to be on friendly terms with us. Providence, however, directs all to the completion of its own wise ends. If the crust which has so long encircled that nation, enclosing it in bigotry and ignorance, shall now be irretrievably broken, letting in light, even Mexico herself may have cause hereafter to rejoice in her present disasters. It was in this way that Italy has been, in a manner, regenerated; the conquests of the French carrying in their train the means and agencies which have, at length, aroused that glorious portion of the earth to some of its ancient spirit. Mexico, in certain senses, is the Italy of this continent; and war, however ruthless and much to be deplored, may yet confer on her the inestimable blessings of real liberty, and a religion released from "feux d'artifice," as well as all other artifices.

A word on the facts of our legend. The attentive observer of men and things has many occasions to note the manner in which ordinary lookers on deceive themselves, as well as others. The species of treason portrayed in these pages is no uncommon occurrence; and it will often be found that the traitor is the loudest in his protestations of patriotism. It is a pretty safe rule to suspect the man of hypocrisy who makes a parade of his religion, and the partisan of corruption and selfishness, who is clamorous about the rights of the people. Captain Spike was altogether above the first vice; though fairly on level, as respects the second, with divers patriots who live by their deity.

CHAPTER I.

Pros.

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

Ariel.

Close by, my master.

Pros.

But are they, Ariel, safe?

Ariel.

Not a hair perished:

Tempest

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

This call was uttered from a wharf of the renowned city of Manhattan, to one who was in the trunk−cabin of a clipper−looking craft, of the name mentioned, and on the deck of which not a soul was visible. Nor was the wharf, though one of those wooden piers that line the arm of the sea that is called the East River, such a spot as ordinarily presents itself to the mind of the reader, or listener, when an allusion is made to a wharf of that town

which it is the fashion of the times to call the Commercial Emporium of America as if there might very well be an emporium of any other character. The wharf in question had not a single vessel of any sort lying at, or indeed very near it, with the exception of the Molly Swash. As it actually stood on the eastern side of the town, it is scarcely necessary to say that such a wharf could only be found high up, and at a considerable distance from the usual haunts of commerce. The brig laymore than a mile above the Hook (Corlaer's, of course, is meant not Sandy Hook) and quite near to the old Alms House far above the ship−yards, in fact. It was a solitary place for a vessel, in the midst of a crowd. The grum top−chain voice of Captain Spike had nothing there to mingle with, or interrupt its harsh tones, and it instantly brought on deck Harry Mulford, the mate in question, apparently eager to receive his orders.

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

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

"What are your orders, Capt. Spike?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Persuaded! It takes no great persuasion, sir, to get the ladies to try their luck in that brig. Lady Washington herself, if she was alive and disposed to a sea−v'y'ge, might be glad of the chance. We've a ladies' cabin, you know, and it's suitable that it should have some one to occupy it. Old Mrs. Budd is a sensible woman, and takes time by the forelock. Rose is ailin' pulmonary they call it, I believe, and her aunt wishes to try the sea for her constitution "

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

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

"I think you must mean hydropathy, sir "

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

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

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

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

The river, as the well−known arm of the sea in which the Swash was lying is erroneously termed, was just at that moment unusually clear of craft, and not a sail, larger than that of a boat, was to be seen between the end of Blackwell's Island and Corlaer's Hook, a distance of about a league. This stagnation in the movement of the port, at that particular point, was owing to the state of wind and tide. Of the first, there was little more than a southerly air, while the last was about two−thirds ebb. Nearly everything that was expected on that tide, coast−wise, and by the way of the Sound, had already arrived, and nothing could go eastward, with that light breeze and under canvas, until the flood made. Of course it was different with the steamers, who were paddling about like so many ducks, steering in all directions, though mostly crossing and re−crossing at the ferries. Just as Mulford turned away from his commander, however, a large vessel of that class shoved her bows into the view, doubling the Hook, and going eastward. The first glance at this vessel sufficed to drive even Rose Budd momentarily out of the minds of both master and mate, and to give a new current to their thoughts. Spike had been on the point of walking up the wharf, but he now so far changed his purpose as actually to jump on board of the brig and spring up alongside of his mate, on the taffrail, in order to get a better look at the steamer. Mulford, who loathed so much in his commander, was actually glad of this, Spike's rare merit as a seaman forming a sort of attraction that held him, as it might be against his own will, bound to his service.

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

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

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

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

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

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

A long, low, expressive whistle from Spike succeeded this remark, the colours of the steamer going up to the end of a gaff on the sternmost of her schooner−rigged masts, just as Mulford ceased speaking. There was just air enough, aided by the steamer's motion, to open the bunting, and let the spectators see the design. There were the stars and stripes, as usual, but the last ran perpendicularly, instead of in a horizontal direction.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"That's a droll−looking revenue cutter, after all, Capt. Spike," he said "a craft better fitted to go in a fleet, as a look−out vessel, than to chase a smuggler in−shore."

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

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

Spike muttered something between his teeth, and jumped down on deck, seemingly dismissing the subject of the revenue entirely from his mind. His old, coarse, authoritative manner returned, and he again spoke to his mate aboutRose Budd, her aunt, the "ladies' cabin," the "young flood," and "casting off," as soon as the last made. Mulford listened respectfully, though with a manifest distaste for the instructions he was receiving. He knew his

man, and a feeling of dark distrust came over him, as he listened to his orders concerning the famous accommodations he intended to give to Rose Budd and that "capital old lady, her aunt;" his opinion of "the immense deal of good sea−air and a v'y'ge would do Rose," and how "comfortable they both would be on board the Molly Swash."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Saying this in a sufficiently positive manner, Capt. Stephen Spike rolled up the wharf, much as a ship goes off before the wind, now inclining to the right, and then again to the left. The gait of the man would have proclaimed him a sea−dog, to any one acquainted with that animal, as far as he could be seen. The short squab figure, the

arms bent nearly at right angles at the elbow, and working like two fins with each roll of the body, the stumpy, solid legs, with the feet looking in the line of his course and kept wide apart, would all have contributed to the making up of such an opinion. Accustomed as he was to this beautiful sight, Harry Mulford kept his eyes riveted on the retiring person of his commander, until it disappeared behind a pile of lumber, waddling always in the direction of the more thickly peopled parts of the town. Then he turned and gazed at the steamer, which, by this time, had fairly passed the brig, and seemed to be actually bound through the Gate. That steamer was certainly a noble−looking craft, but our young man fancied she struggled along through the water heavily.

She might be quick at need, but she did not promise as much by her present rate of moving. Still, she was a noble−looking craft, and, as Mulford descended to the deck again, he almost regretted he did not belong to her; or, at least, to anything but the Molly Swash.

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

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

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

quarter of the suburbs, as if to search for a carriage. As for the revenue−steamer, she had long before gone through the southern passage of Blackwell's, steering for the Gate.

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

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

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

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

Something of the same feeling governed Biddy, too, for, as Mulford civilly extended his hand to her also, she exclaimed

"No fear of me, Mr. Mate I came from Ireland by wather, and knows all about ships and brigs, I do. If you could have seen the times we had, and the saas we crossed, you'd not think it nadeful to say much to the likes iv me."

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

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

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

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

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

Down to this moment, the only sail that was loose on board the Swash was the fore−topsail, as mentioned. This still hung in the gear, but a hand had been sent aloft to overhaul the buntlines and clewlines, and men were also at the sheets. In a minute the sail was ready for hoisting. The Swash carried a wapper of a fore−and−aft mainsail, and, what is more, it was fitted with a standing gaff, for appearance in port. At sea, Spike knew better than to trust to this arrangement; but in fine weather, and close in with the land, he found it convenient to have this sail haul out and brail like a ship's spanker. As the gaff was now aloft, it was only necessary to let go the brails to loosen this broad sheet of canvas, and to clap on the out−hauler, to set it. This was probably the reason why the brig was so unceremoniously cast into the stream, without showing more of her cloth. The jib and flying−jibs, however, did at that moment drop beneath their booms, ready for hoisting.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Spike ordered the mate to clap on the outhauler, and spread that broad sheet of canvas at once to the little breeze there was. This was almost immediately done, when the sail filled, and began to be felt on the movement of the vessel. Still, that movement was very slow, the wind being so light, and the vis inertiœ of so large a body remaining to be overcome. The brig receded from the wharf, almost in a line at right angles to its face, inch by inch, as it might be, dropping slowly up with the tide at the same time. Mulford now passed forward to set the jibs, and to get the topsail on the craft, leaving Spike on the taffrail, keenly eyeing the strangers, who, by this time, had got down nearly to the end of the wharf, at the berth so lately occupied by the Swash. That the captain was uneasy was evident enough, that feeling being exhibited in his countenance, blended with a malignant ferocity.

"Has that brig any pilot?" asked the larger and better−looking of the two strangers.

"What's that to you, friend?" demanded Spike, in return. "Have you a Hell−Gate branch?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You sail with Stephen Spike? when and where, may I ask, and in what v'y'ge, pray?"

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

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

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

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

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

The Molly Swash kept close on a wind, luffing athwar the broad reach she was in, until far enough to weather Blackwell's, when she edged off to her course, and went through the southern passage. Although the wind remained light, and a little baffling, the brig was so easily impelled, and was so very handy, that there was no difficulty in keeping her perfectly in command. The tide, too, was fast increasing in strength and volocity, and the movement from this cause alone was getting to be sufficiently rapid.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ignorant as a girl of lively imagination could remain with the information gleaned from others.

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

"Was my uncle's vessel, The Rose In Bloom, then, very different from the Swash?"

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

Harry Mulford was coiling away a top−gallant−brace, directly in front of Mrs. Budd and Rose, and, at hearing this account of the wonderful equipment of The Rose In Bloom, he suddenly looked up, with a lurking expression about his eye that the niece very well comprehended, while he exclaimed, without much reflection, under the impulse of surprise

"Twelve masts! Did I understand you to say, ma'am, that Capt. Budd's ship had twelve masts?"

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

Harry Mulford would have enjoyed this conversation to the top of his bent, had it not been for Rose. She well knew her aunt's general weakness of intellect, and especially its weakness on this particular subject, but she would suffer no one to manifest contempt for either, if in her power to prevent it. It is seldom one so young, so mirthful, so ingenuousand innocent in the expression of her countenance, assumed so significant and rebuking a frown as did pretty Rose Budd when she heard the mate's involuntary exclamation about the "twelve masts." Harry, who was not easily checked by his equals, or any of his own sex, submitted to that rebuking frown with the meekness of a child, and stammered out, in answer to the well−meaning, but weak−minded widow's question

"If you please, Mrs. Budd just as you please, ma'am only twelve is a good many masts " Rose frowned again "that is more than I'm used to seeing that's all."

"I dare say, Mr. Mulford for you sail in only a half−jigger; but Capt. Budd always sailed in a full−jigger and his full−jiggered ship had just twelve masts, and, to prove it to you, I'll give you the names first then, there were the fore, main, and mizen masts "

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

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

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

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

Mulford had some difficulty in restraining his smiles each time the full−jigger was mentioned, but Rose's expression of countenance kept him in excellent order and she, innocent creature, saw nothing ridiculous in the term, though the twelve masts had given her a little alarm. Delighted that the old lady had got through her enumeration of the spars with so much success, Rose cried, in the exuberance of her spirits

"Well, aunty, for my part, I find a half−jigger vessel, so very, very beautiful, that I do not know how I should behave were I to go on board a full−jigger."

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

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

"But he never swore at you, aunty?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The people forward looked at each other, as they listened to this novel admonition, though they called out the customary "ay, ay, sir," as they went to the sheets, braces and bowlines. To them the passage of no Hell−Gate

conveyed the idea of any particular terror, and with the one they were about to enter, they were much too familiar to care anything about it.

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

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

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

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

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

"What do you make of them, sir?"

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

"And the other, Harry what do you make of the other?"

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

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

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

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

"We're forereaching too near the Hog's Back, Capt. Spike," roared the boatswain, from forward.

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

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

CHAPTER II.

Watch.

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

Dogb.

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

Much Ado About Nothing

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

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

Nor was there anything extraordinary in females betraying this alarm, when one remembers the somewhat astounding signs of danger by which these persons were surrounded. There is always something imposing in the swift movement of a considerable body of water. When this movement is aided by whirlpools and the other similar accessories of an interrupted current, it frequently becomes startling, more especially to those who happen to be on the element itself. This is peculiarly the case with the Pot Rock, where, not only does the water roll and roar as if agitated by a mightywind, but where it even breaks, the foam seeming to glance up stream, in the rapid succession of wave to wave. Had the Swash remained in her terrific berth more than a second or two, she would have proved what is termed a "total loss;" but she did not. Happily, the Pot Rock lies so low that it is not apt to fetch up anything of a light draught of water, and the brigantine's fore−foot had just settled on its summit, long enough to cause the vessel to whirl round and make her obeisance to the place, when a succeeding swell lifted her clear, and away she went down stream, rolling as if scudding in a gale, and, for a moment, under no command whatever. There lay another danger ahead, or it would be better to say astern, for the brig was drifting stern foremost; and that was in an eddy under a bluff, which bluff lies at an angle in the reach, where it is no uncommon thing for craft to be cast ashore, after they have passed all the more imposing and more visible dangers above. It was in escaping this danger, and in recovering the command of his vessel, that Spike now manifested the sort of stuff of which he was really made, in emergencies of this sort. The yards were all sharp up when the accident occurred, and springing to the lee braces, just as a man winks when his eye is menaced, he seized the weather fore−brace with his own hands, and began to round in the yard, shouting out to the man at the wheel to "port his helm" at the same time. Some of the people flew to his assistance, and the yards were not only squared, but braced a little up on the other tack, in much less time than we have taken to relate the evolution. Mulford attended to the main−sheet, and succeeded in getting the boom out in the right direction. Although the wind was in truth very light, the velocity of the drift filled the canvas, and taking the arrow−like current on her lee bow, the Swash, like a frantic steed that is alarmed with the wreck made by his own madness, came under command, and sheered out into the stream again, where she could drift clear of the apprehended danger astern.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"That will never do. I've no wish to be parading the brig before the town. You see, Mulford, nothing can be more innocent and proper than the Molly Swash, as you know from having sailed in her these twelve months. You'll give her that character, I'll be sworn?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The best thing in the known history of Spike was the fact that his steward had sailed with him for more than twenty years. Where he had picked up Josh no one could say, but Josh and himself, and neither chose to be very communicative on the subject. But Josh had certainly been with him as long as he had sailed the Swash, and that was from a time actually anterior to the birth of Mulford. The mate soon had the negro in the council.

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

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

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

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

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

"I see'd a man, sir, dat was won'erful Jack Tier built like, sir, but I did n't hear the conwersation, habbin' the ladies to 'tend to. But Jack was oncommon short in his floor timbers, sir, and had no length of keel at all. His beam was

won'erful for his length, altogedder what you call jolly−boat, or bum−boat build, and was only good afore'e wind, Cap'n Spike."

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

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

Spike mused a moment then he rolled the tobacco over in his mouth, and added, in the way a man speaks when his mind is made up

"Ay ay! I see into the fellow. He'll make a handy lady's maid, and we want such a chap just now. It's better to have an old friend aboard, than to be pickin' up strangers, 'long shore. So, should this Jack Tier come off to us, from any of the islands or points ahead, Mr. Mulford, you'll round to and take him aboard. As for the steamer, if she will only pass out into the Sound where there's room, it shall go hard with us but I get to the eastward of her, without speaking. On the other hand, should she anchor this side of the fort, I'll not attempt to pass her. There is deep water inside of most of the islands, I know, and we'll try and dodge her in that way, if no better offer. I've no more reason than another craft to fear a government vessel, but the sight of one of them makes me oncomfortable; that's all."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Spike gave a long, low whistle, after his fashion, and he walked away from the females, with the air of a man who wanted room to think in. Half a minute later, he called out

"Stand by to shorten sail, boys. Man fore−clew−garnets, flying jib down haul, topgallant sheets, and gaff−topsail gear. In with 'em all, my lads in with everything, with a will."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Skiff be d d! I want no skiff here."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"The gentleman on the wharf was about to take boat, to go through the Gate," concluded Tier, "and so I begs a passage of him. He was good−natured enough to wait until I could find my bag, and as soon a'terwards as the men could get their grog we shoved off. The Molly was just getting in behind Blackwell's as we left the wharf, and, having four good oars, and the shortest road, we come out into the Gate just ahead on you. My eye! what a place that is to go through in a boat, and on a strong flood! The gentleman, who watched the brig as a cat watches a

mouse,says you struck on the Pot, as he called it, but I says 'no,' for the Molly Swash was never know'd to hit rock or shoal in my time aboard her."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Do you know who he was?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Heave ahead what next?"

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

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

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

"'Nips! what the devil be they?"

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

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

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

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

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

The succeeding movements of Spike appeared to be much influenced by what he had just heard. He kept the brig under short canvas for near two hours, sheering about in the same place, taking care to tell everything which

spoke him that he had lost a man overboard. In this way, not only the tide, but the day itself, was nearly spent. About the time the former began to lose its strength, however, the fore−course and the main−sail were got on the brigantine, with the intention of working her up toward Whitestone, where the tides meet, and near which the revenue−steamer was known to be anchored. We say near, though it was, in fact, a mile or two more to the eastward, and close to the extremity of the Point.

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

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

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

The Molly Swash was still under her canvas, though very little sufficed for her present purposes. She was directly off Whitestone, and was making easy stretches across the passage, or river, as it is called, having nothing set but her huge fore−and−aft mainsail and the jib. Under this sail she worked like a top, and Spike sometimes fancied she travelled too fast for his purposes, the night air having thickened the canvas as usual, until it "held the wind as a bottle holds water." There was nothing in this, however, to attract the particular attention of the ship−master's widow, a sail, more or less, being connected with observation much too critical for her schooling, nice as the last had been. She was surprised to find the men stripping the brig forward, and converting her into a schooner. Nor was this done in a loose and slovenly manner, under favour of the obscurity. On the contrary, it was so well executed that it might have deceived even a seaman under a noon−day sun, provided the vessel were a mile or two distant. The manner in which the metamorphosis was made was as follows: the studding−sail booms had been taken off the topsail−yard, in order to shorten it to the eye, and the yard itself was swayed up about half−mast, to give it the appearance of a schooner's fore−yard. The brig's real lower yard was lowered on the bulwarks, while her royal yard was sent down altogether, and the topgallant−mast was lowered until the heel rested on the topsail yard, all of which, in the night, gave the gear forward very much the appearance of that of a fore−topsail schooner, instead of that of a half−rigged brig, as the craft really was. As the vessel carried a try−sail on her

foremast, it answered very well, in the dark, to represent a schooner's foresail. Several other little dispositions of this nature were made, about which it might weary the uninitiated to read, but which will readily suggest themselves to the mind of a sailor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

same time out of ear−shot.

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

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

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

"Ay, ay, Rose they may be answered, as you say, but the answers sometimes are unsatisfactory. Captain Spike,for some reason or other, is uneasy, and would rather not have anything to say to her. He has the greatest aversion to speaking the smallest craft when on a coast."

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

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

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

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

There can be no doubt that the alterations made on board the Swash served her a very good turn on this occasion. Although the night could not be called positively dark, there was sufficient obscurity to render her hull confused and indistinct at any distance, and this so much the more when seen from the steamer outside, or between her and the land. All this Spike very well understood, and largely calculated on. In effect he was not deceived; the look−outs on board the revenue craft could trace little of the vessel that was approaching beyond the spars and sails which rose above the shores, and these seemed to be the spars and sails of a common foretopsail schooner.

As this was not the sort of craft for which they were on the watch, no suspicion was awakened, nor did any reports go from the quarter−deck to the cabin. The steamer had her quarter watches, and officers of the deck, like a vessel of war, the discipline of which was fairly enough imitated, but even a man−of−war may be overreached on an occasion.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

away toward the island which lies northwardly from the Point, and quite near to which all vessels of any draught of water are compelled to pass, even with the fairest winds.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Brig ahoy!" was the call.

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

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

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

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

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

"The steamer hails us again, Captain Spike."

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

All was done as ordered, and done rapidly, as is ever the case on board a well−ordered vessel when there is occasion for exertion. That occasion now appeared to exist in earnest, for while the men were sheeting home the topsail, a flash of light illuminated the scene, when the roar of a gun came booming across the water, succeeded by the very distinct whistling of its shot. We regret that the relict of the late Captain Budd did not behave exactly as became a ship−master's widow, under fire. Instead of remaining silent and passive, even while frightened, as was the case with Rose, she screamed quite as loud as she had previously done that very day in Hell−Gate. It appeared to Spike, indeed, that practice was making her perfect; and, as for Biddy, the spirit of emulation became so powerful in her bosom, that, if anything, she actually outshrieked her mistress. Hearing this, the widow made a second effort, and fairly recovered the ground some might have fancied she had lost.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sail was made on board the Swash with great rapidity, and the brig made a bold push at the Stepping−Stones. Spike was a capital pilot. He insisted if he could once gain sight of the spar that was moored on those rocks for a buoy, he should run with great confidence. The two lights were of great assistance, of course; but the revenue vessel could see these lights as well as the brig, and she, doubtless, had an excellent pilot on board. By the time the studding−sails were set on board the Swash, the steamer was aweigh, and her long line of peculiar sails became visible. Unfortunately for men who were in a hurry, she lay so much within the bluff as to get the wind scant, and her commander thought it necessary to make a stretch over to the southern shore, before he attempted to lay his course. When he was ready to tack, an operation of some time with a vessel of her great length, the

Swash was barely visible in the obscurity, gliding off upon a slack bowline, at a rate which nothing but the damp night air, the ballast−trim of the vessel, united to her excellent sailing qualities, could have produced with so light a breeze.

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

It was about eleven o'clock when the Swash passed the light at Sands' Point, close in with the land. The wind stood much as it had been. If there was a change at all, it was half a point more to the southward, and it was a little fresher. Such as it was, Spike saw he was getting, in that smooth water, quite eight knots out of his craft, and he made his calculations thereon. As yet, and possibly for half an hour longer, he was gaining, and might hope to continue to gain on the steamer. Then her turn would come. Though no great traveller, it was not to be expected that, favoured by smooth water and the breeze, her speed would be less than ten knots, while there was no hope of increasing his own without an increase of the wind. He might be five miles in advance, or six at the most; these six miles would be overcome in three hours of steaming, to a dead certainty, and they might possibly be overcome much sooner. It was obviously necessary to resort to some other experiment than that of dead sailing, if an escape was to be effected.

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

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

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

Spike did try it. For a considerable time longer he stood on, keeping as close to the land as he thought it safe to run, and carrying everything that would draw. But the steamer was on his heels, evidently gaining fast. Her chimneys gave out flames, and there was every sign that her people were in earnest. To those on board the Swash these flames seemed to draw nearer each instant, as indeed was the fact, and just as the breeze came fresher out of the opening in the hills, or the low mountains, which surround the place of refuge in which they designed to enter, Mulford announced that by aid of the night−glass he could distinguish both sails and hull of their pursuer. Spike took a look, and throwing down the instrument, in a way to endanger it, he ordered the studding−sails taken in. The men went aloft like cats, and worked as if they could stand in air. In a minute or two the Swash was under what Mrs. Budd might have called her "attacking" canvas, and was close by the wind, looking on a good leg well up the harbour. The brig seemed to be conscious of the emergency, and glided ahead at capital speed. In five minutes she had shut in the flaming chimneys of the steamer. In five minutes more Spike tacked, to keep under the western side of the harbour, and out of sight as long as possible, and because he thought the breeze drew down fresher where he was than more out in the bay.

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

CHAPTER III.

The western wave was all a flame,

The day was well nigh done,

Almost upon the western wave

Rested the broad bright sun;

When that strange ship drove suddenly

Betwixt us and the sun.

The Ancient Mariner

At that hour, on the succeeding morning, when the light of day is just beginning to chase away the shadows of night, the Molly Swash became visible within the gloom of the high land which surrounds so much of the bay of Hempstead, under easy sail, backing and filling, in order to keep within her hiding−place, until a look could be had at the state of things without. Half an hour later, she was so near the entrance of the estuary, as to enable the look−outs aloft to ascertain that the coast was clear, when Spike ordered the helm to be put up, and the brig to be kept away to her course. At this precise moment, Rose appeared on deck, refreshed by the sleep of a quiet night; and with cheeks tinged with a colour even more delicate than that which was now glowing in the eastern sky, and which was almost as brilliant.

"We stopped in this bit of a harbour for the night, Miss Rose, that is all;" said Spike, observing that his fair passenger was looking about her, in some little surprise, at finding the vessel so near the land, and seemingly so much out of her proper position. "Yes, we always do that, when we first start on a v'y'ge, and before the brig gets used to travelling do n't we, Mr. Mulford?"

Mr. Mulford, who knew how hopeless was the attempt to mystify Rose, as one might mystify her credulous and weak−minded aunt, and who had no disposition to deal any way but fairly by the beautiful, and in one sense now helpless young creature before him, did not see fit to make any reply. Offend Spike he did not dare to do, more especially under present circumstances; and mislead Rose he would not do. He affected not to hear the question, therefore, but issuing an order about the head−sails, he walked forward as if to see it executed. Rose herself was not under as much restraint as the young mate.

"It is convenient, Captain Spike," she coolly answered for Mulford, "to have stopping−places, for vessels that are wearied, and I remember the time when my uncle used to tell me of such matters, very much in the same vein; but, it was before I was twelve years old."

Spike hemmed, and he looked a little foolish, but Clench, the boatswain, coming aft to say something to him in confidence, just at that moment, he was enabled to avoid the awkwardness of attempting to explain. This man Clench, or Clinch, as the name was pronounced, was deep in the captain's secrets; far more so than was his mate, and would have been filling Mulford's station at that very time, had he not been hopelessly ignorant of navigation. On the present occasion, his business was to point out to the captain, two or three lines of smoke, that were visible above the water of the Sound, in the eastern board; one of which he was apprehensive might turn out to be the smoke of the revenue craft, from which they had so recently escaped.

"Steamers are no rarities in Long Island Sound, Clench," observed the captain, levelling his glass at the most suspected of the smokes. "That must be a Providence, or Stonington chap, coming west with the Boston train."

"Either of them would have been further west, by this time, Captain Spike," returned the doubting, but watchful boatswain. "It's a large smoke, and I fear it is the revenue fellow coming back, after having had a look well to the eastward, and satisfying himself that we are not to be had in that quarter."

Spike growled out his assent to the possibility of such a conjecture, and promised vigilance. This satisfied his subordinate for the moment, and he walked forward, or to the place where he belonged. In the mean time, the widow came on deck, smiling, and snuffing the salt air, and ready to be delighted with anything that was maritime.

"Good morning, Captain Spike," she cried "Are we in the offing, yet? you know I desired to be told when we are in the offing, for I intend to write a letter to my poor Mr. Budd's sister, Mrs. Sprague, as soon as we get to the offing."

"What is the offing, aunt?" inquired the handsome niece.

"Why you have hardly been at sea long enough to understand me, child, should I attempt to explain. The offing, however, is the place where the last letters are always written to the owners, and to friends ashore. The term comes, I suppose, from the circumstance that the vessel is about to be off, and it is natural to think of those we leave behind, at such a moment. I intend to write to your aunt Sprague, my dear, the instant I hear we are in the offing; and what is more, I intend to make you my amanuensis."

"But how will the letter be sent, aunty? I have no more objections to writing than any one else, but I do not see how the letter is to be sent. Really, the sea is a curious region, with its stopping−places for the night, and its offings to write letters at!"

"Yes, it's all as you say, Rose a most remarkable region is the sea! You'll admire it, as I admire it, when you come to know it better; and as your poor uncle admired it, and as Captain Spike admires it, too. As for the letters, they can be sent ashore by the pilot, as letters are always sent."

"But, aunty, there is no pilot in the Swash for Captain Spike refused to take one on board."

"Rose! you don't understand what you are talking about! No vessel ever yet sailed without a pilot, if indeedany can. It's opposed to the law, not to have a pilot; and now I remember to have heard your dear uncle say it wasn't a voyage if a vessel didn't take away a pilot."

"But if they take them away, aunty, how can they send the letters ashore by them?"

"Poh! poh! child; you don't know what you're saying; but you'll overlook it, I hope, Captain Spike, for Rose is quick, and will soon learn to know better. As if letters couldn't be sent ashore by the pilot, though he was a hundred thousand miles from land! But, Captain Spike, you must let me know when we are about to get off the

Sound, for I know that the pilot is always sent ashore with his letters, before the vessel gets off the Sound."

"Yes, yes," returned the captain, a little mystified by the widow, though he knew her so well, and understood her so well "you shall know, ma'am, when we get off soundings, for I suppose that is what you mean."

"What is the difference? Off the Sound, or off the soundings, of course, must mean the same thing. But, Rosy, we will go below and write to your aunt at once, for I see a light−house yonder, and light−houses are always put just off the soundings."

Rose, who always suspected her aunt's nautical talk, though she did not know how to correct it, and was not sorry to put an end to it, now, by going below, and spreading her own writing materials, in readiness to write, as the other dictated. Biddy Noon was present, sewing on some of her own finery.

"Now write, as I tell you, Rose," commenced the widow

"My dear sister Sprague Here we are, at last, just off the soundings, with light−houses all round us, and so many capes and islands in sight, that it does seem as if the vessel never could find its way through them all. Some of these islands must be the West Indies"

"Aunty, that can never be!" exclaimed Rose "we left New York only yesterday."

"What of that? Had it been old times, I grant you several days might be necessary to get a sight of the West Indies, but, now, when a letter can be written to a friend in Boston, and an answer received in half an hour, it requires no such time to go to the West Indies. Besides, what otherislands are there in this part of the world? they can't be England "

"No no," said Rose, at once seeing it would be preferable to admit they were the West Indies; so the letter went on:

"Some of these islands must be the West Indies, and it is high time we saw some of them, for we are nearly off the Sound, and the light−houses are getting to be quite numerous. I think we have already seen four since we left the wharf. But, my dear sister Sprague, you will be delighted to hear how much better Rose's health is already becoming "

"My health, aunty! Why, I never knew an ill day in my life!"

"Don't tell me that, my darling; I know too well what all these deceptive appearances of health amount to. I would not alarm you for the world, Rosy dear, but a careful parent and I'm your parent in affection, if not by nature but a careful parent's eye is not to be deceived. I know you look well, but you are ill, my child; though, Heaven be praised, the sea air and hydropathy are already doing you a monstrous deal of good."

As Mrs. Budd concluded, she wiped her eyes, and appeared really glad that her niece had a less consumptive look than when she embarked. Rose sat, gazing at her aunt, in mute astonishment. She knew how much and truly she was beloved, and that induced her to be more tolerant of her connection's foibles than even duty demanded. Feeling was blended with her respect, but it was almost too much for her, to learn that this long, and in some respects painful voyage, was undertaken on her account, and without the smallest necessity for it. The vexation, however, would have been largely increased, but for certain free communications that had occasionally occurred between her and the handsome mate, since the moment of her coming on board the brig. Rose knew that Harry Mulford loved her, too, for he had told her as much with a seaman's frankness; and though she had never let him know that his partiality was returned, her woman's heart was fast inclining toward him, with all her sex's tenderness. This made the mistakeof her aunt tolerable, though Rose was exceedingly vexed it should ever have

occurred.

"Why, my dearest aunt," she cried, "they told me it was on your account that this voyage was undertaken!"

"I know they did, poor, dear Rosy, and that was in order not to alarm you. Some persons of delicate constitutions "

"But my constitution is not in the least delicate, aunt; on the contrary, it is as good as possible; a blessing for which, I trust, I am truly grateful, I did not know but you might be suffering, though you do look so well, for they all agreed in telling me you had need of a sea−voyage."

"I, a subject for hydropathy! Why, child, water is no more necessary to me than it is to a cat."

"But going to sea, aunty, is not hydropathy "

"Don't say that, Rosy; do not say that, my dear. It is hydropathy on a large scale, as Captain Spike says; and when he gets us into blue water, he has promised that you shall have all the benefits of the treatment."

Rose was silent and thoughtful; after which she spoke quickly, like one to whom an important thought had suddenly occurred.

"And Captain Spike, then, was consulted in my case?" she asked.

"He was, my dear, and you have every reason to be grateful to him. He was the first to discover a change in your appearance, and to suggest a sea voyage. Marine Hydropathy, he said, he was sure would get you up again; for Captain Spike thinks your constitution good at the bottom, though the high colour you have proves too high a state of habitual excitement."

"Was Dr. Monson consulted at all, aunt?"

"Not at all. You know the doctors are all against hydropathy, and mesmerism, and the magnetic telegraph, and everything that is new; so we thought it best not to consult him."

"And my aunt Sprague?"

"Yes, she was consulted after everything was settled, and when I knew her notions could not undo what had been already done. But she is a seaman's widow, as well as myself, and has a great notion of the virtue of sea air."

"Then it would seem that Doctor Spike was the principal adviser in my case!"

"I own that he was, Rosy dear. Captain Spike was brought up by your uncle, who has often told me what a thorough seaman he was. 'There's Spike, now,' he said to me one day, 'he can almost make his brig talk' this very brig too, your uncle meant, Rosy, and, of course, one of the best vessels in the world to take hydropathy in."

"Yes, aunty," returned Rose, playing with the pen, while her air proved how little her mind was in her words. "Well, what shall I say next to my aunt Sprague?"

"Rose's health is already becoming confirmed," resumed the widow, who thought it best to encourage her niece by as strong terms as she could employ, "and I shall extol hydropathy to the skies, as long as I live. As soon as we reach our port of destination, my dear sister Sprague, I shall write you a line to let you know it, by the magnetic telegraph "

"But there is no magnetic telegraph on the sea, aunty," interrupted Rose, looking up from the paper, with her clear, serene, blue eyes, expressing even her surprise, at this touch of the relict's ignorance.

"Don't tell me that, Rosy, child, when everybody says the sparks will fly round the whole earth, just as soon as they will fly from New York to Philadelphia."

"But they must have something to fly on, aunty; and the ocean will not sustain wires, or posts."

"Well, there is no need of being so particular; if there is no telegraph, the letter must come by mail. You can say telegraph, here, and when your aunt gets the letter, the postmark will tell her how it came. It looks better to talk about telegraphic communications, child."

Rose resumed her pen, and wrote at her aunt's dictation, as follows: "By the magnetic telegraph, when I hope to be able to tell you that our dear Rose is well. As yet, we both enjoy the ocean exceedingly; but when we get off the Sound, into blue water, and have sent the pilot ashore, or discharged him, I ought to say, which puts me in mind of telling you that a cannon was discharged at us only last night, and that the ball whistled so near me, that I heard it as plain as ever you heard Rose's piano."

"Had I not better first tell my aunt Sprague what is to be done when the pilot is discharged?"

"No; tell her about the cannon that was discharged, first, and about the ball that I heard. I had almost forgot that adventure, which was a very remarkable one, was it not, Biddy?"

"Indeed, Missus, and it was! and Miss Rose might put in the letter how we both screamed at that cannon, and might have been heard as plainly, every bit of it, as the ball."

"Say nothing on the subject, Rose, or we shall never hear the last of it. So, darling, you may conclude in your own way, for I believe I have told your aunt all that comes to mind."

Rose did as desired, finishing the epistle in a very few words, for, rightly enough, she had taken it into her head there was no pilot to be discharged, and consequently that the letter would never be sent. Her short but frequent conferences with Mulford were fast opening her eyes, not to say her heart, and she was beginning to see Captain Spike in his true character, which was that of a great scoundrel. It is true, that the mate had not long judged his commander quite so harshly; but had rather seen his beautiful brig, and her rare qualities, in her owner and commander, than the man himself; but jealousy had quickened his observation of late, and Stephen Spike had lost ground sensibly with Harry Mulford, within the last week. Two or three times before, the young man had thought of seeking another berth, on account of certain distrusts of Spike's occupations; but he was poor, and so long as he remained in the Swash, Harry's opportunities of meeting Rose were greatly increased. This circumstance, indeed, was the secret of his still being in the "Molly," as Spike usually called his craft; the last voyage having excited suspicions that were rather of a delicate nature. Then the young man really loved the brig, which, if she could not be literally made to talk, could be made to do almost everything else. A vessel, and a small vessel, too, is rather contracted as to space, but those who wish to converse can contrive to speak together often, even in such narrow limits. Such had been the fact with Rose Budd and the handsome mate. Twenty times since they sailed, short as that timewas, had Mulford contrived to get so near to Rose, as to talk with her, unheard by others. It is true, that he seldom ventured to do this, so long as the captain was in sight, but Spike was often below, and opportunities were constantly occurring. It was in the course of these frequent but brief conversations, that Harry had made certain dark hints touching the character of his commander, and the known recklessness of his proceedings. Rose had taken the alarm, and fully comprehending her aunt's mental imbecility, her situation was already giving her great uneasiness. She had some undefined hopes from the revenue steamer; though, strangely enough as it appeared to her, her youngest and most approved suitor betrayed a strong desire to escape from that craft, at the very moment he was expressing his apprehensions on account of her presence in the brig. This contradiction arose

from a certain esprit de corps, which seldom fails, more or less, to identify the mariner with his ship.

But the writing was finished, and the letter sealed with wax, Mrs. Budd being quite as particular in that ceremony as Lord Nelson, when the females again repaired on deck. They found Spike and his mate sweeping the eastern part of the Sound with their glasses, with a view to look out for enemies; or, what to them, just then, was much the same thing, government craft. In this occupation, Rose was a little vexed to see that Mulford was almost as much interested as Spike himself, the love of his vessel seemingly overcoming his love for her, if not his love of the right she knew of no reason, however, why the captain should dread any other vessel, and felt sufficiently provoked to question him a little on the subject, if it were only to let him see that the niece was not as completely his dupe as the aunt. She had not been on deck five minutes, therefore, during which time several expressions had escaped the two sailors touching their apprehensions of vessels seen in the distance, ere she commenced her inquiries.

"And why should we fear meeting with other vessels?" Rose plainly demanded "here in Long Island Sound, and within the power of the laws of the country?"

"Fear?" exclaimed Spike, a little startled, and a good deal surprised at this straight−forward question "Fear, Miss Rose! You do not think we are afraid, though thereare many reasons why we do not wish to be spoken by certain craft that are hovering about. In the first place, you know it is war time I suppose you know, Madam Budd, that America is at war with Mexico?"

"Certainly," answered the widow, with dignity "and that is a sufficient reason, Rose, why one vessel should chase, and another should run. If you had heard your poor uncle relate, as I have done, all his chasings and runnings away, in the war times, child, you would understand these things better. Why, I've heard your uncle say that, in some of his long voyages, he has run thousands and thousands of miles, with sails set on both sides, and all over his ship!"

"Yes, aunty, and so have I, but that was 'running before the wind,' as he used to call it."

"I s'pose, however, Miss Rose," put in Spike, who saw that the niece would soon get the better of the aunt; "I s'pose, Miss Rose, that you'll acknowledge that America is at war with Mexico?"

"I am sorry to say that such is the fact, but I remember to have heard you say, yourself, Captain Spike, when my aunt was induced to undertake this voyage, that you did not consider there was the smallest danger from any Mexicans."

"Yes, you did, Captain Spike," added the aunt "you did say there was no danger from Mexicans."

"Nor is there a bit, Madam Budd, if Miss Rose, and your honoured self, will only hear me. There is no danger, because the brig has the heels of anything Mexico can send to sea. She has sold her steamers, and, as for anything else under her flag, I would not care a straw."

"The steamer from which we ran, last evening, and which actually fired off a cannon at us, was not Mexican, but American," said Rose, with a pointed manner that put Spike to his trumps.

"Oh! that steamer " he stammered "that was a race only a race, Miss Rose, and I wouldn't let her come near me, for the world. I should never hear the last of it, in the insurance offices, and on 'change, did I let her overhaul us. You see, Miss Rose you see, Madam Budd " Spike ever found it most convenient to address his mystifying discourse to the aunt, in preference to addressing it to the niece "You see, Madam Budd, the master of that craft and I are old cronies sailed together when boys, and set great store by each other. We met only last evening, just a'ter I had left your own agreeable mansion, Madam Budd, and says he, 'Spike, when do you sail?' 'To−morrow's

flood, Jones,' says I his name is Jones; Peter Jones, and as good a fellow as ever lived. 'Do you go by the Hook, or by Hell−Gate ' "

"Hurl−Gate, Captain Spike, if you please or Whirl−Gate, which some people think is the true sound; but the other way of saying it is awful."

"Well, the captain, my old master, always called it Hell−Gate, and I learned the trick from him "

"I know he did, and so do all sailors; but genteel people, now−a−days, say nothing but Hurl−Gate, or Whirl−Gate."

Rose smiled at this; as did Mulford; but neither said anything, the subject having once before been up between them. As for ourselves, we are still so old−fashioned as to say, and write, Hell−Gate, and intend so to do, in spite of all the Yankees that have yet passed through it, or who ever shall pass through it, and that is saying a great deal. We do not like changing names to suit their uneasy spirits.

"Call the place Hurl−Gate, and go on with your story," said the widow, complacently.

"Yes, Madam Budd 'Do you go by the Hook, or by Whirl−Gate?' said Jones. 'By Whirl−a−Gig−Gate,' says I. 'Well,' says he, 'I shall go through the Gate myself, in the course of the morning. We may meet somewhere to the eastward, and, if we do, I'll bet you a beaver,' says he, 'that I show you my stern.' 'Agreed,' says I, and we shook hands upon it. That's the whole history of our giving the steamer the slip, last night, and of my not wishing to let her speak me."

"But you went into a bay, and let her go past you," said Rose, coolly enough as to manner, but with great point as to substance. "Was not that a singular way of winning a race?"

"It does seem so, Miss Rose, but it's all plain enough, when understood. I found that steam was too much for sails, and I stood up into the bay to let them run past us, in hopes they would never find out the trick. I care as littlefor a hat as any man, but I do care a good deal about having it reported on 'change that the Molly was beat, by even a steamer."

This ended the discourse for the moment, Clench again having something to say to his captain in private.

"How much of that explanation am I to believe, and how much disbelieve?" asked Rose, the instant she was left alone with Harry. "If it be all invention, it was a ready and ingenious story."

"No part of it is true. He no more expected that the steamer would pass through Hell−Gate, than I expected it myself. There was no bet, or race, therefore; but it was our wish to avoid Uncle Sam's cruiser, that was all."

"And why should you wish any such thing?"

"On my honour, I can give you no better reason, so far as I am concerned, than the fact that, wishing to keep clear of her, I do not like to be overhauled. Nor can I tell you why Spike is so much in earnest in holding the revenue vessel at arm's length; I know he dislikes all such craft, as a matter of course, but I can see no particular reason for it just now. A more innocent cargo was never stuck into a vessel's hold."

"What is it?"

"Flour; and no great matter of that. The brig is not half full, being just in beautiful ballast trim, as if ready for a race. I can see no sufficient reason, beyond native antipathy, why Captain Spike should wish to avoid any craft,

for it is humbug his dread of a Mexican, and least of all, here, in Long Island Sound. All that story about Jones is a tub for whales."

"Thank you for the allusion; my aunt and myself being the whales."

"You know I do mean can mean nothing, Rose, that is disrespectful to either yourself or your aunt."

Rose looked up, and she looked pleased. Then she mused in silence, for some time, when she again spoke.

"Why have you remained another voyage with such a man, Harry?" she asked, earnestly.

"Because, as his first officer, I have had access to your house, when I could not have had it otherwise; and because I have apprehended that he might persuade Mrs. Budd, ashe had boasted to me it was his intention to do, to make this voyage."

Rose now looked grateful; and deeply grateful did she feel, and had reason to feel. Harry had concealed no portion of his history from her. Like herself, he was a ship−master's child, but one better educated and better connected than was customary for the class. His father had paid a good deal of attention to the youth's early years, but had made a seaman of him, out of choice. The father had lost his all, however, with his life, in a shipwreck; and Harry was thrown upon his own resources, at the early age of twenty. He had made one or two voyages as a second mate, when chance threw him in Spike's way, who, pleased with some evidences of coolness and skill, that he had shown in a foreign port, on the occasion of another loss, took him as his first officer; in which situation he had remained ever since, partly from choice and partly from necessity. On the other hand, Rose had a fortune; by no means a large one, but several thousands in possession, from her own father, and as many more in reversion from her uncle. It was this money, taken in connection with the credulous imbecility of the aunt, that had awakened the cupidity, and excited the hopes of Spike. After a life of lawless adventure, one that had been chequered by every shade of luck, he found himself growing old, with his brig growing old with him, and little left beside his vessel and the sort of half cargo that was in her hold. Want of means, indeed, was the reason that the flour−barrels were not more numerous.

Rose heard Mulford's explanation favourably, as indeed she heard most of that which came from him, but did not renew the discourse, Spike's conference with the boatswain just then terminating. The captain now came aft, and began to speak of the performances of his vessel in a way to show that he took great pride in them.

"We are travelling at the rate of ten knots, Madam Budd," he said exultingly, "and that will take us clear of the land, before night shuts in ag'in. Montauk is a good place for an offing; I ask for no better."

"Shall we then have two offings, this voyage, Captain Spike?" asked Rose, a little sarcastically. "If we are inthe offing now, and are to be in the offing when we reach Montauk, there must be two such places."

"Rosy, dear, you amaze me!" put in the aunt. "There is no offing until the pilot is discharged, and when he's discharged there is nothing but offing. It's all offing. On the Sound, is the first great change that befalls a vessel as she goes to sea; then comes the offing; next the pilot is discharged then then what comes next, Captain Spike?"

"Then the vessel takes her departure an old navigator like yourself, Madam Budd, ought not to forget the departure."

"Quite true, sir. The departure is a very important portion of a seaman's life. Often and often have I heard my poor dear Mr. Budd talk about his departures. His departures, and his offings and his "

"Land−falls," added Spike, perceiving that the ship−master's relict was a little at fault.

"Thank you, sir; the hint is quite welcome. His land−falls, also, were often in his mouth."

"What is a land−fall, aunty?" inquired Rose "It appears a strange term to be used by one who lives on the water."

"Oh! there is no end to the curiosities of sailors! A 'land−fall,' my dear, means a shipwreck, of course. To fall on the land, and a very unpleasant fall it is, when a vessel should keep on the water. I've heard of dreadful land−falls in my day, in which hundreds of souls have been swept into eternity, in an instant."

"Yes; yes, Madam Budd there are such accidents truly, and serious things be they to encounter," answered Spike, hemming a little to clear his throat, as was much his practice whenever the widow ran into any unusually extravagant blunder; "yes, serious things to encounter. But the land−fall that I mean is a different sort of thing; being, as you well know, what we say when we come in sight of land, a'ter a v'y'ge; or, meaning the land we may happen first to see. The departure is the beginning of our calculation when we lose sight of the last cape or headland, and the land−fall closes it, by letting us know where we are, at the other end of our journey, as you probably remember."

"Is there not such a thing as clearing out in navigation?" asked Rose, quickly, willing to cover a little confusion that was manifest in her aunt's manner.

"Not exactly in navigation, Miss Rose, but clearing out, with honest folk, ought to come first, and navigation a'terwards. Clearing out means going through the Custom−House, accordin' to law."

"And the Molly Swash has cleared out, I hope?"

"Sartain a more lawful clearance was never given in Wall Street; it's for Key West and a market. I did think of making it Havana and a market, but port−charges are lightest at Key West."

"Then Key West is the place to which we are bound?"

"It ought to be, agreeable to papers; though vessels sometimes miss the ports for which they clear."

Rose put no more questions; and her aunt, being conscious that she had not appeared to advantage in the affair of the "land−fall," was also disposed to be silent. Spike and Mulford had their attention drawn to the vessel, and the conversation dropped.

The reader can readily suppose that the Molly Swash had not been standing still all this time. So far from this, she was running "down Sound," with the wind on her quarter, or at south−west, making great head−way, as she was close under the south shore, or on the island side of the water she was in. The vessel had no other motion than that of her speed, and the females escaped everything like sea−sickness, for the time being. This enabled them to attend to making certain arrangements necessary to their comforts below, previously to getting into rough water. In acquitting herself of this task, Rose received much useful advice from Josh, though his new assistant, Jack Tier, turned out to be a prize indeed, in the cabins. The first was only a steward; but the last proved himself not only a handy person of his calling, but one full of resources a genius, in his way. Josh soon became so sensible of his own inferiority, in contributing to the comforts of females, that he yielded the entire management of the "ladies' cabin," as a little place that might have been ten feet square, was called, to his uncouth−looking, but really expert deputy. Jack waddled about below, as if born and brought up in such a place, and seemed every way fitted for his office. Inheight, and in build generally, there was a surprising conformity between the widow and the steward's deputy, a circumstance which might induce one to think they must often have been in each other's way, in a space so small; though, in point of fact, Jack never ran foul of any one. He seemed to avoid this inconvenience by a species of nautical instinct.

Towards the turn of the day, Rose had everything arranged, and was surprised to find how much room she had made for her aunt and herself, by means of Jack's hints, and how much more comfortable it was possible to be, in that small cabin, than she had at first supposed.

After dinner, Spike took his siesta. He slept in a little state−room that stood on the starboard side of the quarter−deck, quite aft; as Mulford did in one on the larboard. These two state−rooms were fixtures; but a light deck overhead, which connected them, shipped and unshipped, forming a shelter for the man at the wheel, when in its place, as well as for the officer of the watch, should he see fit to use it, in bad weather. This sort of cuddy, Spike termed his "coach−house."

The captain had no sooner gone into his state−room, and closed its window, movements that were understood by Mulford, than the latter took occasion to intimate to Rose, by means of Jack Tier, the state of things on deck, when the young man was favoured with the young lady's company.

"He has turned in for his afternoon's nap, and will sleep for just one hour, blow high, or blow low," said the mate, placing himself at Rose's side on the trunk, which formed the usual seat for those who could presume to take the liberty of sitting down on the quarter−deck. "It's a habit with him, and we can count on it, with perfect security."

"His doing so, now, is a sign that he has no immediate fears of the revenue steamer?"

"The coast is quite clear of her. We have taken good looks at every smoke, but can see nothing that appears like our late companion. She has doubtless gone to the eastward, on duty, and merely chased us, on her road."

"But why should she chase us, at all?"

"Because we ran. Let a dog run, or a man run, or a cat run, ten to one but something starts in chase. It ishuman nature, I believe, to give chase; though I will admit there was something suspicious about that steamer's movements her anchoring off the Fort, for instance. But let her go, for the present; are you getting things right, and to your mind, below decks?"

"Very much so. The cabin is small, and the two state−rooms the merest drawers that ever were used, but, by putting everything in its place, we have made sufficient room, and no doubt shall be comfortable."

"I am sorry you did not call on me for assistance. The mate has a prescriptive right to help stow away."

"We made out without your services," returned Rose, slightly blushing "Jack Tier, as he is called, Josh's assistant, is a very useful person, and has been our adviser and manager. I want no better for such services."

"He is a queer fellow, all round. Take him altogether, I hardly ever saw so droll a being! As thick as he's long, with a waddle like a duck, a voice that is cracked, hair like bristles, and knee high; the man might make a fortune as a show. Tom Thumb is scarcely a greater curiosity."

"He is singular in 'build,' as you call it," returned Rose, laughing, "but, I can assure you that he is a most excellent fellow in his way worth a dozen of Josh. Do you know, Harry, that I suspect he has strong feelings towards Captain Spike; though whether of like or dislike, friendship or enmity, I am at a loss to say."

"And why do you think that he has any feeling at all? I have heard Spike say he left the fellow ashore, somewhere down on the Spanish Main, or in the Islands, quite twenty years since; but a sailor would scarce carry a grudge so long a time, for such a thing as that."

"I do not know but feeling there is, and much of it, too; though, whether hostile or friendly, I will not undertake to say."

"I'll look to the chap, now you tell me this. It is a little odd, the manner in which he got on board us, taken in connection with the company he was in, and a discovery may be made. Here he is, however; and, as I keep the keys of the magazine, he can do us no great harm, unless he scuttles the brig."

"Magazine! Is there such a thing here?"

"To be sure there is, and ammunition enough in it to keep eight carronades in lively conversation for a couple of hours."

"A carronade is what you call a gun, is it not?"

"A piece of a one being somewhat short, like your friend, Jack Tier, who is shaped a good deal like a carronade."

Rose smiled nay, half laughed, for Harry's pleasantries almost took the character of wit in her eyes, but she did not the less pursue her inquiries.

"Guns! And where are they, if they be on this vessel?"

"Do not use such a lubberly expression, my dear Rose, if you respect your father's profession. On a vessel, is a new−fangled Americanism, that is neither fish, flesh, nor red−herring, as we sailors say neither English nor Greek."

"What should I say, then? My wish is not to parade sea−talk, but to use it correctly, when I use it at all."

"The expression is hardly 'sea−talk,' as you call it, but every−day English that is, when rightly used. On a vessel is no more English than it is nautical no sailor ever used such an expression."

"Tell me what I ought to say, and you will find me a willing, if not an apt scholar. I am certain of having often read it, in the newspapers, and that quite lately."

"I'll answer for that, and it's another proof of its being wrong. In a vessel is as correct as in a coach, and on a vessel as wrong as can be; but you can say on board a vessel, though not 'on the boards of a vessel;' as Mrs. Budd has it."

"Mr. Mulford!"

"I beg a thousand pardons, Rose, and will offend no more though she does make some very queer mistakes!"

"My aunt thinks it an honour to my uncle's memory, to be able to use the language of his professional life, and if she does sometimes make mistakes that are absurd, it is with motives so respectable that no sailor should deride them."

"I am rebuked for ever. Mrs. Budd may call the anchor a silver spoon, hereafter, without my even smiling. But if the aunt has this kind remembrance of a seaman's life, why cannot the niece think equally well of it?"

"Perhaps she does," returned Rose, smiling again "seeing all its attractions through the claims of Captain Spike."

"I think half the danger from him gone, now that you seem so much on your guard. What an odious piece of deception, to persuade Mrs. Budd that you were fast falling into a decline!"

"One so odious that I shall surely quit the brig at the first port we enter, or even in the first suitable vessel that we may speak."

"And Mrs. Budd could you persuade her to such a course?"

"You scarce know us, Harry Mulford. My aunt commands, when there is no serious duty to perform, but we change places when there is. I can persuade her to anything that is right, in ten minutes."

"You might persuade a world!" cried Harry, with strong admiration expressed in his countenance; after which he began to converse with Rose, on a subject so interesting to themselves, that we do not think it prudent to relate any more of the discourse, forgetting all about the guns.

About four o'clock, of a fine summer's afternoon, the Swash went through the Race, on the best of the ebb, and with a staggering south−west wind. Her movement by the land, just at that point, could not have been less than at the rate of fifteen miles in the hour. Spike was in high spirits, for his brig had got on famously that day, and there was nothing in sight to the eastward. He made no doubt, as he had told his mate, that the steamer had gone into the Vineyard Sound, and that she was bound over the shoals.

"They want to make political capital out of her," he added, using one of the slang phrases, that the "business habits" of the American people are so rapidly incorporating with the common language of the country "They want to make political capital out of her, Harry, and must show her off to the Boston folk, who are full of notions. Well, let them turn her to as much account in that way as they please, so long as they keep her clear of the Molly. Your sarvant, Madam Budd" addressing the widow, who just at that moment came on deck "a fine a'ternoon, and likely to be a clear night to run off the coast in."

"Clear nights are desirable, and most of all at sea, CaptainSpike," returned the relict, in her best, complacent manner, "whether it be to run off a coast, or to run on a coast. In either case, a clear night, or a bright moon must be useful."

Captain Spike rolled his tobacco over in his mouth, and cast a furtive glance at the mate, but he did not presume to hazard any further manifestations of his disposition to laugh.

"Yes, Madam Budd," he answered, "it is quite as you say, and I am only surprised where you have picked up so much of what I call useful nautical knowledge."

"We live and learn, sir. You will recollect that this is not my first voyage, having made one before, and that I passed a happy, happy, thirty years, in the society of my poor, dear husband, Rose's uncle. One must have been dull, indeed, not to have picked up, from such a companion, much of a calling that was so dear to him, and the particulars of which were so very dear to him. He actually gave me lessons in the 'sea dialect,' as he called it, which probably is the true reason I am so accurate and general in my acquisitions."

"Yes, Madam Budd yes hem you are yes, you are wonderful in that way. We shall soon get an offing, now, Madam Budd yes, soon get an offing, now."

"And take in our departure, Captain Spike " added the widow, with a very intelligent smile.

"Yes, take our departure. Montauk is yonder, just coming in sight; only some three hours' run from this spot. When we get there, the open ocean will lie before us; and give me the open sea, and I'll not call the king my

uncle."

"Was he your uncle, Captain Spike?"

"Only in a philanthropic way, Madam Budd. Yes, let us get a good offing, and a rapping to'gallant breeze, and I do not think I should care much for two of Uncle Sam's new−fashioned revenue craft, one on each side of me."

"How delightful do I find such conversation, Rose! It's as much like your poor, dear uncle's, as one pea is like another. 'Yes,' he used to say, too, 'let me only have one on each side of me, and a wrapper round the topgallant sail to hold the breeze, and I'd not call the king my uncle.' Now I think of it, he used to talk about the king as his uncle, too."

"It was all talk, aunty. He had no uncle, and, what is more, he had no king."

"That's quite true, Miss Rose," rejoined Spike, attempting a bow, which ended in a sort of jerk. "It is not very becoming in us republicans to be talking of kings, but a habit is a habit. Our forefathers had kings, and we drop into their ways without thinking of what we are doing. Fore−topgallant yard, there?"

"Sir."

"Keep a bright look−out, ahead. Let me know the instant you make anything in the neighbourhood of Montauk."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"As I was saying, Madam Budd, we seamen drop into our forefathers' ways. Now, when I was a youngster, I remember, one day, that we fell in with a ketch you know, Miss Rose, what a ketch is, I suppose?"

"I have not the least notion of it, sir."

"Rosy, you amaze me!" exclaimed the aunt "and you a ship−master's niece, and a ship−master's daughter! A catch is a trick that sailors have, when they quiz landsmen."

"Yes, Madam Budd, yes; we have them sort of catches, too; but I now mean the vessel with a peculiar rig, which we call a ketch, you know."

"Is it the full−jigger, or the half−jigger sort, that you mean?"

Spike could hardly stand this, and he had to hail the top−gallant−yard again, in order to keep the command of his muscles, for he saw by the pretty frown that was gathering on the brow of Rose, that she was regarding the matter a little seriously. Luckily, the answer of the man on the yard diverted the mind of the widow from the subject, and prevented the necessity of any reply.

"There's a light, of course, sir, on Montauk, is there not, Captain Spike?" demanded the seaman who was aloft.

"To be sure there is every head−land, hereabouts, has its light; and some have two."

"Ay, ay, sir it's that which puzzles me; I think I see one light−house, and I'm not certain but I see two."

"If there is anything like a second, it must be a sail. Montauk has but one light."

Mulford sprang into the fore−rigging, and in a minute wason the yard. He soon came down, and reported the light−house in sight, with the afternoon's sun shining on it, but no sail near.

"My poor, dear Mr. Budd used to tell a story of his being cast away on a light−house, in the East Indies," put in the relict, as soon as the mate had ended his report, "which always affected me. It seems there were three ships of them together, in an awful tempest directly off the land "

"That was comfortable, any how," cried Spike; "if it must blow hard, let it come off the land, say I."

"Yes, sir, it was directly off the land, as my poor husband always said, which made it so much the worse you must know, Rosy; though Captain Spike's gallant spirit would rather encounter danger than not. It blew what they call a Hyson, in the Chinese seas "

"A what, aunty? Hyson is the name of a tea, you know."

"A Hyson, I'm pretty sure it was; and I suppose the wind is named after the tea, or the tea after the wind."

"The ladies do get in a gale, sometimes, over their tea," said Spike gallantly. "But I rather think Madam Budd must mean a Typhoon."

"That's it a Typhoon, or a Hyson there is not much difference between them, you see. Well, it blew a Typhoon, and they are always mortal to somebody. This my poor Mr. Budd well knew, and he had set his chronometer for that Typhoon "

"Excuse me, aunty, it was the barometer that he was watching the chronometer was his watch."

"So it was his watch on deck was his chronometer, I declare. I am forgetting a part of my education. Do you know the use of a chronometer, now, Rose? You have seen your uncle's often, but do you know how he used it?"

"Not in the least, aunty. My uncle often tried to explain it, but I never could understand him."

"It must have been, then, because Captain Budd did not try to make himself comprehended," said Mulford, "for I feel certain nothing would be easier than to make you understand the uses of the chronometer."

"I should like to learn it from you, Mr. Mulford," answered the charming girl, with an emphasis so slight on the 'you,' that no one observed it but the mate, but which was clear enough to him, and caused every nerve to thrill.

"I can attempt it," answered the young man, "if it be agreeable to Mrs. Budd, who would probably like to hear it herself."

"Certainly, Mr. Mulford; though I fancy you can say little on such a subject that I have not often heard already, from my poor, dear Mr. Budd."

"This was not very encouraging, truly; but Rose continuing to look interested, the mate proceeded.

"The use of the chronometer is to ascertain the longitude," said Harry, "and the manner of doing it is, simply this: A chronometer is nothing more nor less than a watch, made with more care than usual, so as to keep the most accurate time. They are of all sizes, from that of a clock, down to this which I wear in my fob, and which is a watch in size and appearance. Now, the nautical almanacs are all calculated to some particular meridian "

"Yes," interrupted the relict, "Mr. Budd had a great deal to say about meridians."

"That of London, or Greenwich, being the meridian used by those who use the English Almanacs, and those of Paris or St. Petersburg, by the French and Russians. Each of these places has an observatory, and chronometers that are kept carefully regulated, the year round. Every chronometer is set by the regulator of the particular observatory or place to which the almanac used is calculated."

"How wonderfully like my poor, dear Mr. Budd, all this is, Rosy! Meridians, and calculated, and almanacs! I could almost think I heard your uncle entertaining me with one of his nautical discussions, I declare!"

"Now the sun rises earlier in places east, than in places west of us."

"It rises earlier in the summer, but later in the winter, everywhere, Mr. Mulford."

"Yes, my dear Madam; but the sun rises earlier every day, in London, than it does in New York."

"That is impossible," said the widow, dogmatically "Why should not the sun rise at the same time in England and America?"

"Because England is east of America, aunty. The sundoes not move, you know, but only appears to us to move, because the earth turns round from west to east, which causes those who are farthest east to see it first. That is what Mr. Mulford means."

"Rose has explained it perfectly well," continued the mate. "Now the earth is divided into 360 degrees, and the day is divided into 24 hours. If 360 be divided by 24, the quotient will be 15. If follows that, for each fifteen degrees of longitude, there is a difference of just one hour in the rising of the sun, all over the earth, where it rises at all. New York is near five times 15 degrees west of Greenwich, and the sun consequently rises five hours later at New York than at London."

"There must be a mistake in this, Rosy," said the relict, in a tone of desperate resignation, in which the desire to break out in dissent, was struggling oddly enough with an assumed dignity of deportment. "I've always heard that the people of London are some of the latest in the world. Then, I've been in London, and know that the sun rises in New York, in December, a good deal earlier than it does in London, by the clock yes, by the clock."

"True enough, by the clock, Mrs. Budd, for London is more than ten degrees north of New York, and the farther north you go, the later the sun rises in winter, and the earlier in summer."

The relict merely shrugged her shoulders, as much as to say that she knew no such thing; but Rose, who had been well taught, raised her serene eyes to her aunt's face, and mildly said

"All true, aunty, and that is owing to the fact that the earth is smaller at each end than in the middle."

"Fiddle faddle with your middles and ends, Rose I've been in London, dear, and know that the sun rises later there than in New York, in the month of December, and that I know by the clock, I tell you."

"The reason of which is," resumed Mulford, "because the clocks of each place keep the time of that place. Now, it is different with the chronometers; they are set in the observatory of Greenwich, and keep the time of Greenwich. This watch chronometer was set there, only six monthssince; and this time, as you see, is near nine o'clock, when in truth it is only about four o'clock here, where we are."

"I wonder you keep such a watch, Mr. Mulford!"

"I keep it," returned the mate, smiling, "because I know it to keep good time. It has the Greenwich time; and, as your watch has the New York time, by comparing them together, it is quite easy to find the longitude of New York."

"Do you, then, keep watches to compare with your chronometers?" asked Rose, with interest.

"Certainly not; as that would require a watch for every separate part of the ocean, and then we should only get known longitudes. It would be impracticable, and load a ship with nothing but watches. What we do is this: We set our chronometers at Greenwich, and thus keep the Greenwich true time wherever we go. The greatest attention is paid to the chronometers, to see that they receive no injuries; and usually there are two, and often more of them, to compare one with another, in order to see that they go well. When in the middle of the ocean, for instance, we find the true time of the day at that spot, by ascertaining the height of the sun. This we do by means of our quadrants, or sextants; for, as the sun is always in the zenith at twelve o'clock, nothing is easier than to do this, when the sun can be seen, and an arc of the heavens measured. At the instant the height of the sun is ascertained by one observer, he calls to another, who notes the time on the chronometer. The difference in these two times, or that of the chronometer and that of the sun, gives the distance in degrees and minutes, between the longitude of Greenwich and that of the place on the ocean where the observer is; and that gives him his longitude. If the difference is three hours and twenty minutes, in time, the distance from Greenwich is fifty degrees of longitude, because the sun rises three hours and twenty minutes sooner in London, than in the fiftieth degree of west longitude."

"A watch is a watch, Rosy," put in the aunt, doggedly "and time is time. When it's four o'clock at our house, it's four o'clock at your aunt Sprague's, and it's so all over the world. The world may turn round I'll not deny it, for your uncle often said as much as that, but it cannot turn in the way Mr. Mulford says, or we should all fall off it, atnight, when it was bottom upwards. No, sir, no; you've started wrong. My poor, dear, late Mr. Budd, always admitted that the world turned round, as the books say; but when I suggested to him the difficulty of keeping things in their places, with the earth upside down, he acknowledged candidly for he was all candour, I must say that for him and owned that he had made a discovery by means of his barometer, which showed that the world did not turn round in the way you describe, or by rolling over, but by whirling about, as one turns in a dance. You must remember your uncle's telling me this, Rose?"

Rose did remember her uncle's telling her aunt this, as well as a great many other similar prodigies. Captain Budd had married his silly wife on account of her pretty face, and when the novelty of that was over, he often amused himself by inventing all sorts of absurdities, to amuse both her and himself. Among other things, Rose well remembered his quieting her aunt's scruples about falling off the earth, by laying down the theory that the world did not "roll over," but "whirl round." But Rose did not answer the question.

"Objects are kept in their places on the earth by means of attraction," Mulford ventured to say, with a great deal of humility of manner. "I believe it is thought there is no up or down, except as we go from or towards the earth; and that would make the position of the last a matter of indifference, as respects objects keeping on it."

"Attractions are great advantages, I will own, sir, especially to our sex. I think it will be acknowledged there has been no want of them in our family, any more than there has been of sense and information. Sense and information we pride ourselves on; attractions being gifts from God, we try to think less of them. But all the attractions in the world could not keep Rosy, here, from falling off the earth, did it ever come bottom upwards. And, mercy on me, where would she fall to!"

Mulford saw that argument was useless, and he confined his remarks, during the rest of the conversation, to showing Rose the manner in which the longitude of a place might be ascertained, with the aid of the chronometer, and by means of observations to get the true time of day, at the particular place itself. Rose was so quick−witted, and already so well instructed, as easily to comprehend the principles; the details being matters of no great

moment to one of her sex and habits. But Mrs. Budd remained antagonist to the last. She obstinately maintained that twelve o'clock was twelve o'clock; or, if there was any difference, "London hours were notoriously later than those of New York."

Against such assertions arguments were obviously useless, and Mulford, perceiving that Rose began to fidget, had sufficient tact to change the conversation altogether.

And still the Molly Swash kept in swift motion. Montauk was by this time abeam, and the little brigantine began to rise and fall, on the long swells of the Atlantic, which now opened before her, in one vast sheet of green and rolling waters. On her right lay the termination of Long Island; a low, rocky cape, with its light, and a few fields in tillage, for the uses of those who tended it. It was the "land's end" of New York, while the island that was heaving up out of the sea, at a distance of about twenty miles to the eastward, was the property of Rhode Island, being called Blok Island. Between the two, the Swash shaped her course for the ocean.

Spike had betrayed uneasiness, as his brig came up with Montauk; but the coast seemed clear, with not even a distant sail in sight, and he came aft, rubbing his hands with delight, speaking cheerfully.

"All right, Mr. Mulford," he cried "everything ship−shape and brister−fashion not even a smack fishing hereaway, which is a little remarkable. Ha! what are you staring at, over the quarter, there?"

"Look here, sir, directly in the wake of the setting sun, which we are now opening from the land is not that a sail?"

"Sail! Impossible, sir. What should a sail be doing in there, so near Montauk no man ever saw a sail there in his life. It's a spot in the sun, Madam Budd, that my mate has got a glimpse at, and, sailor−like, he mistakes it for a sail! Ha ha ha yes, Harry, it's a spot in the sun."

"It is a spot on the sun, as you say, but it's a spot made by a vessel and here is a boat pulling towards her, might and main; going from the light, as if carrying news."

It was no longer possible for Spike's hopes to deceivehim. There was a vessel, sure enough; though, when first seen, it was so directly in a line with the fiery orb of the setting sun, as to escape common observation. As the brig went foaming on towards the ocean, however, the black speck was soon brought out of the range of the orb of day, and Spike's glass was instantly levelled at it.

"Just as one might expect, Mr. Mulford," cried the captain, lowering his glass, and looking aloft to see what could be done to help his craft along; "a bloody revenue cutter, as I'm a wicked sinner! There she lies, sir, within musket shot of the shore, hid behind the point, as it might be in waiting for us, with her head to the southward, her helm hard down, topsail aback, and foresail brailed; as wicked looking a thing as Free Trade and Sailor's Rights ever ran from. My life on it, sir, she's been put in that precise spot, in waiting for the Molly to arrive. You see, as we stand on, it places her as handsomely to windward of us, as the heart of man could desire."

"It is a revenue cutter, sir; now she's out of the sun's wake, that is plain enough. And that is her boat, which has been sent to the light to keep a look−out for us. Well, sir, she's to windward; but we have everything set for our course, and as we are fairly abeam, she must be a great traveller to overhaul us."

"I thought these bloody cutters were all down in the Gulf," growled the captain, casting his eyes aloft again, to see that everything drew. "I'm sure the newspapers have mentioned as many as twenty that are down there, and here is one, lying behind Montauk, like a snake in the grass!"

"At any rate, by the time he gets his boat up we shall get the start of him ay, there he fills and falls off, to go and meet her. He'll soon be after us, Captain Spike, at racing speed."

Everything occurred as those two mariners had foreseen. The revenue cutter, one of the usual fore−top−sail schooners that are employed in that service, up and down the coast, had no sooner hoisted up her boat, than she made sail, a little off the wind, on a line to close with the Swash. As for the brig, she had hauled up to an easy bowline, as she came round Montauk, and was now standing off south south−east, still having the wind at south−west. The weatherlyposition of the cutter enabled her to steer rather more than one point freer. At the commencement of this chase, the vessels were about a mile and a half apart, a distance too great to enable the cutter to render the light guns she carried available, and it was obvious from the first, that everything depended on speed. And speed it was, truly; both vessels fairly flying; the Molly Swash having at last met with something very like her match. Half an hour satisfied both Spike and Mulford that, by giving the cutter the advantage of one point in a freer wind, she would certainly get alongside of them, and the alternative was therefore to keep off.

"A starn chase is a long chase, all the world over," cried Spike "edge away, sir; edge away, sir, and bring the cutter well on our quarter."

This order was obeyed; but to the surprise of those in the Swash, the cutter did not exactly follow, though she kept off a little more. Her object seemed to be to maintain her weatherly position, and in this manner the two vessels ran on for an hour longer, until the Swash had made most of the distance between Montauk and Blok Island. Objects were even becoming dimly visible on the last, and the light on the point was just becoming visible, a lone star above a waste of desert, the sun having been down now fully a quarter of an hour, and twilight beginning to draw the curtain of night over the waters.

"A craft under Blok," shouted the look−out, that was still kept aloft as a necessary precaution.

"What sort of a craft?" demanded Spike, fiercely; for the very mention of a sail, at that moment, aroused all his ire. "Arn't you making a frigate out of an apple−orchard?"

"It's the steamer, sir. I can now see her smoke. She's just clearing the land, on the south side of the island, and seems to be coming round to meet us."

A long, low, eloquent whistle from the captain, succeeded this announcement. The man aloft was right. It was the steamer, sure enough; and she had been lying hid behind Blok Island, exactly as her consort had been placed behind Montauk, in waiting for their chase to arrive. The result was, to put the Molly Swash in exceeding jeopardy, and thereason why the cutter kept so well to windward was fully explained. To pass out to sea between these two craft was hopeless. There remained but a single alternative from capture by one or by the other, and that Spike adopted instantly. He kept his brig dead away, setting studding−sails on both sides. This change of course brought the cutter nearly aft, or somewhat on the other quarter, and laid the brig's head in a direction to carry her close to the northern coast of the island. But the principal advantage was gained over the steamer, which could not keep off, without first standing a mile or two, or even more, to the westward, in order to clear the land. This was so much clear gain to the Swash, which was running off at racing speed, on a north−east course, while her most dangerous enemy was still heading to the westward. As for the cutter, she kept away; but it was soon apparent that the brig had the heels of her, dead before the wind.

Darkness now began to close around the three vessels; the brig and the schooner soon becoming visible to each other principally by means of their night−glasses; though the steamer's position could be easily distinguished by means of her flaming chimney. This latter vessel stood to the westward for a quarter of an hour, when her commander appeared to become suddenly conscious of the ground he was losing, and he wore short round, and went off before the wind, under steam and canvas; intending to meet the chase off the northern side of the island. The very person who had hailed the Swash, as she was leaving the wharf, who had passed her in Hell−Gate, with

Jack Tier in his boat, and who had joined her off Throgmorton's, was now on her deck, urging her commander by every consideration not to let the brig escape. It was at his suggestion that the course was changed. Nervous, and eager to seize the brig, he prevailed on the commander of the steamer to alter his course. Had he done no more than this, all might have been well; but so exaggerated were his notions of the Swash's sailing, that, instead of suffering the steamer to keep close along the eastern side of the island, he persuaded her commander of the necessity of standing off a long distance to the northward and eastward, with a view to get ahead of the chase. This was not bad advice, were thereany certainly that Spike would stand on, of which, however, he had no intention.

The night set in dark and cloudy; and, the instant that Spike saw, by means of the flaming chimney, that the steamer had wore, and was going to the eastward of Blok, his plan was laid. Calling to Mulford, he communicated it to him, and was glad to find that his intelligent mate was of his own way of thinking. The necessary orders were given, accordingly, and everything was got ready for its execution.

In the meantime, the two revenue craft were much in earnest. The schooner was one of the fastest in the service, and had been placed under Montauk, as described, in the confident expectation of her being able to compete with even the Molly Swash successfully, more especially if brought upon a bowline. Her commander watched the receding form of the brig with the closest attention, until it was entirely swallowed up in the darkness, under the land, towards which he then sheered himself, in order to prevent the Swash from hauling up, and turning to windward, close in under the shadow of the island. Against this manœuvre, however, the cutter had now taken an effectual precaution, and her people were satisfied that escape in that way was impossible.

On the other hand, the steamer was doing very well. Driven by the breeze, and propelled by her wheels, away she went, edging further and further from the island, as the person from the Custom−House succeeded, as it might be, inch by inch, in persuading the captain of the necessity of his so doing. At length a sail was dimly seen ahead, and then no doubt was entertained that the brig had got to the northward and eastward of them. Half an hour brought the steamer alongside of this sail, which turned out to be a brig that had come over the shoals, and was beating into the ocean, on her way to one of the southern ports. Her captain said there had nothing passed to the eastward.

Round went the steamer, and in went all her canvas. Ten minutes later the look−out saw a sail to the westward, standing before the wind. Odd as it might seem, the steamer's people now fancied they were sure of the Swash. There she was, coming directly for them, with squared yards!The distance was short, or a vessel could not have been seen by that light, and the two craft were soon near each other. A gun was actually cleared on board the steamer, ere it was ascertained that the stranger was the schooner! It was now midnight, and nothing was in sight but the coasting brig. Reluctantly, the revenue people gave the matter up; the Molly Swash having again eluded them, though by means unknown.

CHAPTER IV.

Leander dived for love, Leucadia's cliff

The Lesbian Sappho leap'd from in a miff,

To punish Phaon; Icarus went dead,

Because the wax did not continue stiff;

And, had he minded what his father said,

He had not given a name unto his watery bed.

Sands.

We must now advance the time several days, and change the scene to a distant part of the ocean; within the tropics indeed. The females had suffered slight attacks of sea−sickness, and recovered from them, and the brig was safe from all her pursuers. The manner of Spike's escape was simple enough, and without any necromancy. While the steamer, on the one hand, was standing away to the northward and eastward, in order to head him off, and the schooner was edging in with the island, in order to prevent his beating up to windward of it, within its shadows, the brig had run close round the northern margin of the land, and hauled up to leeward of the island, passing between it and the steamer. All this time, her movements were concealed from the schooner by the island itself, and from the steamer, by its shadow and dark back−ground, aided by the distance. By making short tacks, this expedient answered perfectly well; and, at the very moment when the two revenue vessels met, at midnight, about three leagues toleeward of Blok Island, the brigantine, Molly Swash, was just clearing its most weatherly point, on the larboard tack, and coming out exactly at the spot where the steamer was when first seen that afternoon. Spike stood to the westward, until he was certain of having the island fairly between him and his pursuers, when he went about, and filled away on his course, running out to sea again on an easy bowline. At sunrise the next day he was fifty miles to the southward and eastward of Montauk; the schooner was going into New London, her officers and people quite chop−fallen; and the steamer was paddling up the Sound, her captain being fully persuaded that the runaways had returned in the direction from which they had come, and might yet be picked up in that quarter.

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

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

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

"Not in admiration, Madam Budd ha! ha! ha! no, not in admiration. Immoderation is what they like when it comes to that. I'm a single man, but I know that the ladies like admiration mind where you're sheering to," the captain said, interrupting himself a little fiercely, considering the nature of the subject, in consequence of Jack Tier's having trodden on his toe in passing "or I'll teach you the navigation of the quarter−deck, Mr. Burgoo!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The relict looked grave; and she wondered at any man's being so singular as to allude to a first husband, at the very moment he was thinking of offering himself for a second. As for herself, she had not uttered as many words in the last four years, as she had uttered in that very conversation, without making some allusion to her "poor dear Mr. Budd." The reader is not to do injustice to the captain's widow, however, by supposing for a moment that she was actually so weak as to feel any tenderness for a man like Spike, which would be doing a great wrong to both her taste and her judgment, as Rose well knew, even while most annoyed by the conversation she could not but

overhear. All that influenced the good relict was that besetting weakness of her sex, which renders admiration so universally acceptable; and predisposes a female, as it might be, to listen to a suitor with indulgence, and some little show of kindness, even when resolute to reject him. As for Rose, to own the truth, her aunt did not give her a thought, as yet, notwithstanding Spike was getting to be so sentimental.

"Yes, your late excellent and honourable consort always said that I got my growth sooner than any youngster he ever fell in with," resumed the captain, after a short pause; exciting fresh wonder in his companion, that he would persist in lugging in the "dear departed" so very unseasonably. "I am a great admirer of all the Budd family, my good lady, and only wish my connection with it had never tarminated; if tarminated it can be called."

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

"Ay, so it is always with you ladies; when a man is bent on suthin' closer and more interestin' like, you're forputting it off on friendship. Now friendship is good enough in its way, Madam Budd, but friendship is n't love."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Heavy weather, Madam Budd only in heavy weather."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It has been stated already that the brig was just beginning to feel the trades, and it might have been added, to see the mountains of San Domingo. The winds had been variable for the last day or two, and they still continued light, and disposed to be unsteady, ranging from north−east to south−east, with a preponderance in favour of the first point. At the cry of "sail−ho!" everybody looked in the indicated direction, which was west, a little northerly, but for a long time without success. The cry had come from aloft, and Mulford went up as high as the fore−top before he got any glimpse of the stranger at all. He had slung a glass, and Spike was unusually anxious to know the result of his examination.

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

"Wait a moment, sir, till I get a look, she's a long way off, and hardly visible."

"Well, sir, well?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Perhaps he's a Frenchman Johnny Crapaud keeps cruisers in these seas as well as the rest on'em."

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

"Come down, sir, come down there's work to be done as soon as you have breakfasted."

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

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

"He nat'rally wishes to know who gets alongside," put in Tier, somewhat apologetically.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Why, sure enough! It's war−times, you know, and war−times always bring trouble to the trader though it sometimes brings profit, too."

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

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

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

"Ay, ay; no merchantmen keeps his light stun'−sails set, as near the wind as that fellow's going. He's a big chap, too a frigate, at least, by his canvas."

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

"With thunderin' batteries, of course."

"With short thirty−twos and a few rapping sixty−eight Paixhans or Columbiads, as they ought in justice to be called."

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

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

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

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

"Nevertheless, I'd rather take my chance, just now, with Don Montezuma than with Uncle Sam."

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

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

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

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

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

"What brig is that?" commenced the discourse.

"The Molly Swash, of New York, Stephen Spike, master."

"Where from, and whither bound?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Very true. I'll range ahead of you, and as soon as you've room, I'll thank you to heave−to. I wish to send a boat on board you."

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

Although there will be frequent occasion to mention this cruiser, the circumstances are of so recent occurrence, that we do not choose to give either her name, or that of any one belonging to her. We shall, consequently, tell the curious, who may be disposed to turn to their navy−lists and blue−books, that the search will be of no use, as all

the names we shall use, in reference to this cruiser, will be fictitious. As much of the rest of our story as the reader please may be taken for gospel; but we tell him frankly, that we have thought it most expedient to adopt assumed names, in connection with this vessel and all her officers. There are good reasons for so doing; and, among others, is that of abstaining from arming a clique to calumniate her commander, (who, by the way, like another commander in the Gulf that might be named, and who has actually been exposed to the sort of tracasserie to which there is allusion, is one of the very ablest men in the service,) in order to put another in his place.

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

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

"You've got it all as straight, lieutenant, as if you was a readin' it from the log."

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

"Flour; eight hundred barrels of flour."

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

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

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

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

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

"That ship, then, is called the Poughkeepsie, is she, sir?" inquired Spike.

"Such is her name, thanks to a most beneficent and sage provision of Congress, which has extended its parental care over the navy so far as to imagine that a man chosen by thepeople to exercise so many of the functions of a sovereign, is not fit to name a ship. All our two and three deckers are to be called after states; the frigates after

rivers; and the sloops after towns. Thus it is that our craft has the honour to be called the United States ship the 'Poughkeepsie,' instead of the 'Arrow,' or the 'Wasp,' or the 'Curlew,' or the 'Petrel,' as might otherwise have been the case. But the wisdom of Congress is manifest, for the plan teaches us sailors geography."

"Yes, sir, yes, one can pick up a bit of l'arnin' in that way cheap. The Poughkeepsie, Captain ?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It's so in the newspapers, I can swear, lieutenant."

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

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

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

"Which will be ?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I should n't forgive myself in six months for making so had a bargain, lieutenant, so we'll say no more about it if you please."

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

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

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

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

"So I've been told, sir. She's a beautiful vessel, lieutenant, and is full jiggered, I perceive."

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

"Mrs. Budd means that you've a full rigged craft," put in Spike, anxious to have a voice in the conference, "this vessel being only a half−rigged brig."

"Oh! ay; yes, yes the lady is quite right. We are full jiggered from our dead−eyes to our eye−bolts."

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

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

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

"So I should think, ma'am," returned Wallace, a little quizzically, "judging from the effect on yourself."

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

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

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

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

"Everything was done secundem artem, ma'am. The razor was quite an example of what are called in poetry 'thoughts too deep for tears.' "

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"That would greatly prolong the passage, Captain Spike, a week at least."

"What if it does I've a week to spare; we're nine days afore our time."

"Our time for what, sir? Is there any particular time set for a vessel's going into Key West?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

While the Swash was making the circuit of Jamaica, as described, her captain had little communication with his passengers. The misunderstanding with the relict embarrassed him as much as it embarrassed her; and he was quite willing to let time mitigate her resentment. Rose would be just as much in his power a fortnight hence as she was today. This cessation in the captain's attentions gave the females greater liberty, and they improved it, singularly enough as it seemed to Mulford, by cultivating a strange sort of intimacy with Jack Tier. The very day that succeeded the delicate conversation with Mrs. Budd, to a part of which Jack had been an auditor, the uncouth−looking steward's assistant was seen in close conference with the pretty Rose; the subject of their conversation being, apparently, of a most engrossing nature. From that hour, Jack got to be not only a confidant, but a favourite, to Mulford's great surprise. A less inviting subject for tête−à−têtes and confidential dialogues, thought the young man, could not well exist; but so it was; woman's caprices are inexplicable; and not only Rose and her aunt, but even the captious and somewhat distrustful Biddy, manifested on all occasions not only friendship, but kindness and consideration for Jack.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As respects the vessel, nothing worthy of notice occurred until she had passed Loggerhead Key, and was fairly launched in the Gulf of Mexico. Then, indeed, Spike took a step that greatly surprised his mate. The latter was directed to bring all his instruments, charts, and place them in the captain's state−room, where it was understood they were to remain until the brig got into port. Spike was but an indifferent navigator, while Mulford was one of a higher order than common. So much had the former been accustomed to rely on the latter, indeed, as they approached a strange coast, that he could not possibly have taken any step, that was not positively criminal, which would have given his mate more uneasiness than this.

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

Nor was the sequestration of the mate's instruments the only suspicious act of Spike. He caused the brig's paint to be entirely altered, and even went so far toward disguising her, as to make some changes aloft. All this was done as the vessel passed swiftly on her course, and everything had been effected, apparently to the captain's satisfaction, when the cry of "land−ho!" was once more heard. The land proved to be a cluster of low, small islands, part coral, part sand, that might have been eight or ten in number, and the largest of which did not possess a surface of more than a very few acres. Many were the merest islets imaginable, and on one of the largest of the cluster rose a tall, gaunt light−house, having the customary dwelling of its keeper at its base. Nothing else was visible; the broad expanse of the blue waters of the Gulf excepted. All the land in sight would not probably have

made one field of twenty acres in extent, and that seemed cut off from the rest of the world, by a broad barrier of water. It was a spot of such singular situation and accessories, that Mulford gazed at it with a burning desire to know where he was, as the brig steered through a channel between two of the islets, into a capacious and perfectly safe basin, formed by the group, and dropped her anchor in its centre.

CHAPTER V.

He sleeps; but dreams of massy gold,

And heaps of pearl. He stretch'd his hands

He hears a voice "Ill man withhold!"

A pale one near him stands.

Dana.

It was near night−fall when the Swash anchored among the low and small islets mentioned. Rose had been on deck, as the vessel approached this singular and solitary haven, watching the movements of those on board, as well as the appearance of objects on the land, with the interest her situation would be−likely to awaken. She saw the light and manageable craft glide through the narrow and crooked passages that led into the port, the process of anchoring, and the scene of tranquil solitude that succeeded; each following the other as by a law of nature. The light−house next attracted her attention, and, as soon as the sun disappeared, her eyes were fastened on the lantern, in expectation of beholding the watchful and warning fires gleaming there, to give the mariner notice of the position of the dangers that surrounded the place. Minute went by after minute, however, and the customary illumination seemed to be forgotten.

"Why is not this light shining?" Rose asked of Mulford, as the young man came near her, after having discharged his duty in helping to moor the vessel, and in clearing the decks. "All the light−houses we have passed, and they have been fifty, have shown bright lights at this hour, but this."

"I cannot explain it; nor have I the smallest notion where we are. I have been aloft, and there was nothing in sight but this cluster of low islets, far or near. I did fancy, for a moment, I saw a speck like a distant sail, off here, to the northward and eastward, but I rather think it was a gull, or some other sea−bird glancing upward on the wing. I mentioned it to the captain when I came down, and he appeared to believe it a mistake. I have watched that light−house closely, too, ever since we came in, and I have not seen the smallest sign of life about it. It is altogether an extraordinary place!"

"One suited to acts of villany, I fear, Harry!"

"Of that we shall be better judges to−morrow. You, at least, have one vigilant friend, who will die sooner than harm shall come to you. I believe Spike to be thoroughly unprincipled; still he knows he can go so far and no further, and has a wholesome dread of the law. But the circumstance that there should be such a port as this, with a regular light−house, and no person near the last, is so much out of the common way, that I do not know what to make of it."

"Perhaps the light−house keeper is afraid to show himself, in the presence of the Swash?"

"That can hardly be, for vessels must often enter the port, if port it can be called. But Spike is as much concerned at the circumstance that the lamps are not lighted, as any of us can be. Look, he is about to visit the building in the

boat, accompanied by two of his oldest sea−dogs."

"Why might we not raise the anchor, and sail out of this place, leaving Spike ashore?" suggested Rose, with more decision and spirit than discretion.

"For the simple reason that the act would be piracy, even if I could get the rest of the people to obey my orders, as certainly I could not. No, Rose: you, and your aunt, and Biddy, however, might land at these buildings, and refuse to return, Spike having no authority over his passengers."

"Still he would have the power to make us come back to his brig. Look, he has left the vessel's side, and is going directly toward the light−house."

Mulford made no immediate answer, but remained at Rose's side, watching the movements of the captain. The last pulled directly to the islet with the buildings, a distance of only a few hundred feet, the light−house being constructed on a rocky island that was nearly in the centre of the cluster, most probably to protect it from the ravages of the waves. The fact, however, proved, as Mulford did not fail to suggest to his companion, that the beacon had beenerected less to guide vessels into the haven, than to warn mariners at a distance, of the position of the whole group.

In less than five minutes after he had landed, Spike himself was seen in the lantern, in the act of lighting its lamps. In a very short time the place was in a brilliant blaze, reflectors and all the other parts of the machinery of the place performing their duties as regularly as if tended by the usual keeper. Soon after Spike returned on board, and the anchor−watch was set. Then everybody sought the rest that it was customary to take at that hour.

Mulford was on deck with the appearance of the sun; but he found that Spike had preceded him, had gone ashore again, had extinguished the lamps, and was coming alongside of the brig on his return. A minute later the captain came over the side.

"You were right about your sail, last night, a'ter all, Mr. Mulford," said Spike, on coming aft. "There she is, sure enough; and we shall have her alongside to strike cargo out and in, by the time the people have got their breakfasts."

As Spike pointed toward the light−house while speaking, the mate changed his position a little, and saw that a schooner was coming down toward the islets before the wind. Mulford now began to understand the motives of the captain's proceedings, though a good deal yet remained veiled in mystery. He could not tell where the brig was, nor did he know precisely why so many expedients were adopted to conceal the transfer of a cargo as simple as that of flour. But he who was in the secret left but little time for reflection; for swallowing a hasty breakfast on deck, he issued orders enough to his mate to give him quite as much duty as he could perform, when he again entered the yawl, and pulled toward the stranger.

Rose soon appeared on deck, and she naturally began to question Harry concerning their position and prospects. He was confessing his ignorance, as well as lamenting it, when his companion's sweet face suddenly flushed. She advanced a step eagerly toward the open window of Spike's state−room, then compressed her full, rich under−lip with the ivory of her upper teeth, and stood a single instant, a beautiful statue of irresolution instigated by spirit. The lastquality prevailed; and Mulford was really startled when he saw Rose advance quite to the window, thrust in an arm, and turn toward him with his own sextant in her hand. During the course of the passage out, the young man had taught Rose to assist him in observing the longitude; and she was now ready to repeat the practice. Not a moment was lost in executing her intention. Sights were had, and the instrument was returned to its place without attracting the attention of the men, who were all busy in getting up purchases, and in making the other necessary dispositions for discharging the flour. The observations answered the purpose, though somewhat imperfectly made. Mulford had a tolerable notion of their latitude, having kept the brig's run in his head since quitting

Yutacan; and he now found that their longitude was about 83 ° west from Greenwich. After ascertaining this fact, a glance at the open chart, which lay on Spike's desk, satisfied him that the vessel was anchored within the group of the Dry Tortugas, or at the western termination of the well−known, formidable, and extensive Florida Reef. He had never been in that part of the world before, but had heard enough in sea−gossip, and had read enough in books, to be at once apprised of the true character of their situation. The islets were American; the light−house was American; and the haven in which the Swash lay was the very spot in the contemplation of government for an outer man−of−war harbour, where fleets might rendezvous in the future wars of that portion of the world. He now saw plainly enough the signs of the existence of a vast reef, a short distance to the southward of the vessel, that formed a species of sea−wall, or mole, to protect the port against the waves of the gulf in that direction. This reef he knew to be miles in width.

There was little time for speculation, Spike soon bringing the strange schooner directly alongside of the brig. The two vessels immediately became a scene of activity, one discharging, and the other receiving the flour as fast as it could be struck out of the hold of the Swash and lowered upon the deck of the schooner. Mulford, however, had practised a little artifice, as the stranger entered the haven, which drew down upon him an anathema or two from Spike, as soon as they were alone. The mate had set thebrig's ensign, and this compelled the stranger to be markedly rude, or to answer the compliment. Accordingly he had shown the ancient flag of Spain. For thus extorting a national symbol from the schooner, the mate was sharply rebuked at a suitable moment, though nothing could have been more forbearing than the deportment of his commander when they first met.

When Spike returned to his own vessel, he was accompanied by a dark−looking, well−dressed, and decidedly gentleman−like personage, whom he addressed indifferently, in his very imperfect Spanish, as Don Wan, (Don Juan, or John,) or Señor Montefalderon. By the latter appellation he even saw fit to introduce the very respectable−looking stranger to his mate. This stranger spoke English well, though with an accent.

"Don Wan has taken all the flour, Mr. Mulford, and intends shoving it over into Cuba, without troubling the custom−house, I believe; but that is not a matter to give us any concern, you know."

The wink, and the knowing look by which this speech was accompanied, seemed particularly disagreeable to Don Juan, who now paid his compliments to Rose, with no little surprise betrayed in his countenance, but with the ease and reserve of a gentleman. Mulford thought it strange that a smuggler of flour should be so polished a personage, though his duty did not admit of his bestowing much attention on the little trifling of the interview that succeeded.

For about an hour the work went steadily and rapidly on. During that time Mulford was several times on board the schooner, as, indeed, was Josh, Jack Tier, and others belonging to the Swash. The Spanish vessel was Baltimore, or clipper built, with a trunk−cabin, and had every appearance of sailing fast. Mulford was struck with her model, and, while on board of her, he passed both forward and aft to examine it. This was so natural in a seaman, that Spike, while he noted the proceeding, took it in good part. He even called out to his mate, from his own quarter−deck, to admire this or that point in the schooner's construction. As is customary with the vessels of southern nations, this stranger was full of men, but they continued at their work, some half dozen of brawny negroes amongthem, shouting their songs as they swayed at the falls, no one appearing to manifest jealousy or concern. At length Tier came near the mate, and said,

"Uncle Sam will not be pleased when he hears the reason that the keeper is not in his light−house."

"And what is that reason, Jack? If you know it, tell it to me."

"Go aft and look down the companion−way, maty, and see it for yourself."

Mulford did go aft, and he made an occasion to look down into the schooner's cabin, where he caught a glimpse of the persons of a man and a boy, whom he at once supposed had been taken from the light−house. This one fact of

itself doubled his distrust of the character of Spike's proceedings. There was no sufficient apparent reason why a mere smuggler should care about the presence of an individual more or less in a foreign port. Everything that had occurred, looked like pre−concert between the brig and the schooner; and the mate was just beginning to entertain the strongest distrust that their vessel was holding treasonable communication with the enemy, when an accident removed all doubt on the subject, from his own mind at least. Spike had, once or twice, given his opinion that the weather was treacherous, and urged the people of both crafts to extraordinary exertions, in order that the vessels might get clear of each other as soon as possible. This appeal had set various expedients in motion to second the more regular work of the purchases. Among other things, planks had been laid from one vessel to the other, and barrels were rolled along them with very little attention to the speed or the direction. Several had fallen on the schooner's deck with rude shocks, but no damage was done, until one, of which the hoops had not been properly secured, met with a fall, and burst nearly at Mulford's feet. It was at the precise moment when the mate was returning, from taking his glance into the cabin, toward the side of the Swash. A white cloud arose, and half a dozen of the schooner's people sprang for buckets, kids, or dishes, in order to secure enough of the contents of the broken barrel to furnish them with a meal. At first nothing was visible but the white cloud that succeeded the fall, and the scrambling sailors in its midst. No sooner, however, hadthe air got to be a little clear, than Mulford saw an object lying in centre of the wreck, that he at once recognised for a keg of the gunpowder! The captain of the schooner seized this keg, gave a knowing look at Mulford, and disappeared in the hold of his own vessel, carrying with him, what was out of all question, a most material part of the true cargo of the Swash.

At the moment when the flour−barrel burst, Spike was below, in close conference with his Spanish, or Mexican guest; and the wreck being so soon cleared away, it is probable that he never heard of the accident. As for the two crews, they laughed a little among themselves at the revelation which had been made, as well as at the manner; but to old sea−dogs like them, it was a matter of very little moment, whether the cargo was, in reality, flour or gunpowder. In a few minutes the affair seemed to be forgotten. In the course of another hour the Swash was light, having nothing in her but some pig−lead, which she used for ballast, while the schooner was loaded to her hatches, and full. Spike now sent a boat, with orders to drop a kedge about a hundred yards from the place where his own brig lay. The schooner warped up to this kedge, and dropped an anchor of her own, leaving a very short range of cable out, it being a flat calm. Ordinarily, the trades prevail at the Dry Tortugas, and all along the Florida Reef. Sometimes, indeed, this breeze sweeps across the whole width of the Gulf of Mexico, blowing home, as it is called reaching even to the coast of Texas. It is subject, however, to occasional interruptions everywhere, varying many points in its direction, and occasionally ceasing entirely. The latter was the condition of the weather about noon on this day, or when the schooner hauled off from the brig, and was secured at her own anchor.

"Mr. Mulford," said Spike, "I do not like the state of the atmosphere. D'ye see that fiery streak along the western horizon well, sir, as the sun gets nearer to that streak, there'll be trouble, or I'm no judge of weather."

"You surely do not imagine, Captain Spike, that the sun will be any nearer to that fiery streak, as you call it, when he is about to set, than he is at this moment?" answered the mate, smiling.

"I'm sure of one thing, young man, and that is, that old heads are better than young ones. What a man has onceseen, he may expect to see again, if the same leading signs offer. Man the boat, sir, and carry out the kedge, which is still in it, and lay it off here, about three p'ints on our larboard bow."

Mulford had a profound respect for Spike's seamanship, whatever he might think of his principles. The order was consequently obeyed. The mate was then directed to send down various articles out of the top, and to get the top−gallant and royal yards on deck. Spike carried his precautions so far, as to have the mainsail lowered, it ordinarily brailing at that season of the year, with a standing gaff. With this disposition completed, the captain seemed more at his ease, and went below to join Señor Montefalderon in a siesta. The Mexican, for such, in truth, was the national character of the owner of the schooner, had preceded him in this indulgence; and most of the people of the brig having laid themselves down to sleep under the heat of the hour, Mulford soon enjoyed another favourable opportunity for a private conference with Rose.

"Harry," commenced the latter, as soon as they were alone; "I have much to tell you. While you have been absent I have overheard a conversation between this Spanish gentleman and Spike, that shows the last is in treaty with the other for the sale of the brig. Spike extolled his vessel to the skies, while Don Wan, as he calls him, complains that the brig is old, and cannot last long; to which Spike answered 'to be sure she is old, Señor Montefalderon, but she will last as long as your war, and under a bold captain might be made to return her cost a hundred fold!' What war can he mean, and to what does such a discourse tend?"

"The war alludes to the war now existing between America and Mexico, and the money to be made is to be plundered at sea, from our own merchant−vessels. If Don Juan Montefalderon is really in treaty for the purchase of the brig, it is to convert her into a Mexican cruiser, either public or private."

"But this would be treason on the part of Spike!"

"Not more so than supplying the enemy with gunpowder, as he has just been doing. I have ascertained the reason he was so unwilling to be overhauled by the revenuesteamer, as well as the reason why the revenue steamer wished so earnestly to overhaul us. Each barrel of flour contains another of gunpowder, and that has been sold to this Señor Montefalderon, who is doubtless an officer of the Mexican government, and no smuggler."

"He has been at New York, this very summer, I know," continued Rose, "for he spoke of his visit, and made such other remarks, as leaves no doubt that Spike expected to find him here, on this very day of the month. He also paid Spike a large sum of money in doubloons, and took back the bag to his schooner, when he had done so, after showing the captain enough was left to pay for the brig could they only agree on the terms of their bargain."

"Ay, ay; it is all plain enough now, Spike has determined on a desperate push for fortune, and foreseeing it might not soon be in his power to return to New York in safety, he has included his designs on you and your fortune, in the plot."

"My fortune! the trifle I possess can scarcely be called a fortune, Harry!"

"It would be a fortune to Spike, Rose; and I shall be honest enough to own it would be a fortune to me. I say this frankly, for I do believe you think too well of me to suppose that I seek you for any other reason than the ardent love I bear your person and character; but a fact is not to be denied because it may lead certain persons to distrust our motives. Spike is poor, like myself; and the brig is not only getting to be very old, but she has been losing money for the last twelve months."

Mulford and Rose now conversed long and confidentially, on their situation and prospects. The mate neither magnified nor concealed the dangers of both; but freely pointed out the risk to himself, in being on board a vessel that was aiding and comforting the enemy. It was determined between there that both would quit the brig the moment an opportunity offered; and the mate even went so far as to propose an attempt to escape in one of the boats, although he might incur the hazards of a double accusation, those of mutiny and larceny, for making the experiment. Unfortunately, neither Rose, nor her aunt, nor Biddy, nor Jack Tier had seen the barrel of powder, and neither could testify as to the true character of Spike's connection with the schooner. It was manifestly necessary, therefore, independently of the risks that might be run by "bearding the lion in his den," to proceed with great intelligence and caution.

This dialogue between Harry and Rose, occurred just after the turn in the day, and lasted fully an hour. Each had been too much interested to observe the heavens, but, as they were on the point of separating, Rose pointed out to her companion the unusual and most menacing aspect of the sky in the western horizon. It appeared as if a fiery heat was glowing there, behind a curtain of black vapour; and what rendered it more remarkable, was the circumstance that an extraordinary degree of placidity prevailed in all other parts of the heavens. Mulford scarce knew what to make of it; his experience not going so far as to enable him to explain the novel and alarming

appearance. He stepped on a gun, and gazed around him for a moment. There lay the schooner, without a being visible on board of her, and there stood the light−house, gloomy in its desertion and solitude. The birds alone seemed to be alive and conscious of what was approaching. They were all on the wing, wheeling wildly in the air, and screaming discordantly, as belonged to their habits. The young man leaped off the gun, gave a loud call to Spike, at the companion−way, and sprang forward to call all hands.

One minute only was lost, when every seaman on board the Swash, from the captain to Jack Tier, was on deck. Mulford met Spike at the cabin door, and pointed toward the fiery column, that was booming down upon the anchorage, with a velocity and direction that would now admit of no misinterpretation. For one instant that sturdy old seaman stood aghast; gazing at the enemy as one conscious of his impotency might have been supposed to quail before an assault that he foresaw must prove irresistible. Then his native spirit, and most of all the effects of training, began to show themselves in him, and he became at once, not only the man again, but the resolute, practised, and ready commander.

"Come aft to the spring, men " he shouted "clap on the spring, Mr. Mulford, and bring the brig head to wind."

This order was obeyed as seamen best obey, in cases ofsudden and extreme emergency; or with intelligence, aptitude and power. The brig had swung nearly round, in the desired direction, when the tornado struck her. It will be difficult, we do not know but it is impossible, to give a clear and accurate account of what followed. As most of our readers have doubtless felt how great is the power of the wind, whiffling and pressing different ways, in sudden and passing gusts, they have only to imagine this power increased many, many fold, and the baffling currents made furious, as it might be, by meeting with resistance, to form some notion of the appalling strength and frightful inconstancy with which it blew for about a minute.

Notwithstanding the circumstance of Spike's precaution had greatly lessened the danger, every man on the deck of the Swash believed the brig was gone when the gust struck her. Over she went, in fact, until the water came pouring in above her half−ports, like so many little cascades, and spouting up through her scupper−holes, resembling the blowing of young whales. It was the whiffling energy of the tornado that alone saved her. As if disappointed in not destroying its intended victim at one swoop, the tornado "let up" in its pressure, like a dexterous wrestler, making a fresh and desperate effort to overturn the vessel, by a slight variation in its course. That change saved the Swash. She righted, and even rolled in the other direction, or what might be called to windward, with her decks full of water. For a minute longer these baffling, changing gusts continued, each causing the brig to bow like a reed to their power, one lifting as another pressed her down, and then the weight, or the more dangerous part of the tornado was passed, though it continued to blow heavily, always in whiffling blasts, several minutes longer.

During the weight of the gust, no one had leisure, or indeed inclination to look to aught beyond its effect on the brig. Had one been otherwise disposed, the attempt would have been useless, for the wind had filled the air with spray, and near the islets even with sand. The lurid but fiery tinge, too, interposed a veil that no human eye could penetrate. As the tornado passed onward, however, and the winds lulled, the air again became clear, and in five minutes after the moment when the Swash lay nearly on her side, withher lower yard−arm actually within a few feet of the water, all was still and placid around her, as one is accustomed to see the ocean in a calm, of a summer's afternoon. Then it was that those who had been in such extreme jeopardy could breathe freely and look about them. On board the Swash all was well not a rope−yarn had parted, or an eyebolt drawn. The timely precautions of Spike had saved his brig, and great was his joy thereat.

In the midst of the infernal din of the tornado, screams had ascended from the cabin, and the instant he could quit the deck with propriety, Mulford sprang below, in order to ascertain their cause. He apprehended that some of the females had been driven to leeward when the brig went over, and that part of the luggage or furniture had fallen on them. In the main cabin, the mate found Señor Montefalderon just quitting his berth, composed, gentleman−like, and collected. Josh was braced in a corner nearly grey with fear, while Jack Tier still lay on the

cabin floor, at the last point to which he had rolled. One word sufficed to let Don Juan know that the gust had passed, and the brig was safe, when Mulford tapped at the deor of the inner cabin. Rose appeared, pale, but calm and unhurt.

"Is any one injured?" asked the young man, his mind relieved at once, as soon as he saw that she who most occupied his thoughts was safe; "we heard screams from this cabin."

"My aunt and Biddy have been frightened," answered Rose, "but neither has been hurt. Oh, Harry, what terrible thing has happened to us? I heard the roaring of "

" 'T was a tornado," interrupted Mulford eagerly, "but 't is over. 'T was one of those sudden and tremendous gusts that sometimes occur within the tropics, in which the danger is usually in the first shock. If no one is injured in this cabin, no one is injured at all."

"Oh, Mr. Mulford dear Mr. Mulford!" exclaimed the relict, from the corner into which she had been followed and jammed by Biddy, "Oh, Mr. Mulford, are we foundered or not?"

"Heaven be praised, not, my dear ma'am, though we came nearer to it than I ever was before."

"Are we cap−asided?"

"Nor that, Mrs. Budd; the brig is as upright as a church."

"Upright!" repeated Biddy, in her customary accent, "is it as a church? Sure, then, Mr. Mate, 't is a Presbyterian church that you mane, and that is always totterin'."

"Catholic, or Dutch no church in York is more completely up and down than the brig at this moment."

"Get off of me get off of me, Biddy, and let me rise," said the widow, with dignity. "The danger is over I see, and, as we return our thanks for it, we have the consolation of knowing that we have done our duty. It is incumbent on all, at such moments, to be at their posts, and to set examples of decision and prudence."

As Mulford saw all was well in the cabin, he hastened on deck, followed by Señor Montefalderon. Just as they emerged from the companion−way, Spike was hailing the forecastle.

"Forecastle, there," he cried, standing on the trunk himself as he did so, and moving from side to side, as if to catch a glimpse of some object ahead.

"Sir," came back from an old salt, who was coiling up rigging in that seat of seamanship.

"Where−away is the schooner? She ought to be dead ahead of us, as we tend now but blast me if I can see as much as her mast−heads."

At this suggestion, a dozen men sprang upon guns or other objects, to look for the vessel in question. The old salt forward, however, had much the best chance, for he stepped on the heel of the bowsprit, and walked as far out as the knight−heads, to command the whole view ahead of the brig. There he stood half a minute, looking first on one side of the head−gear, then the other, when he gave his trousers a hitch, put a fresh quid in his mouth, and called out in a voice almost as hoarse as the tempest, that had just gone by,

"The schooner has gone down at her anchor, sir. There's her buoy watching still, as if nothing had happened; but as for the craft itself, there's not so much as a bloody yard−arm, or mast−head of her to be seen!"

This news produced a sensation in the brig at once, as may be supposed. Even Señor Montefalderon, a quiet, gentleman−like person, altogether superior in deportment to the bustle and fuss that usually marks the manners of persons in trade, was disturbed; for to him the blow was heavy indeed. Whether he were acting for himself, or was an agent of the Mexican government, the loss was much the same.

"Tom is right enough," put in Spike, rather coolly for the circumstances "that there schooner of yourn has foundered, Don Wan, as any one can see. She must have capsized and filled, for I obsarved they had left the hatches off, meaning, no doubt, to make an end of the storage as soon as they had done sleeping."

"And what has become of all her men, Don Esteban?" for so the Mexican politely called his companion. "Have all my poor countrymen perished in this disaster?"

"I fear they have, Don Wan; for I see no head, as of any one swimming. The vessel lay so near that island next to it, that a poor swimmer would have no difficulty in reaching the place; but there is no living thing to be seen. But man the boat, men; we will go to the spot, Señor, and examine for ourselves."

There were two boats in the water, and along−side of the brig. One was the Swash's yawl, a small but convenient craft, while the other was much larger, fitted with a sail, and had all the appearance of having been built to withstand breezes and seas. Mulford felt perfectly satisfied, the moment he saw this boat, which had come into the haven in tow of the schooner, that it had been originally in the service of the light−house keeper. As there was a very general desire among those on the quarter−deck to go to the assistance of the schooner, Spike ordered both boats manned, jumping into the yawl himself, accompanied by Don Juan Montefalderon, and telling Mulford to follow with the larger craft, bringing with him as many of the females as might choose to accompany him. As Mrs. Budd thought it incumbent on her to be active in such a scene, all did go, including Biddy, though with great reluctance on the part of Rose.

With the buoy for a guide, Spike had no difficulty in finding the spot where the schooner lay. She had scarcely shifted her berth in the least, there having been no time for her even to swing to the gust, but she had probably capsizedat the first blast, filled, and gone down instantly. The water was nearly as clear as the calm, mild atmosphere of the tropics; and it was almost as easy to discern the vessel, and all her hamper, as if she lay on a beach. She had sunk as she filled, or on her side, and still continued in that position. As the water was little more than three fathoms deep, the upper side was submerged but a few inches, and her yard−arms would have been out of the water, but for the circumstance that the yards had canted under the pressure.

At first, no sign was seen of any of those who had been on board this ill−fated schooner when she went down. It was known that twenty−one souls were in her, including the man and the boy who had belonged to the light−house. As the boat moved slowly over this sad ruin, however, a horrible and startling spectacle came in view. Two bodies were seen, within a few feet of the surface of the water, one grasped in the arms of the other, in the gripe of despair. The man held in the grasp, was kept beneath the water solely by the death−lock of his companion, who was himself held where he floated, by the circumstance that one of his feet was entangled in a rope. The struggle could not have been long over, for the two bodies were slowly settling toward the bottom when first seen. It is probable that both these men had more than once risen to the surface in their dreadful struggle. Spike seized a boat−hook, and made an effort to catch the clothes of the nearest body, but ineffectually, both sinking to the sands beneath, lifeless, and without motion. There being no sharks in sight, Mulford volunteered to dive and fasten a line to one of these unfortunate men, whom Don Juan declared at once was the schooner's captain. Some little time was lost in procuring a lead−line from the brig, when the lead was dropped alongside of the drowned. Provided with another piece of the same sort of line, which had a small running bowline around that which was fastened to the lead, the mate made his plunge, and went down with great vigour of arm. It required resolution and steadiness to descend so far into salt water; but Harry succeeded, and rose with the bodies, which came up with the slightest impulse. All were immediately got into theboat, and away the latter went toward the light−house, which was nearer and more easy of access than the brig.

It is probable that one of these unfortunate men might have been revived under judicious treatment; but he was not fated to receive it. Spike, who knew nothing of such matters, undertook to direct everything, and, instead of having recourse to warmth and gentle treatment, he ordered the bodies to be rolled on a cask, suspended them by the heels, and resorted to a sort of practice that might have destroyed well men, instead of resuscitating those in whom the vital spark was dormant, if not actually extinct.

Two hours later, Rose, seated in her own cabin, unavoidably overheard the following dialogue, which passed in English, a language that Señor Montefalderon spoke perfectly well, as has been said.

"Well, Señor," said Spike, "I hope this little accident will not prevent our final trade. You will want the brig now, to take the schooner's place."

"And how am I to pay you for the brig, Señor Spike, even if I buy her?"

"I'll ventur' to guess there is plenty of money in Mexico. Though they do say the government is so backward about paying, I have always found you punctual, and am not afraid to put faith in you ag'in."

"But I have no longer any money to pay you half in hand, as I did for the powder, when last in New York."

"The bag was pretty well lined with doubloons when I saw it last, Señor."

"And do you know where that bag is; and where there is another that holds the same sum?"

Spike started, and he mused in silence some little time, ere he again spoke.

"I had forgotten," he at length answered. "The gold must have all gone down in the schooner, along with the powder!"

"And the poor men!"

"Why, as for the men, Señor, more may be had for the asking; but powder and doubloons will be hard to find, when most wanted. Then the men were poor men, accordin' to my idees of what an able seaman should be, or theynever would have let their schooner turn turtle with them as she did."

"We will talk of the money, Don Esteban, if you please," said the Mexican, with reserve.

"With all my heart, Don Wan nothing is more agreeable to me than money. How many of them doubloons shall fall to my share, if I raise the schooner and put you in possession of your craft again?"

"Can that be done, Señor?" demanded Don Juan earnestly.

"A seaman can do almost anything, in that way, Don Wan, if you will give him time and means. For one−half the doubloons I can find in the wrack, the job shall be done."

"You can have them," answered Don Juan, quietly, a good deal surprised that Spike should deem it necessary to offer him any part of the sum he might find. "As for the powder, I suppose that is lost to my country."

"Not at all, Don Wan. The flour is well packed around it, and I don't expect it would take any harm in a month. I shall not only turn over the flour to you, just as if nothing had happened, but I shall put four first−rate hands aboard your schooner, who will take her into port for you, with a good deal more sartainty than forty of the men you had. My mate is a prime navigator."

This concluded the bargain, every word of which was heard by Rose, and every word of which she did not fail to communicate to Mulford, the moment there was an opportunity. The young man heard it with great interest, telling Rose that he should do all he could to assist in raising the schooner, in the hope that something might turn up to enable him to escape in her, taking off Rose and her aunt. As for his carrying her into a Mexican port, let them trust him for that! Agreeably to the arrangement, orders were given that afternoon to commence the necessary preparations for the work, and considerable progress was made in them by the time the Swash's people were ordered to knock off work for the night.

After the sun had set, the reaction in the currents again commenced, and it blew for a few hours heavily, during the night. Toward morning, however, it moderated, and whenthe sun re−appeared it scarcely ever diffused its rays over a more peaceful or quiet day. Spike caused all hands to be called, and immediately set about the important business he had before him.

In order that the vessel might be as free as possible, Jack Tier was directed to skull the females ashore, in the brig's yawl; Señor Montefalderon, a man of polished manners, as we maintain is very apt to be the case with Mexican gentlemen, whatever may be the opinion of this good republic on the subject just at this moment, asked permission to be of the party. Mulford found an opportunity to beg Rose, if they landed at the light, to reconnoitre the place well, with a view to ascertain what facilities it could afford in an attempt to escape. They did land at the light, and glad enough were Mrs. Budd, Rose and Biddy to place their feet on terrá firmâ after so long a confinement to the narrow limits of a vessel.

"Well," said Jack Tier, as they walked up to the spot where the buildings stood, "this is a rum place for a light'us, Miss Rose, and I don't wonder the keeper and his messmates has cleared out."

"I am very sorry to say," observed Señor Montefalderon, whose countenance expressed the concern he really felt, "that the keeper and his only companion, a boy, were on board the schooner, and have perished in her, in common with so many of my poor countrymen. There are the graves of two whom we buried here last evening, after vain efforts to restore them to life!"

"What a dreadful catastrophe it has been, Señor," said Rose, whose sweet countenance eloquently expressed the horror and regret she so naturally felt "Twenty fellow−beings hurried into eternity without even an instant for prayer!"

"You feel for them, Señorita it is natural you should, and it is natural that I, their countryman and leader, should feel for them, also. I do not know what God has in reserve for my unfortunate country! We may have cruel and unscrupulous men among us, Señorita, but we have thousands who are just, and brave, and honourable."

"So Mr. Mulford tells me, Señor; and he has been much in your ports, on the west coast."

"I like that young man, and wonder not a little at his and your situation in this brig " rejoined the Mexican, dropping his voice so as not to be heard by their companions, as they walked a little ahead of Mrs. Budd and Biddy. "The Señor Spike is scarcely worthy to be his commander or your guardian."

"Yet you find him worthy of your intercourse and trust, Don Juan?"

The Mexican shrugged his shoulders, and smiled equivocally; still, in a melancholy manner. It would seem he did not deem it wise to push this branch of the subject further, since he turned to another.

"I like the Señor Mulford," he resumed, "for his general deportment and principles, so far as I can judge of him on so short an acquaintance."

"Excuse me, Señor," interrupted Rose, hurriedly "but you never saw him until you met him here."

"Never I understand you, Señorita, and can do full justice to the young man's character. I am willing to think he did not know the errand of his vessel, or I should not have seen him now. But what I most like him for, is this: Last night, during the gale, he and I walked the deck together, for an hour. We talked of Mexico, and of this war, so unfortunate for my country already, and which may become still more so, when he uttered this noble sentiment 'My country is more powerful than yours, Señor Montefalderon,' he said, 'and in this it has been more favoured by God. You have suffered from ambitious rulers, and from military rule, while we have been advancing under the arts of peace, favoured by a most beneficent Providence. As for this war, I know but little about it, though I dare say the Mexican government may have been wrong in some things that it might have controlled and some that it might not but let right be where it will, I am sorry to see a nation that has taken so firm a stand in favour of popular government, pressed upon so hard by another that is supposed to be the great support of such principles. America and Mexico are neighbours, and ought to be friends; and while I do not, cannot blame my own country for pursuing the war with vigour, nothing would please me more than to hear peace proclaimed.' "

"That is just like Harry Mulford," said Rose, thoughtfully, as soon as her companion ceased to speak. "I do wish, Señor, that there could be no use for this powder, that is now buried in the sea."

Don Juan Montefalderon smiled, and seemed a little surprised that the fair young thing at his side should have known of the treacherous contents of the flour−barrels. No doubt he found it inexplicable, that persons like Rose and Mulford should, seemingly, be united with one like Spike; but he was too well bred, and, indeed, too effectually mystified, to push the subject further than might be discreet.

By this time they were near the entrance of the light−house, into which the whole party entered, in a sort of mute awe at its silence and solitude. At Señor Montefalderon's invitation, they ascended to the lantern, whence they could command a wide and fair view of the surrounding waters. The reef was much more apparent from that elevation than from below; and Rose could see that numbers of its rocks were bare, while on other parts of it there was the appearance of many feet of water. Rose gazed at it with longing eyes, for, from a few remarks that had fallen from Mulford, she suspected he had hopes of escaping among its channels and coral.

As they descended and walked through the buildings, Rose also took good heed of the supplies the place afforded. There were flour, and beef, and pork, and many other of the common articles of food, as well as water in a cistern, that caught it as it flowed from the roof of the dwelling. Water was also to be found in casks nothing like a spring or a well existing among those islets. All these things Rose noted, putting them aside in her memory for ready reference hereafter.

In the mean time the mariners were not idle. Spike moved his brig, and moored her, head and stern, alongside of the wreck, before the people got their breakfasts. As soon as that meal was ended, both captain and mate set about their duty in earnest. Mulford carried out an anchor on the off−side of the Swash, and dropped it at a distance of about eighty fathoms from the vessel's beam. Purchases were brought from both mast−heads of the brig to the chain of this anchor, and were hove upon until the vessel wasgiven a heel of more than a streak, and the cable was tolerably taut. Other purchases were got up opposite, and overhauled down, in readiness to take hold of the schooner's masts. The anchor of the schooner was weighed by its buoy−rope, and the chain, after being rove through the upper or opposite hawse−hole, brought in on board the Swash. Another chain was dropped astern, in such a way, that when the schooner came upright, it would be sure to pass beneath her keel, some six or eight feet from the rudder. Slings were then sunk over the mast−heads, and the purchases were hooked on. Hours were consumed in these preliminary labours, and the people went to dinner as soon as they were completed.

When the men had dined, Spike brought one of his purchases to the windlass, and the other to the capstan, though not until each was bowsed taut by hand; a few minutes having brought the strain so far on everything, as to enable a seaman, like Spike, to form some judgment of the likelihood that his preventers and purchases would stand.

Some changes were found necessary to equalize the strain, but, on the whole, the captain was satisfied with his work, and the crew were soon ordered to "heave−away; the windlass best."

In the course of half an hour the hull of the vessel, which lay on its bilge, began to turn on its keel, and the heads of the spars to rise above the water. This was the easiest part of the process, all that was required of the purchases being to turn over a mass which rested on the sands of the bay. Aided by the long levers afforded by the spars, the work advanced so rapidly, that, in just one hour's time after his people had begun to heave, Spike had the pleasure to see the schooner standing upright, alongside of his own brig, though still sunk to the bottom. The wreck was secured in this position, by means of guys and preventers, in order that it might not again cant, when the order was issued to hook on the slings that were to raise it to the surface. These slings were the chains of the schooner, one of which went under her keel, while for the other the captain trusted to the strength of the two hawse−holes, having passed the cable out of one and in at the other, in a way to serve his purposes, as has just been stated.

When all was ready, Spike mustered his crew, and made a speech. He told the men that he was about a job that was out of the usual line of their duty, and that he knew they had a right to expect extra pay for such extra work. The schooner contained money, and his object was to get at it. If he succeeded, their reward would be a doubloon a man, which would be earning more than a month's wages by twenty−four hours' work. This was enough. The men wanted to hear no more; but they cheered their commander, and set about their task in the happiest disposition possible.

The reader will understand that the object to be first achieved, was to raise a vessel, with a hold filled with flour and gunpowder, from off the bottom of the bay to its surface. As she stood, the deck of this vessel was about six feet under water, and every one will understand that her weight, so long as it was submerged in a fluid as dense as that of the sea, would be much more manageable than if suspended in air. The barrels, for instance, were not much heavier than the water they displaced, and the wood work of the vessel itself, was, on the whole, positively lighter than the element in which it had sunk. As for the water in the hold, that was of the same weight as the water on the outside of tne craft, and there had not been much to carry the schooner down, beside her iron, the spars that were out of water, and her ballast. This last, some ten or twelve tons in weight, was in fact the principal difficulty, and alone induced Spike to have any doubts about his eventual success. There was no foreseeing the result until he had made a trial, however; and the order was again given to "heave away."

To the infinite satisfaction of the Swash's crew, the weight was found quite manageable, so long as the hull remained beneath the water. Mulford, with three or four assistants, was kept on board the schooner lightening her, by getting the other anchor off her bows, and throwing the different objects overboard, or on the decks of the brig. By the time the bulwarks reached the surface, as much was gained in this way, as was lost by having so much of the lighter woodwork rise above the water. As a matter of course, however, the weight increased as the vessel rose, and more especially as the lower portion of the spars, the bowsprit, boom,from being buoyant assistants, became so much dead weight to be lifted.

Spike kept a watchful eye on his spars, and the extra supports he had given them. He was moving, the whole time, from point to point, feeling shrouds and back−stays, and preventers, in order to ascertain the degree of strain on each, or examining how the purchases stood. As for the crew, they cheered at their toil, incessantly, passing from capstan bars to the handspikes, and vice versâ. They, too, felt that their task was increasing in resistance as it advanced, and now found it more difficult to gain an inch, than it had been at first to gain a foot. They seemed, indeed, to be heaving their own vessel out, instead of heaving the other craft up, and it was not long before they had the Swash heeling over toward the wreck several streaks. The strain, moreover, on everything, became not only severe, but somewhat menacing. Every shroud, back−stay, and preventer was as taut as a bar of iron, and the chain−cable that led to the anchor planted off abeam, was as straight as if the brig were riding by it in a gale of wind. One or two ominous surges aloft, too, had been heard, and, though no more than straps and slings settling into their places under hard strains, they served to remind the crew that danger might come from that quarter. Such was the state of things, when Spike called out to "heave and pall," that he might take a look at the condition

of the wreck.

Although a great deal remained to be done, in order to get the schooner to float, a great deal had already been done. Her precise condition was as follows: Having no cabin windows, the water had entered her, when she capsized, by the only four apertures her construction possessed. These were the companion−way, or cabin−doors; the sky−light; the main−hatch, or the large inlet amid−ships, by which cargo went up and down; and the booby−hatch, which was the counterpart of the companion−way, forward; being intended to admit of ingress to the forecastle, the apartment of the crew. Each of these hatch−ways, or orifices, had the usual defences of "coamings," strong frame−work around their margins. These coamings rose six or eight inches above the deck, and answered the double purpose of strengthening the vessel, in a part, that without them would be weakerhan common, and of preventing any water that might be washing about the decks from running below. As soon, therefore, as these three apertures, or their coamings, could be raised above the level of the water of the basin, all danger of the vessel's receiving any further tribute of that sort from the ocean would be over. It was to this end, consequently, that Spike's efforts had been latterly directed, though they had only in part succeeded. The schooner possessed a good deal of sheer, as it is termed; or, her two extremities rose nearly a foot above her centre, when on an even keel. This had brought her extremities first to the surface, and it was the additional weight which had consequently been brought into the air that had so much increased the strain, and induced Spike to pause. The deck forward, as far aft as the foremast, and aft as far forward as the centre of the trunk, or to the sky−light, was above the water, or at least awash; while all the rest of it was covered. In the vicinity of the main−hatch there were several inches of water; enough indeed to leave the upper edge of the coamings submerged by about an inch. To raise the keel that inch by means of the purchases, Spike well knew would cost him more labour, and would incur more risk than all that had been done previously, and he paused before he would attempt it.

The men were now called from the brig and ordered to come on board the schooner. Spike ascertained by actual measurement how much was wanted to bring the coamings of the main−hatch above the water, until which, he knew, pumping and bailing would be useless. He found it was quite an inch, and was at a great loss to know how that inch should be obtained. Mulford advised another trial with the handspikes and bars, but to this Spike would not consent. He believed that the masts of the brig had already as much pressure on them as they would bear. The mate next proposed getting the main boom off the vessel, and to lighten the craft by cutting away her bowsprit and masts. The captain was well enough disposed to do this, but he doubted whether it would meet with the approbation of "Don Wan," who was still ashore with Rose and her aunt, and who probably looked forward to recovering his gunpowderby means of those very spars. At length the carpenter hit upon a plan that was adopted.

This plan was very simple, though it had its own ingenuity. It will be remembered that water could now only enter the vessel's hold at the main−hatch, all the other hatchways having their coamings above the element. The carpenter proposed, therefore, that the main−hatches, which had been off when the tornado occurred, but which had been found on deck when the vessel righted, should now be put on, oakum being first laid along in their rabbetings, and that the cracks should be stuffed with additional oakum, to exclude as much water as possible. He thought that two or three men, by using caulking irons for ten minutes, would make the hatch−way so tight that very little water would penetrate. While this was doing, he himself would bore as many holes forward and aft as he could, with a two inch auger, out of which the water then in the vessel would be certain to run. Spike was delighted with this project, and gave the necessary orders on the spot.

This much must be said of the crew of the Molly Swash whatever they did in their own profession, they did intelligently and well. On the present occasion they maintained their claim to this character, and were both active and expert. The hatches were soon on, and, in an imperfect manner, caulked. While this was doing, the carpenter got into a boat, and going under the schooner's bows, where a whole plank was out of water, he chose a spot between two of the timbers, and bored a hole as near the surface of the water as he dared to do. Not satisfied with one hole, however, he bored many choosing both sides of the vessel to make them, and putting some aft as well as forward. In a word, in the course of twenty minutes the schooner was tapped in at least a dozen places, and jets of water, two inches in diameter, were spouting from her on each bow, and under each quarter.

Spike and Mulford noted the effect. Some water, doubtless, still worked itself into the vessel about the main−hatch, but that more flowed from her by means of the outlets just named, was quite apparent. After close watching at the outlets for some time, Spike was convinced that the schooner was slowly rising, the intense strain that still came from the brig producing that effect as the vessel gradually became lighter. By the end of half an hour, there could be no longer any doubt, the holes, which had been bored within an inch of the water, being now fully two inches above it. The auger was applied anew, still nearer to the surface of the sea, and as fresh outlets were made, those that began to manifest a dulness in their streams were carefully plugged.

Spike now thought it was time to take a look at the state of things on deck. Here, to his joy, he ascertained that the coamings had actually risen a little above the water. The reader is not to suppose by this rising of the vessel, that she had become sufficiently buoyant, in consequence of the water that had run out of her, to float of herself. This was far from being the case; but the constant upward pressure from the brig, which, on mechanical principles, tended constantly to bring that craft upright, had the effect to lift the schooner as the latter was gradually relieved from the weight that pressed her toward the bottom.

The hatches were next removed, when it was found that the water in the schooner's hold had so far lowered, as to leave a vacant space of quite a foot between the lowest part of the deck and its surface. Toward the two extremities of the vessel this space necessarily was much increased, in consequence of the sheer. Men were now sent into the hatchway with orders to hook on to the flour−barrels a whip having been rigged in readiness to hoist them on deck. At the same time gangs were sent to the pumps, though Spike still depended for getting rid of the water somewhat on the auger the carpenter continuing to bore and plug his holes as new opportunities offered, and the old outlets became useless. It was true this expedient would soon cease, for the water having found its level in the vessel's hold, was very nearly on a level also with that on the outside. Bailing also was commenced, both forward and aft.

Spike's next material advantage was obtained by means of the cargo. By the time the sun had set, fully two hundred barrels had been rolled into the hatchway, and passed on deck, whence about half of them were sent in the light−house boat to the nearest islet, and the remainder were transferred to the deck of the brig. These last were placed on the off side of the Swash, and aided in bringing hernearer upright. A great deal was gained in getting rid of these barrels. The water in the schooner lowered just as much as the space they had occupied,−and the vessel was relieved at once of twenty tons in weight.

Just after the sun had set, Señor Don Juan Montefalderon and his party returned on board. They had staid on the island to the last moment, at Rose's request, for she had taken as close an observation of everything as possible, in order to ascertain if any means of concealment existed, in the event of her aunt, Biddy, and herself quitting the brig. The islets were all too naked and too small, however; and she was compelled to return to the Swash, without any hopes derived from this quarter.

Spike had just directed the people to get their suppers as the Mexican came on board. Together they descended to the schooner's deck, where they had a long but secret conference. Señor Montefalderon was a calm, quiet and reasonable man, and while he felt as one would be apt to feel who had recently seen so many associates swept suddenly out of existence, the late catastrophe did not in the least unman him. It is too much the habit of the American people to receive their impressions from newspapers, which throw off their articles unreflectingly, and often ignorantly, as crones in petticoats utter their gossip. In a word, the opinions thus obtained are very much on a level, in value, with the thoughts of those who are said to think aloud, and who give utterance to all the crudities and trivial rumours that may happen to reach their ears. In this manner, we apprehend, very false notions of our neighbours of Mexico have become circulated among us. That nation is a mixed race, and has necessarily the various characteristics of such an origin, and it is unfortunately little influenced by the diffusion of intelligence which certainly exists here. Although an enemy, it ought to be acknowledged, however, that even Mexico has her redeeming points. Anglo−Saxons as we are, we have no desire unnecessarily to illustrate that very marked feature in the Anglo−Saxon character, which prompts the mother stock to calumniate all who oppose it, but would rather

adopt some of that chivalrous courtesy of which so much that is lofty and commendable is to be found among the descendants of Old Spain.

The Señor Montefalderon was earnestly engaged in what he conceived to be the cause of his country. It was scarcely possible to bring together two men impelled by motives more distinct than Spike and this gentleman. The first was acting under impulses of the lowest and most grovelling nature; while the last was influenced by motives of the highest. However much Mexico may, and has, weakened her cause by her own punic faith, instability, military oppression, and political revolutions, giving to the Texans in particular ample justification for their revolt, it was not probable that Don Juan Montefalderon saw the force of all the arguments that a casuist of ordinary ingenuity could certainly adduce against his country; for it is a most unusual thing to find a man anywhere, who is willing to admit that the positions of an opponent are good. He saw in the events of the day, a province wrested from his nation; and, in his reasoning on the subject, entirely overlooking the numerous occasions on which his own fluctuating government had given sufficient justification, not to say motives, to their powerful neighbours to take the law into their own hands, and redress themselves, he fancied all that has occurred was previously planned; instead of regarding it, as it truly is, as merely the result of political events that no man could have foreseen, that no man had originally imagined, or that any man could control.

Don Juan understood Spike completely, and quite justly appreciated not only his character, but his capabilities. Their acquaintance was not of a day, though it had ever been marked by that singular combination of caution and reliance that is apt to characterize the intercourse between the knave and the honest man, when circumstances compel not only communication, but, to a certain extent, confidence. They now paced the deck of the schooner, side by side, for fully an hour, during which time the price of the vessel, the means, and the mode of payment and transfer, were fully settled between them.

"But what will you do with your passengers, Don Esteban?" asked the Mexican pleasantly, when the more material points were adjusted. "I feel a great interest in the young lady in particular, who is a charming señorita, and who tells me that her aunt brought her this voyage on account of her health. She looks much too blooming to beout of health, and if she were, this is a singular voyage for an invalid to make!"

"You don't understand human natur' yet, altogether, I see, Don Wan," answered Spike, chuckling and winking. "As you and I are not only good friends, but what a body may call old friends, I'll let you into a secret in this affair, well knowing that you'll not betray it. It's quite true that the old woman thinks her niece is a pulmonary, as they call it, and that this v'y'ge is recommended for her, but the gal is as healthy as she's handsom'."

"Her constitution, then, must be very excellent, for it is seldom I have seen so charming a young woman. But if the aunt is misled in this matter, how has it been with the niece?"

Spike did not answer in words, but he leered upon his companion, and he winked.

"You mean to be understood that you are in intelligence with each other, I suppose, Don Esteban," returned the Señor Montefalderon, who did not like the captain's manner, and was willing to drop the discourse.

Spike then informed his companion, in confidence, that he and Rose were affianced, though without the aunt's knowledge, that he intended to marry the niece the moment he reached a Mexican port with the brig, and that it was their joint intention to settle in the country. He added that the affair required management, as his intended had property, and expected more, and he begged Don Juan to aid him, as things drew near to a crisis. The Mexican evaded an answer, and the discourse dropped.

The moon was now shining, and would continue to throw its pale light over the scene for two or three hours longer. Spike profited by the circumstance to continue the work of lightening the schooner. One of the first things done next was to get up the dead, and to remove them to the boat. This melancholy office occupied an hour, the

bodies being landed on the islet, near the powder, and there interred in the sands. Don Juan Montefalderon attended on this occasion, and repeated some prayers over the graves, as he had done in the morning, in the cases of the two who had been buried near the light−house.

While this melancholy duty was in the course of performance, that of pumping and bailing was continued, under the immediate personal superintendence of Mulford. It would not be easy to define, with perfect clearness, the conflicting feelings by which the mate of the Swash was now impelled. He had no longer any doubt on the subject of Spike's treason, and had it not been for Rose, he would not have hesitated a moment about making off in the light−house boat for Key West, in order to report all that had passed to the authorities. But not only Rose was there, and to be cared for, but what was far more difficult to get along with, her aunt was with her. It is true, Mrs. Budd was no longer Spike's dupe; but under any circumstances she was a difficult subject to manage, and most especially so in all matters that related to the sea. Then the young man submitted, more or less, to the strange influence which a fine craft almost invariably obtains over those that belong to her. He did not like the idea of deserting the Swash, at the very moment he would not have hesitated about punishing her owner for his many misdeeds. In a word, Harry was too much of a tar not to feel a deep reluctance to turn against his cruise, or his voyage, however much either might be condemned by his judgment, or even by his principles.

It was quite nine o'clock when the Señor Montefalderon and Spike returned from burying the dead. No sooner did the last put his foot on the deck of his own vessel, than he felt the fall of one of the purchases which had been employed in raising the schooner. It was so far slack as to satisfy him that the latter now floated by her own buoyancy, though it might be well to let all stand until morning, for the purposes of security. Thus apprised of the condition of the two vessels, he gave the welcome order to "knock off for the night."

CHAPTER VI.

At the piping of all hands,

When the judgment signal's spread

When the islands and the land,

And the seas give up their dead,

And the south and the north shall come;

When the sinner is dismayed,

And the just man is afraid,

Then heaven be thy aid,

Poor Tom.

Brainard.

The people had now a cessation from their toil. Of all the labour known to sea−faring men, that of pumping is usually thought to be the most severe. Those who work at it have to be relieved every minute, and it is only by having gangs to succeed each other, that the duty can be done at all with anything like steadiness. In the present instance, it is true, that the people of the Swash were sustained by the love of gold, but glad enough were they when Mulford called out to them to "knock off, and turn in for the night." It was high time this summons should

be made, for not only were the people excessively wearied, but the customary hours of labour were so far spent, that the light of the moon had some time before begun to blend with the little left by the parting sun. Glad enough were all hands to quit the toil; and two minutes were scarcely elapsed ere most of the crew had thrown themselves down, and were buried in deep sleep. Even Spike and Mulford took the rest they needed, the cook alone being left to look out for the changes in the weather. In a word, everybody but this idler was exhausted with pumping and bailing, and even gold had lost its power to charm, until nature was recruited by rest.

The excitement produced by the scenes through which they had so lately passed, caused the females to sleep soundly, too. The death−like stillness which pervaded thevessel contributed to their rest, and Rose never woke, from the first few minutes after her head was on her pillow, until near four in the morning. The deep quiet seemed ominous to one who had so lately witnessed the calm which precedes the tornado, and she arose. In that low latitude and warm season, few clothes were necessary, and our heroine was on deck in a very few minutes. Here she found the same grave−like sleep pervading everything. There was not a breath of air, and the ocean seemed to be in one of its profoundest slumbers. The hard−breathing of Spike could be heard through the open windows of his state−room, and this was positively the only sound that was audible. The common men, who lay scattered about the decks, more especially from the mainmast forward, seemed to be so many logs, and from Mulford no breathing was heard.

The morning was neither very dark nor very light, it being easy to distinguish objects that were near, while those at a distance were necessarily lost in obscurity. Availing herself of the circumstance, Rose went as far as the gangway, to ascertain if the cook were at his post. She saw him lying near his galley, in as profound a sleep as any of the crew. This she felt to be wrong, and she felt alarmed, though she knew not why. Perhaps it was the consciousness of being the only person up and awake at that hour of deepest night, in a vessel so situated as the Swash, and in a climate in which hurricanes seem to be the natural offspring of the air. Some one must be aroused, and her tastes, feelings, and judgment, all pointed to Harry Mulford as the person she ought to awaken. He slept habitually in his clothes the lightest summer dress of the tropics; and the window of his little state−room was always open for air. Moving lightly to the place, Rose laid her own little, soft hand on the arm of the young man, when the latter was on his feet in an instant. A single moment only was necessary to regain his consciousness, when Mulford left the state−room and joined Rose on the quarter−deck.

"Why am I called, Rose," the young man asked, attempering his voice to the calm that reigned around him; "and why am I called by you?"

Rose explained the state of the brig, and the feeling which induced her to awaken him. With woman's gentleness shenow expressed her regret for having robbed Harry of his rest; had she reflected a moment, she might have kept watch herself, and allowed him to obtain the sleep he must surely so much require.

But Mulford laughed at this; protested he had never been awakened at a more favourable moment, and would have sworn, had it been proper, that a minute's further sleep would have been too much for him. After these first explanations, Mulford walked round the decks, carefully felt how much strain there was on the purchases, and rejoined Rose to report that all was right, and that he did not consider it necessary to call even the cook. The black was an idler in no sense but that of keeping watch, and he had toiled the past day as much as any of the men, though it was not exactly at the pumps.

A long and semi−confidential conversation now occurred between Harry and Rose. They talked of Spike, the brig, and her cargo, and of the delusion of the captain's widow. It was scarcely possible that powder should be so much wanted at the Havanna as to render smuggling, at so much cost, a profitable adventure; and Mulford admitted his convictions that the pretended flour was originally intended for Mexico. Rose related the tenor of the conversation she had overheard between the two parties, Don Juan and Don Esteban, and the mate no longer doubted that it was Spike's intention to sell the brig to the enemy. She also alluded to what had passed between herself and the stranger.

Mulford took this occasion to introduce the subject of Jack Tier's intimacy and favour with Rose. He even professed to feel some jealousy on account of it, little as there might be to alarm most men in the rivalry of such a competitor. Rose laughed, as girls will laugh when there is question of their power over the other sex, and she fairly shook her rich tresses as she declared her determination to continue to smile on Jack to the close of the voyage. Then, as if she had said more than she intended, she added with woman's generosity and tenderness,

"After all, Harry, you know how much I promised to you even before we sailed, and how much more since, and have no just cause to dread even Jack. There is another reason, however, that ought to set your mind entirely at case on his account. Jack is married, and has a partner living at this very moment, as he does not scruple to avow himself."

A hissing noise, a bright light, and a slight explosion, interrupted the half−laughing girl, and Mulford, turning on his heel, quick as thought, saw that a rocket had shot into the air, from a point close under the bows of the brig. He was still in the act of moving toward the forecastle, when, at the distance of several leagues, he saw the explosion of another rocket high in the air. He knew enough of the practices of vessels of war, to feel certain that these were a signal and its answer from some one in the service of government. Not at all sorry to have the career of the Swash arrested, before she could pass into hostile hands, or before evil could befall Rose, Mulford reached the forecastle just in time to answer the inquiry that was immediately put to him, in the way of a hail. A gig, pulling four oars only, with two officers in its stern−sheets, was fairly under the vessel's bows, and the mate could almost distinguish the countenance of the officer who questioned him, the instant he showed his head and shoulders above the bulwarks.

"What vessels are these?" demanded the stranger, speaking in the authoritative manner of one who acted for the state, but not speaking much above the usual conversational tone.

"American and Spanish," was the answer. "This brig is American the schooner alongside is a Spaniard, that turned turtle in a tornado, about six−and−thirty hours since, and on which we have been hard at work trying to raise her, since the gale which succeeded the tornado has blown its pipe out."

"Ay, ay, that's the story, is it? I did not know what to make of you, lying cheek by jowl, in this fashion. Was anybody lost on board the schooner?"

"All hands, including every soul aft and forward, the supercargo excepted, who happened to be aboard here. We buried seventeen bodies this afternoon on the smallest of the Keys that you see near at hand, and two this morning alongside of the light. But what boat is that, and where are you from, and whom are you signalling?"

"The boat is a gig," answered the stranger, deliberately,"and she belongs to a cruiser of Uncle Sam's, that is off the reef, a short bit to the eastward, and we signalled our captain. But I'll come on board you, sir, if you please."

Mulford walked aft to meet the stranger at the gangway, and was relieved, rather than otherwise, at finding that Spike was already on the quarter−deck. Should the vessel of war seize the brig, he could rejoice at it, but so strong were his professional ideas of duty to the craft he sailed in, that he did not find it in his heart to say aught against her. Were any mishap to befall it, or were justice to be done, he preferred that it might be done under Spike's own supervision, rather than under his.

"Call all hands, Mr. Mulford," said Spike, as they met. "I see a streak of day coming yonder in the east let all hands be called at once. What strange boat is this we have alongside?"

This question was put to the strangers, Spike standing on his gangway−ladder to ask it, while the mate was summoning the crew. The officer saw that a new person was to be dealt with, and in his quiet, easy way, he answered, while stretching out his hands to take the man−rope

"Your servant, sir we are man−of−war's men, belonging to one of Uncle Sam's craft, outside, and have just come in to pay you a visit of ceremony. I told one, whom I suppose was your mate, that I would just step on board of you."

"Ay, ay one at a time, if you please. It's war−time, and I cannot suffer armed boat's crews to board me at night, without knowing something about them. Come up yourself, if you please, but order your people to stay in the boat. Here, muster about this gangway, half a dozen of you, and keep an eye on the crew of this strange boat."

These orders had no effect on the cool and deliberate lieutenant, who ascended the brig's side, and immediately stood on her deck. No sooner had he and Spike confronted each other, than each gave a little start, like that of recognition, and the lieutenant spoke.

"Ay, ay I believe I know this vessel now. It is the Molly Swash, of New York, bound to Key West, and a market; and I have the honour to see Captain Stephen Spike again."

It was Mr. Wallace, the second lieutenant of the sloop−of−warthat had boarded the brig in the Mona Passage, and to avoid whom Spike had gone to the southward of Jamaica. The meeting was very mal−à−propos, but it would not do to betray that the captain and owner of the vessel thought as much as this; on the contrary, Wallace was warmly welcomed, and received, not only as an old acquaintance, but as a very agreeable visiter. To have seen the two, as they walked aft together, one might have supposed that the meeting was conducive of nothing but a very mutual satisfaction, it was so much like that which happens between those who keep up a hearty acquaintance.

"Well, I'm glad to see you again, Captain Spike," cried Wallace, after the greetings were passed, "if it be only to ask where you flew to, the day we left you in the Mona Passage? We looked out for you with all our eyes, expecting you would be down between San Domingo and Jamaica, but I hardly think you got by us in the night. Our master thinks you must have dove, and gone past loon−fashion. Do you ever perform that manœuvre?"

"No, we've kept above water the whole time, lieutenant," answered Spike, heartily; "and that is more than can be said of the poor fellow alongside of us. I was so much afraid of the Isle of Pines, that I went round Jamaica."

"You might have given the Isle of Pines a berth, and still have passed to the northward of the Englishmen," said Wallace, a little drily. "However, that island is somewhat of a scarecrow, and we have been to take a look at it ourselves. All's right there, just now. But you seem light; what have you done with your flour?"

"Parted with every barrel of it. You may remember I was bound to Key West, and a market. Well, I found my market here, in American waters."

"You have been lucky, sir. This 'emporium' does not seem to be exactly a commercial emporium."

"The fact is, the flour is intended for the Havanna; and I fancy it is to be shipped for slavers. But I am to know nothing of all that, you'll understand, lieutenant. If I sell my flour in American waters, at two prices, it's no concern of mine what becomes of it a'terwards."

"Unless it happen to pass into enemy's hands, certainly not; and you are too patriotic to deal with Mexico, just now,I'm sure. Pray, did that flour go down when the schooner turned turtle?"

"Every barrel of it; but Don Wan, below there, thinks that most of it may yet be saved, by landing it on one of those Keys to dry. Flour, well packed, wets in slowly. You see we have some of it on deck."

"And who may Don Wan be, sir, pray? We are sent here to look after Dons and Donas, you know."

"Don Wan is a Cuban merchant, and deals in such articles as he wants. I fell in with him among the reefs here, where he was rummaging about in hopes of meeting with a wrack, he tells me, and thinking to purchase something profitable in that way; but finding I had flour, he agreed to take it out of me at this anchorage, and send me away in ballast at once. I have found Don Wan Montefalderon ready pay, and very honourable."

Wallace then requested an explanation of the disaster, to the details of which he listened with a sailor's interest. He asked a great many questions, all of which bore on the more nautical features of the event; and, day having now fairly appeared, he examined the purchases and backings of the Swash with professional nicety. The schooner was no lower in the water than when the men had knocked off work the previous night; and Spike set the people at the pumps and their bailing again, as the most effectual method of preventing their making any indiscreet communications to the man−of−war's men.

About this time the relict appeared on deck, when Spike gallantly introduced the lieutenant anew to his passengers. It is true he knew no name to use, but that was of little moment, as he called the officer "the lieutenant," and nothing else.

Mrs. Budd was delighted with this occasion to show−off, and she soon broke out on the easy, indolent, but waggish Wallace, in a strain to surprise him, notwithstanding the specimen of the lady's skill from which he had formerly escaped.

"Captain Spike is of opinion, lieutenant, that our cast−anchor here is excellent, and I know the value of a good cast−anchor place; for my poor Mr. Budd was a sea−faring man, and taught me almost as much of your noble profession as he knew himself."

"And he taught you, ma'am," said Wallace, fairly opening his eyes, under the influence of astonishment, "to be very particular about cast−anchor places!"

"Indeed he did. He used to say, that roads−instead were never as good, for such purposes, as land that's locked havens, for the anchors would return home, as he called it, in roads−instead."

"Yes, ma'am," answered Wallace, looking very queer at first, as if disposed to laugh outright, then catching a glance of Rose, and changing his mind; "I perceive that Mr. Budd knew what he was about, and preferred an anchorage where he was well land−locked, and where there was no danger of his anchors coming home, as so often happens in your open roadsteads."

"Yes, that's just it! That was just his notion! You cannot feel how delightful it is, Rose, to converse with one that thoroughly understands such subjects! My poor Mr. Budd did, indeed, denounce roads−instead, at all times calling them 'savage.' "

"Savage, aunt," put in Rose, hoping to stop the good relict by her own interposition "that is a strange word to apply to an anchorage!"

"Not at all, young lady," said Wallace gravely. "They are often wild berths, and wild berths are not essentially different from wild beasts. Each is savage, as a matter of course."

"I knew I was right!" exclaimed the widow. "Savage cast−anchors come of wild births, as do savage Indians. Oh! the language of the ocean, as my poor Mr. Budd used to say, is eloquence tempered by common sense!"

Wallace stared again, but his attention was called to other things, just at that moment. The appearance of Don Juan Montefalderon y Castro on deck, reminded him of his duty, and approaching that gentleman he condoled with him on the grave loss he had sustained. After a few civil expressions on both sides, Wallace made a delicate

allusion to the character of the schooner.

"Under other circumstances," he said, "it might be my duty to inquire a little particularly as to the nationality ofyour vessel, Señor, for we are at war with the Mexicans, as you doubtless know."

"Certainly," answered Don Juan, with an unmoved air and great politeness of manner, "though it would be out of my power to satisfy you. Everything was lost in the schooner, and I have not a paper of any sort to show you. If it be your pleasure to make a prize of a vessel in this situation, certainly it is in your power to do it. A few barrels of wet flour are scarce worth disputing about."

Wallace now seemed a little ashamed, the sang froid of the other throwing dust in his eyes, and he was in a hurry to change the subject. Señor Don Juan was very civilly condoled with again, and he was made to repeat the incidents of the loss, as if his auditor took a deep interest in what he said, but no further hint was given touching the nationality of the vessel. The lieutenant's tact let him see that Señor Montefalderon was a person of a very different calibre from Spike, as well as of different habits; and he did not choose to indulge in the quiet irony that formed so large an ingredient in his own character, with this new acquaintance. He spoke Spanish himself, with tolerable fluency, and a conversation now occurred between the two, which was maintained for some time with spirit and a very manifest courtesy.

This dialogue between Wallace and the Spaniard gave Spike a little leisure for reflection. As the day advanced the cruiser came more and more plainly in view, and his first business was to take a good survey of her. She might have been three leagues distant, but approaching with a very light breeze, at the rate of something less than two knots in the hour. Unless there was some one on board her who was acquainted with the channels of the Dry Tortugas, Spike felt little apprehension of the ship's getting very near to him; but he very well understood that, with the sort of artillery that was in modern use among vessels of war, he would hardly be safe could the cruiser get within a league. That near Uncle Sam's craft might certainly come without encountering the hazards of the channels, and within that distance she would be likely to get in the course of the morning, should he have the complaisance to wait for her. He determined, therefore, not to be guilty of that act of folly.

All this time the business of lightening the schooner proceeded. Although Mulford earnestly wished that the man−of−war might get an accurate notion of the true character and objects of the brig, he could not prevail on himself to become an informer. In order to avoid the temptation so to do, he exerted himself in keeping the men at their tasks, and never before had pumping and bailing been carried on with more spirit. The schooner soon floated of herself, and the purchases which led to the Swash were removed. Near a hundred more barrels of the flour had been taken out of the hold of the Spanish craft, and had been struck on the deck of the brig, or sent to the Key by means of the boats. This made a material change in the buoyancy of the vessel, and enabled the bailing to go on with greater facility. The pumps were never idle, but two small streams of water were running the whole time toward the scuppers, and through them into the sea.

At length the men were ordered to knock off, and to get their breakfasts. This appeared to arouse Wallace, who had been chatting, quite agreeably to himself, with Rose, and seemed reluctant to depart, but who now became sensible that he was neglecting his duty. He called away his boat's crew, and took a civil leave of the passengers; after which he went over the side. The gig was some little distance from the Swash, when Wallace rose and asked to see Spike, with whom he had a word to say at parting.

"I will soon return," he said, "and bring you forty or fifty fresh men, who will make light work with your wreck. I am certain our commander will consent to my doing so, and will gladly send on board you two or three boat's crews."

"If I let him," muttered Spike between his teeth, "I shall be a poor, miserable cast−anchor devil, that's all."

To Wallace, however, he expressed his hearty acknowledgments; begged him not to be in a hurry, as the worst was now over, and the row was still a long one. If he got back toward evening it would be all in good time. Wallace waved his hand, and the gig glided away. As for Spike, he sat down on the plank−sheer where he had stood, and remained there ruminating intently for two or three minutes. When he descended to the deck his mind was fully madeup. His first act was to give some private orders to the boatswain, after which he withdrew to the cabin, whither he summoned Tier, without delay.

"Jack," commenced the captain, using very little circumlocution in opening his mind, "you and I are old shipmates, and ought to be old friends, though I think your natur' has undergone some changes since we last met. Twenty years ago there was no man in the ship on whom I could so certainly depend as on Jack Tier; now, you seem given up altogether to the women. Your mind has changed even more than your body."

"Time does that for all of us, Captain Spike," returned Tier coolly. "I am not what I used to be, I'll own, nor are you yourself, for that matter. When I saw you last, noble captain, you were a handsome man of forty, and could go aloft with any youngster in the brig; but, now, you're heavy, and not over−active."

"I! Not a bit of change has taken place in me for the last thirty years. I defy any man to show the contrary. But that's neither here nor there; you are no young woman, Jack, that I need be boasting of my health and beauty before you. I want a bit of real sarvice from you, and want it done in old−times fashion; and I mean to pay for it in old−times fashion, too."

As Spike concluded, he put into Tier's hand one of the doubloons that he had received from Señor Montefalderon, in payment for the powder. The doubloons, for which so much pumping and bailing were then in process, were still beneath the waters of the gulf.

"Ay, ay, sir," returned Jack, smiling and pocketing the gold, with a wink of the eye, and a knowing look; "this does resemble old times sum'at. I now begin to know Captain Spike, my old commander again, and see that he's more like himself than I had just thought him. What am I to do for this, sir? speak plain, that I may be sartain to steer the true course."

"Oh, just a trifle, Jack nothing that will break up the ground−tier of your wits, my old shipmate. You see the state of the brig, and know that she is in no condition for ladies."

" 'T would have been better all round, sir, had they never come aboard at all," answered Jack, looking dark.

Spike was surprised, but he was too much bent on his projects to heed trifles.

"You know what sort of flour they're whipping out of the schooner, and must understand that the brig will soon be in a pretty litter. I do not intend to let them send a single barrel of it beneath my hatches again, but the deck and the islands must take it all. Now I wish to relieve my passengers from the confinement this will occasion, and I have ordered the boatswain to pitch a tent for them on the largest of these here Tortugas; and what I want of you, is to muster food and water, and other women's knicknacks, and go ashore with them, and make them as comfortable as you can for a few days, or until we can get this schooner loaded and off."

Jack Tier looked at his commander as if he would penetrate his most secret thoughts. A short pause succeeded, during which the steward's mate was intently musing, then his countenance suddenly brightened; he gave the doubloon a fillip, and caught it on the palm of his hand as it descended, and he uttered the customary "Ay, ay, sir," with apparent cheerfulness. Nothing more passed between these two worthies, who now parted, Jack to make his arrangements, and Spike to "tell his yarn," as he termed the operation in his own mind, to Mrs. Budd, Rose, and Biddy. The widow listened complacently, though she seemed half doubting, half ready to comply. As for Rose, she received the proposal with delight The confinement of the vessel having become irksome to her. The

principal obstacle was in overcoming the difficulties made by the aunt, Biddy appearing to like the notion quite as much as "Miss Rosy." As for the light−house, Mrs. Budd had declared nothing would induce her to go there; for she did not doubt that the place would soon be, if it were not already, haunted. In this opinion she was sustained by Biddy; and it was the knowledge of this opinion that induced Spike to propose the tent.

"Are you sure, Captain Spike, it is not a desert island?" asked the widow; "I remember that my poor Mr. Budd always spoke of desert islands as horrid places, and spots that every one should avoid."

"What if it is, aunty," said Rose eagerly, "while we have the brig here, close at hand. We shall suffer none of the wants of such a place, so long as our friends can supply us."

"And such friends, Miss Rose," exclaimed Spike, a little sentimentally for him, "friends that would undergo hunger and thirst themselves, before you should want for any comforts."

"Do, now, Madam Budd," put in Biddy in her hearty way, "it's an island, ye'll remimber: and sure that's just what ould Ireland has ever been, God bless it! Islands make the pleasantest risidences."

"Well I'll venture to oblige you and Biddy, Rosy, dear," returned the aunt, still half reluctant to yield; "but you'll remember, that if I find it at all a desert island, I'll not pass the night on it on any account whatever."

With this understanding the party was transferred to the shore. The boatswain had already erected a sort of a tent, on a favourable spot, using some of the old sails that had covered the flour−barrels, not only for the walls, but for a carpet of some extent also. This tent was ingeniously enough contrived. In addition to the little room that was entirely enclosed, there was a sort of piazza, or open verandah, which would enable its tenants to enjoy the shade in the open air. Beneath this verandah, a barrel of fresh water was placed, as well as three or four ship's stools, all of which had been sent ashore with the materials for constructing the tent. The boat had been going and coming for some time, and the distance being short, the "desert island" was soon a desert no longer. It is true that the supplies necessary to support three women for as many days, were no great matter, and were soon landed, but Jack Tier had made a provision somewhat more ample. A capital caterer, he had forgotten nothing within the compass of his means, that could contribute to the comfort of those who had been put especially under his care. Long before the people "knocked off" for their dinners, the arrangements were completed, and the boatswain was ready to take his leave.

"Well, ladies," said that grum old salt, "I can do no more for you, as I can see. This here island is now almost as comfortable as a ship that has been in blue water for amonth, and I do n't know how it can be made more comfortabler."

This was only according to the boatswain's notion of comfort; but Rose thanked him for his care in her winning way, while her aunt admitted that, "for a place that was almost a desert island, things did look somewhat promising." In a few minutes the men were all gone, and the islet was left to the sole possession of the three females, and their constant companion, Jack Tier. Rose was pleased with the novelty of her situation, though the islet certainly did deserve the opprobrium of being a "desert island." There was no shade but that of the tent, and its verandah−like covering, though the last, in particular, was quite extensive. There was no water, that in the barrel and that of the ocean excepted. Of herbage there was very little on this islet, and that was of the most meagre and coarse character, being a long wiry grass, with here and there a few stunted bushes. The sand was reasonably firm, however, more especially round the shore, and the walking was far from unpleasant. Little did Rose know it, but a week earlier, the spot would have been next to intolerable to her, on account of the musquitoes, gallinippers, and other similar insects of the family of tormentors; but everything of the sort had temporarily disappeared in the currents of the tornado. To do Spike justice, he was aware of this circumstance, or he might have hesitated about exposing females to the ordinary annoyances of one of these spots. Not a musquito, or anything of the sort was left, however, all having gone to leeward, in the vortex which had come so near

sweeping off the Mexican schooner.

"This place will do very well, aunty, for a day or two," cried Rose cheerfully, as she returned from a short excursion, and threw aside her hat, one made to shade her face from the sun of a warm climate, leaving the sea−breeze that was just beginning to blow, to fan her blooming and sunny cheeks. "It is better than the brig. The worst piece of land is better than the brig."

"Do not say that, Rose not if it's a desert island, dear; and this is desperately like a desert island; I am almost sorry I ventured on it."

"It will not be deserted by us, aunty, until we shall seeoccasion to do so. Why not endeavour to get on board of yonder ship, and return to New York in her; or at least induce her captain to put us ashore somewhere near this, and go home by land. Your health never seemed better than it is at this moment; and as for mine, I do assure you, aunty, dear, I am as perfectly well as I ever was in my life."

"All from this voyage. I knew it would set you up, and am delighted to hear you say as much. Biddy and I were talking of you this very morning, my child, and we both agreed that you were getting to be yourself again. Oh, ships, and brigs, and schooners, full−jigger or half−jigger, for pulmonary complaints, say I! My poor Mr. Budd always maintained that the ocean was the cure for all diseases, and I determined that to sea you should go, the moment I became alarmed for your health."

The good widow loved Rose most tenderly, and she was obliged to use her handkerchief to dry the tears from her eyes as she concluded. Those tears sprung equally from a past feeling of apprehension, and a present feeling of gratitude. Rose saw this, and she took a seat at her aunt's side, touched herself, as she never failed to be on similar occasions with this proof of her relative's affection. At that moment even Harry Mulford would have lost a good deal in her kind feelings toward him, had he so much as smiled at one of the widow's nautical absurdities. At such times, Rose seemed to be her aunt's guardian and protectress, instead of reversing the relations, and she entirely forgot herself the many reasons which existed for wishing that she had been placed in childhood, under the care of one better qualified than the well−meaning relict of her uncle, for the performance of her duties.

"Thank you, aunty thank'ee, dear aunty," said Rose, kissing the widow affectionately. "I know that you mean the best for me, though you are a little mistaken in supposing me ill. I do assure you, dear," patting her aunt's cheek, as if she herself had been merely a playful child, "I never was better; and if I have been pulmonary, I am entirely cured, and am now ready to return home."

"God be praised for this, Rosy. Under His divine providence, it is all owing to the sea. If you really feel so much restored, however, I do not wish to keep you a moment longer on a ship's board than is necessary. We owe something to Captain Spike's care, and cannot quit him too unceremoniously; but as soon as he is at liberty to go into a harbour, I will engage him to do so, and we can return home by land unless, indeed, the brig intends to make the home voyage herself."

"I do not like this brig, aunty, and now we are out of her, I wish we could keep out of her. Nor do I like your Captain Spike, who seems to me anything but an agreeable gentleman."

"That's because you arn't accustomed to the sea. My poor Mr. Budd had his ways, like all the rest of them; it takes time to get acquainted with them. All sailors are so."

Rose bent her face involuntarily, but so low as to conceal the increasing brightness of her native bloom, as she answered,

"Harry Mulford is not so, aunty, dear and he is every inch a sailor."

"Well, there is a difference, I must acknowledge, though I dare say Harry will grow every day more and more like all the rest of them. In the end, he will resemble Captain Spike."

"Never," said Rose, firmly.

"You can't tell, child. I never saw your uncle when he was Harry's age, for I was n't born till he was thirty, but often and often has he pointed out to me some slender, genteel youth, and say, 'just such a lad was I at twenty,' though nothing could be less alike, at the moment he was speaking, than they two. We all change with our years. Now I was once as slender, and almost not quite, Rosy, for few there are that be but almost as handsome as you yourself."

"Yes, aunty, I've heard that before," said Rose, springing up, in order to change the discourse; "but Harry Mulford will never become like Stephen Spike. I wish we had never known the man, dearest aunty."

"It was all your own doings, child. He's a cousin of your most intimate friend, and she brought him to the house; and one could n't offend Mary Mulford, by telling her we did n't like her cousin."

Rose seemed vexed, and she kept her little foot in motion, patting the sail that formed the carpet, as girls will pat theground with their feet when vexed. This gleam of displeasure was soon over, however, and her countenance became as placid as the clear, blue sky that formed the vault of the heavens above her head. As if to atone for the passing rebellion of her feelings, she threw her arms around her aunt's neck; after which she walked away, along the beach, ruminating on her present situation, and of the best means of extricating their party from the power of Spike.

It requires great familiarity with vessels and the seas, for one to think, read, and pursue the customary train of reasoning on board a ship that one has practised ashore. Rose had felt this embarrassment during the past month, for the whole of which time she had scarcely been in a condition to act up to her true character, suffering her energies, and in some measure her faculties, to be drawn into the vortex produced by the bustle, novelties, and scenes of the vessel and the ocean. But, now she was once more on the land, diminutive and naked as was the islet that composed her present world, and she found leisure and solitude for reflection and decision. She was not ignorant of the nature of a vessel of war, or of the impropriety of unprotected females placing themselves on board of one; but gentlemen of character, like the officers of the ship in sight, could hardly be wanting in the feelings of their caste; and anything was better than to return voluntarily within the power of Spike. She determined within her own mind that voluntarily she would not. We shall leave this young girl, slowly wandering along the beach of her islet, musing on matters like these, while we return to the vessels and the mariners.

A good breeze had come in over the reef from the Gulf, throwing the sloop−of−war dead to leeward of the brigantine's anchorage. This was the reason that the former had closed so slowly. Still the distance between the vessels was so small, that a swift cruiser, like the ship of war, would soon have been alongside of the wreckers, but for the intervening islets and the intricacies of their channels. She had made sail on the wind, however, and was evidently disposed to come as near to the danger as her lead showed would be safe, even if she did not venture among them.

Spike noted all these movements, and he took his measures accordingly. The pumping and bailing had been goingon since the appearance of light, and the flour had been quite half removed from the schooner's hold. That vessel consequently floated with sufficient buoyancy, and no further anxiety was felt on account of her sinking. Still, a great deal of water remained in her, the cabin itself being nearly half full. Spike's object was to reduce this water sufficiently to enable him to descend into the state−room which Señor Montefalderon had occupied, and bring away the doubloons that alone kept him in the vicinity of so ticklish a neighbour as the Poughkeepsie. Escape was easy enough to one who knew the passages of the reef and islets; more especially since the wind had so fortunately brought the cruiser to leeward. Spike most apprehended a movement upon him in the boats, and he

had almost made up his mind, should such an enterprise be attempted, to try his hand in beating it off with his guns. A good deal of uncertainty on the subject of Mulford's consenting to resist the recognised authorities of the country, as well as some doubts of a similar nature in reference to two or three of the best of the foremast hands, alone left him at all in doubt as to the expediency of such a course. As no boats were lowered from the cruiser, however, the necessity of resorting to so desperate a measure, did not occur, and the duty of lightening the schooner had proceeded without interruption. As soon as the boatswain came off from the islet, he and the men with him were directed to take the hands and lift the anchors, of which it will be remembered the Swash had several down. Even Mulford was shortly after set at work on the same duty; and these expert and ready seamen soon had the brig clear of the ground. As the schooner was anchored, and floated without assistance, the Swash rode by her.

Such was the state of things when the men turned to, after having had their dinners. By this time, the sloop−of−war was within half a league of the bay, her progress having been materially retarded by the set of the current, which was directly against her. Spike saw that a collision of some sort or other must speedily occur, and he determined to take the boatswain with him, and descend into the cabin of the schooner in quest of the gold. The boatswain was summoned, and Señor Montefalderon repeated in this man's presence the instructions that he thought it necessaryfor the adventurers to follow, in order to secure the prize. Knowing how little locks would avail on board a vessel, were the men disposed to rob him, that gentleman had trusted more to secreting his treasure, than to securing it in the more ordinary way. When the story had again been told, Spike and his boatswain went on board the schooner, and, undressing, they prepared to descend into the cabin. The captain paused a single instant to take a look at the sloop−of−war, and to examine the state of the weather. It is probable some new impression was made on him by this inquiry, for, hailing Mulford, he ordered him to loosen the sails, and to sheet home, and hoist the foretopsail. In a word, to "see all ready to cast off, and make sail on the brig at the shortest notice." With this command he disappeared by the schooner's companion−way.

Spike and his companion found the water in the cabin very much deeper than they had supposed. With a view to comfort, the cabin−floor had been sunk much lower than is usual on board American vessels, and this brought the water up nearly to the arm−pits of two men as short as our captain and his sturdy little boatswain. The former grumbled a good deal, when he ascertained the fact, and said something about the mate's being better fitted to make a search in such a place, but concluding with the remark, that "the man who wants ticklish duty well done, must see to it himself."

The gold−hunters groped their way cautiously about the cabin for some time, feeling for a drawer, in which they had been told they should find the key of Señor Montefalderon's state−room door. In this Spike himself finally succeeded, he being much better acquainted with cabins and their fixtures, than the boatswain.

"Here it is, Ben," said the captain, "now for a dive among the Don's val'ables. Should you pick up anything worth speaking of, you can condemn it for salvage, as I mean to cast off, and quit the wrack the moment we've made sure of the doubloons."

"And what will become of all the black flour that is lying about, sir?" asked the boatswain with a grin.

"It may take care of itself. My agreement will be up as soon as the doubloons are found. If the Don will comedown handsomely with his share of what will be left, I may be bought to put the kegs we have in the brig ashore for him somewhere in Mexico; but my wish is to get out of the neighbourhood of that bloody sloop−of−war, as soon as possible."

"She makes but slow headway ag'in the current, sir; but a body would think she might send in her boats."

"The boats might be glad to get back again," muttered Spike. "Ay, here is the door unlocked, and we can now fish for the money."

Some object had rolled against the state−room door, when the vessel was capsized, and there was a good deal of difficulty in forcing it open. They succeeded at last, and Spike led the way by wading into the small apartment. Here they began to feel about beneath the water, and by a very insufficient light, in quest of the hidden treasure. Spike and his boatswain differed as to the place which had just been described to them, as men will differ even in the account of events that pass directly before their eyes. While thus employed, the report of a heavy gun came through the doors of the cabin, penetrating to the recess in which they were thus employed.

"Ay, that's the beginning of it!" exclaimed Spike. "I wonder that the fool has put it off so long."

"That gun was a heavy fellow, Captain Spike," returned the boatswain; "and it sounded in my ears as if't was shotted."

"Ay, ay, I dare say you're right enough in both opinions. They put such guns on board their sloops−of−war, now−a−days, as a fellow used to find in the lower batteries of a two−decker only in old times; and as for shot, why Uncle Sam pays, and they think it cheaper to fire one out of a gun, than to take the trouble of drawing it."

"I believe here's one of the bags, Captain Spike," said the boatswain, making a dip, and coming up with one−half of the desired treasure in his fist. "By George, I've grabbed him, sir; and the other bag can't be far off."

"Hand that over to me," said the captain, a little authoritatively, "and take a dive for the next."

As the boatswain was obeying this order, a second gun was heard, and Spike thought that the noise made by thenear passage of a large shot was audible also. He called out to Ben to "bear a hand, as the ship seems in 'arnest." But the head of the boatswain being under water at the time, the admonition was thrown away. The fellow soon came up, however, puffing like a porpoise that has risen to the surface to blow.

"Hand it over to me at once," said Spike, stretching out his unoccupied hand to receive the prize; "we have little time to lose."

"That's sooner said than done, sir," answered the boatswain; "a box has driven down upon the bag, and there's a tight jam. I got hold of the neck of the bag, and pulled like a horse, but it wouldn't come no how."

"Show me the place, and let me have a drag at it. There goes another of his bloody guns!"

Down went Spike, and the length of time he was under water, proved how much he was in earnest. Up he came at length, and with no better luck than his companion. He had got hold of the bag, satisfied himself by feeling its outside that it contained the doubloons, and hauled with all his strength, but it would not come. The boatswain now proposed to take a jamming hitch with a rope around the neck of the bag, which was long enough to admit of such a fastening, and then to apply their united force. Spike assented, and the boatswain rummaged about for a piece of small rope to suit his purpose. At this moment Mulford appeared at the companion−way to announce the movements on the part of the sloop−of−war. He had been purposely tardy, in order to give the ship as much time as possible; but he saw by the looks of the men that a longer delay might excite suspicion.

"Below there!" called out the mate.

"What's wanting, sir? what's wanting, sir?" answered Spike; "let's know at once."

"Have you heard the guns, Captain Spike?"

"Ay, ay, every grumbler of them. They've done no mischief, I trust, Mr. Mulford?"

"None as yet, sir; though the last shot, and it was a heavy fellow, passed just above the schooner's deck. I've the topsail sheeted home and hoisted, and it's that which has set them at work. If I clewed up again, I dare say they'd not fire another gun."

"Clew up nothing, sir, but see all clear for casting off and making sail through the South Pass. What do you say, Ben, are you ready for a drag?"

"All ready, sir," answered the boatswain, once more coming up to breathe. "Now for it, sir; a steady pull, and a pull all together."

They did pull, but the hitch slipped, and both went down beneath the water. In a moment they were up again, puffing a little and swearing a great deal. Just then another gun, and a clatter above their heads, brought them to a stand.

"What means that, Mr. Mulford?" demanded Spike, a good deal startled.

It means that the sloop−of−war has shot away the head of this schooner's foremast, sir, and that the shot has chipp'd a small piece out of the heel of our maintop−mast that's all."

Though excessively provoked at the mate's cool manner of replying, Spike saw that he might lose all by being too tenacious about securing the remainder of the doubloons. Pronouncing in very energetic terms on Uncle Sam, and all his cruisers, an anathema that we do not care to repeat, he gave a surly order to Ben to "knock−off," and abandoned his late design. In a minute he was on deck and dressed.

"Cast off, lads," cried the captain, as soon as on the deck of his own brig again, "and four of you man that boat. We have got half of your treasure, Señor Wan, but have been driven from the rest of it, as you see. There is the bag; when at leisure we'll divide it, and give the people their share. Mr. Mulford, keep the brig in motion, hauling up toward the South Pass, while I go ashore for the ladies. I'll meet you just in the throat of the passage."

This said, Spike tumbled into his boat, and was pulled ashore. As for Mulford, though he cast many an anxious glance toward the islet, he obeyed his orders, keeping the brig standing off and on, under easy canvas, but working her up toward the indicated passage.

Spike was met by Jack Tier on the beach of the little island.

"Muster the women at once," ordered the captain, "we have no time to lose, for that fellow will soon be firing broadsides, and his shot now range half a mile beyond us."

"You'll no more move the widow and her maid, than you'll move the island," answered Jack, laconically.

"Why should I not move them? Do they wish to stay here and starve?"

"It's little that they think of that. The sloop−of−war no sooner begun to fire than down went Mrs. Budd on the canvas floor of the tent, and set up just such a screaming as you may remember she tried her hand at the night the revenue craft fired into us. Biddy lay down alongside of her mistress, and at every gun, they just scream as loud as they can, as if they fancied they might frighten off Uncle Sam's men from their duty."

"Duty! You little scamp, do you call tormenting honest traders in this fashion the duty of any man?"

"Well, captain, I'm no ways partic'lar about a word or two. Their 'ways,' if you like that better than duty, sir."

"Where's Rose? Is she down too, screaming and squalling?"

"No, Captain Spike, no. Miss Rose is endeavouring, like a handsome young Christian lady as she is, to pacify and mollify her aunt and Biddy; and right down sensible talk does she give them."

"Then she at least can go aboard the brig," exclaimed Spike, with a sudden animation, and an expression of countenance that Jack did not at all like.

"I ray−y−ther think she'll wish to hold on to the old lady," observed the steward's−mate, a little emphatically.

"You be d d," cried Spike, fiercely; "when your opinion is wanted, I'll ask for it. If I find you've been setting that young woman's mind ag'in me, I'll toss you overboard, as I would the offals of a shark."

"Young women's minds, when they are only nineteen, get set ag'in boys of fifty−six without much assistance."

"Fifty−six yourself."

"I'm fifty−three that I'll own without making faces at it," returned Jack, meekly; "and, Stephen Spike, you logged fifty−six your last birthday, or a false entry was made."

This conversation did not take place in the presence of the boat's crew, but as the two walked together toward the tent. They were now in the verandah, as we have called the shaded opening in front, and actually within sound ofthe sweet voice of Rose, as she exhorted her aunt, in tones a little louder than usual for her to use, to manifest more fortitude. Under such circumstances Spike did not deem it expedient to utter that which was uppermost in his mind, but, turning short upon Tier, he directed a tremendous blow directly between his eyes. Jack saw the danger and dodged, falling backward to avoid a concussion which he knew would otherwise be fearful, coming as it would from one of the best forecastle boxers of his time. The full force of the blow was avoided, though Jack got enough of it to knock him down, and to give him a pair of black eyes. Spike did not stop to pick the assistant steward up, for another gun was fired at that very instant, and Mrs. Budd and Biddy renewed their screams. Instead of pausing to kick the prostrate Tier, as had just before been his intention, the captain entered the tent.

A scene that was sufficiently absurd met the view of Spike, when he found himself in the presence of the females. The widow had thrown herself on the ground, and was grasping the cloth of the sail on which the tent had been erected with both her hands, and was screaming at the top of her voice. Biddy's imitation was not exactly literal, for she had taken a comfortable seat at the side of her mistress, but in the way of cries, she rather outdid her principal.

"We must be off," cried Spike, somewhat unceremoniously. "The man−of−war is blazing away, as if she was a firin' minute−guns over our destruction, and I can wait no longer."

"I'll not stir," answered the widow "I can't stir I shall be shot if I go out. No, no, no I'll not stir an inch."

"We'll be kilt! we'll be kilt!" echoed Biddy, "and a wicket murther't will be in that same man, war or no war."

The captain perceived the uselessness of remonstrance at such a moment, and perhaps he was secretly rejoiced thereat; but it is certain that he whipped Rose up under his arm, and walked away with her, as if she had been a child of two or three years of age. Rose did not scream, but she struggled and protested vehemently. It was in vain. Already the captain had carried her half the distance between the tent and the boat, in the last of which, a minute more would have deposited his victim, when a severe blow on the backof his head caused Spike to stumble, and he permitted Rose to escape from his grasp, in the effort to save himself from a fall. Turning fiercely toward his assailant, whom he suspected to be one of his boat's crew, he saw Tier standing within a few yards,

levelling a pistol at him.

"Advance a step, and you're a dead man, villain!" screamed Jack, his voice almost cracked with rage, and the effort he made to menace.

Spike muttered an oath too revolting for our pages; but it was such a curse as none but an old salt could give vent to, and that in the bitterness of his fiercest wrath. At that critical moment, while Rose was swelling with indignation and wounded maiden pride, almost within reach of his arms, looking more lovely than ever, as the flush of anger deepened the colour in her cheeks, a fresh and deep report from one of the guns of the sloop−of−war drew all eyes in her direction. The belching of that gun seemed to be of double the power of those which had preceded it, and jets of water, that were twenty feet in height, marked the course of the formidable missile that was projected from the piece. The ship had, indeed, discharged one of those monster−cannons that bear the name of a distinguished French engineer, but which should more properly be called by the name of the ingenious officer who is at the head of our own ordnance, as they came originally from his inventive faculties, though somewhat improved by their European adopter. Spike suspected the truth, for he had heard of these "Pazans," as he called them, and he watched the booming, leaping progress of the eight−inch shell that this gun threw, with the apprehension that unknown danger is apt to excite. As jet succeeded jet, each rising nearer and nearer to his brig, the interval of time between them seeming fearfully to diminish, he muttered oath upon oath. The last leap that the shell made on the water was at about a quarter of a mile's distance of the islet on which his people had deposited at least a hundred and fifty barrels of his spurious flour:−thence it flew, as it might be without an effort, with a grand and stately bound into the very centre of the barrels, exploding at the moment it struck. All saw the scattering of flour, which was instantly succeeded by the heavy though slightly straggling explosion of all the powder on the island. A hundredkegs were lighted, as it might be, in a common flash, and a cloud of white smoke poured out and concealed the whole islet, and all near it.

Rose stood confounded, nor was Jack Tier in a much better state of mind, though he still kept the pistol levelled, and menaced Spike. But the last was no longer dangerous to any there. He recollected that piles of the barrels encumbered the decks of his vessel, and he rushed to the boat, nearly frantic with haste, ordering the men to pull for their lives. In less than five minutes he was alongside, and on the deck of the Swash his first order being to "Tumble every barrel of this bloody powder into the sea, men. Over with it, Mr. Mulford, clear away the midship ports, and launch as much as you can through them."

Remonstrance on the part of Señor Montefalderon would have been useless, had he been disposed to make it; but, sooth to say, he was as ready to get rid of the powder as any there, after the specimen he had just witnessed of the power of a Paixhan gun.

Thus it is ever with men. Had two or three of those shells been first thrown without effect, as might very well have happened under the circumstances, none there would have cared for the risk they were running; but the chance explosion which had occurred, presented so vivid a picture of the danger, dormant and remote as it really was, as to throw the entire crew of the Swash into a frenzy of exertion.

Nor was the vessel at all free from danger. On the contrary, she ran very serious risk of being destroyed, and in some degree, in the very manner apprehended. Perceiving that Spike was luffing up through one of the passages nearest the reef, which would carry him clear of the group, a long distance to windward of the point where he could only effect the same object, the commander of the sloop−of−war opened his fire in good earnest, hoping to shoot away something material on board the Swash, before she could get beyond the reach of his shot. The courses steered by the two vessels, just at that moment, favoured such an attempt, though they made it necessarily very short−lived. While the Swash was near the wind, the sloop−of−war was obliged to run off to avoid islets ahead of her, a circumstance which, while it brought the brig square with the ship's broadside, compelledthe latter to steer on a diverging line to the course of her chase. It was in consequence of these facts, that the sloop−of−war now opened in earnest, and was soon canopied in the smoke of her own fire.

Great and important changes, as has been already mentioned, have been made in the armaments of all the smaller cruisers within the last few years. Half a generation since, a ship of the rate we do not say of the size of the vessel which was in chase of Spike and his craft, would not have had it in her power to molest an enemy at the distance these two vessels were now apart. But recent improvements have made ships of this nominal force formidable at nearly a league's distance; more especially by means of their Paixhans and their shells.

For some little time the range carried the shot directly over the islet of the tent; Jack Tier and Rose, both of whom were watching all that passed with intense interest, standing in the open air the whole time, seemingly with no concern for themselves, so absorbed was each, notwithstanding all that had passed, in the safety of the brig. As for Rose, she thought only of Harry Mulford, and of the danger he was in by those fearful explosions of the shells. Her quick intellect comprehended the peculiar nature of the risk that was incurred by having the flour−barrels on deck, and she could not but see the manner in which Spike and his men were tumbling them into the water, as the quickest manner of getting rid of them. After what had just passed between Jack Tier and his commander, it might not be so easy to account for his manifest, nay, intense interest in the escape of the Swash. This was apparent by his troubled countenance, by his exclamations, and occasionally by his openly expressed wishes for her safety. Perhaps it was no more than the interest the seaman is so apt to feel in the craft in which he has so long sailed, and which to him has been a home, and of which Mulford exhibited so much, in his struggles between feeling and conscience between a true and a false duty.

As for Spike and his people, we have already mentioned their efforts to get rid of the powder. Shell after shell exploded, though none very near the brig, the ship working her guns as if in action. At length the officers of the sloop−of−wardetected a source of error in their aim, that is of very common occurrence in sea−gunnery. Their shot had been thrown to ricochet, quartering a low, but very regular succession of little waves. Each shot striking the water at an acute angle to its agitated surface, was deflected from a straight line, and described a regular curve toward the end of its career; or, it might be truer to say, an irregular curvature, for the deflection increased as the momentum of the missile diminished.

No sooner did the commanding officer of the sloop−of−war discover this fact, and it was easy to trace the course of the shots by the jets of water they cast into the air, and to see as well as to hear the explosions of the shells, than he ordered the guns pointed more to windward, as a means of counteracting the departure from the straight lines. This expedient succeeded in part, the solid shot falling much nearer to the brig the moment the practice was resorted to. No shell was fired for some little time after the new order was issued, and Spike and his people began to hope these terrific missiles had ceased their annoyance. The men cheered, finding their voices for the first time since the danger had seemed so imminent, and Spike was heard animating them to their duty. As for Mulford, he was on the coach−house deck, working the brig, the captain having confided to him that delicate duty, the highest proof he could furnish of confidence in his seamanship. The handsome young mate had just made a half−board, in the neatest manner, shoving the brig by its means through a most difficult part of the passage, and had got her handsomely filled again on the same tack, looking right out into open water, by a channel through which she could now stand on a very easy bowline. Everything seemed propitious, and the sloop−of−war's solid shot began to drop into the water, a hundred yards short of the brig. In this state of things one of the Paixhans belched forth its angry flame and sullen roar again. There was no mistaking the gun. Then came its mass of iron, a globe that would have weighed just sixty−eight pounds, had not sufficient metal been left out of its interior to leave a cavity to contain a single pound of powder. Its course, as usual, was to be marked by its path along the sea, as it bounded, half a mile at a time, from wave to wave. Spikesaw by its undeviating course that this shell was booming terrifically toward his brig, and a cry to "look out for the shell," caused the work to be suspended. That shell struck the water for the last time, within two hundred yards of the brig, rose dark and menacing in its furious leap, but exploded at the next instant. The fragments of the iron were scattered on each side, and ahead. Of the last, three or four fell into the water so near the vessel as to cast their spray on her decks.

"Overboard with the rest of the powder!" shouted Spike. "Keep the brig off a little, Mr. Mulford keep her off, sir; you luff too much, sir."

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the mate. "Keep her off, it is."

"There comes the other shell!" cried Ben, but the men did not quit their toil to gaze this time. Each seaman worked as if life and death depended on his single exertions. Spike alone watched the course of the missile. On it came, booming and hurtling through the air, tossing high the jets, at each leap it made from the surface, striking the water for its last bound, seemingly in a line with the shell that had just preceded it. From that spot it made its final leap. Every hand in the brig was stayed and every eye was raised as the rushing tempest was heard advancing. The mass went muttering directly between the masts of the Swash. It had scarcely seemed to go by when the fierce flash of fire and the sharp explosion followed. Happily for those in the brig, the projectile force given by the gun carried the fragments from them, as in the other instance it had brought them forward; else would few have escaped mutilation, or death, among their crew.

The flashing of fire so near the barrels of powder that still remained on their deck, caused the frantic efforts to be renewed, and barrel after barrel was tumbled overboard, amid the shouts that were now raised to animate the people to their duty.

"Luff, Mr. Mulford luff you may, sir," cried Spike. No answer was given.

"D'ye hear there, Mr. Mulford? it is luff you may, sir."

"Mr. Mulford is not aft, sir," called out the man at the helm "but luff it is, sir."

"Mr. Mulford not aft! Where's the mate, man? Tell him he is wanted."

No Mulford was to be found! A call passed round the decks, was sent below, and echoed through the entire brig, but no sign or tidings could be had of the handsome mate. At that exciting moment the sloop−of−war seemed to cease her firing, and appeared to be securing her guns.

CHAPTER VII.

Thou art the same, eternal sea!

The earth has many shapes and forms,

Of hill and valley, flower and tree;

Fields that the fervid noontide warms,

Or winter's rugged grasp deforms,

Or bright with autumn's golden store;

Thou coverest up thy face with storms,

Or smilest serene, but still thy roar

And dashing foam go up to vex the sea−beat shore:

Lunt.

We shall now advance the time eight−and−forty hours. The baffling winds and calms that succeeded the tornado had gone, and the trades blew in their stead. Both vessels had disappeared, the brig leading, doubling the western extremity of the reef, and going off before both wind and current, with flowing sheets, fully three hours before the sloop−of−war could beat up against the latter, to a point that enabled her to do the same thing. By that time, the Swash was five−and−twenty miles to the eastward, and consequently but just discernible in her loftiest sails, from the ship's royal yards. Still, the latter continued the chase; and that evening both vessels were beating down along the southern margin of the Florida Reef, against the trades, but favoured by a three or four knot current, the brig out of sight to windward. Our narrative leads us to lose sight of both these vessels, for a time, in order to return to the islets of the Gulf. Eight−and−forty hours had made some changes inand around the haven of the Dry Tortugas. The tent still stood, and a small fire that was boiling its pot and its kettle, at no great distance from it, proved that the tent was still inhabited. The schooner also rode at her anchors, very much as she had been abandoned by Spike. The bag of doubloons, however, had been found, and there it lay, tied but totally unguarded, in the canvas verandah of Rose Budd's habitation. Jack Tier passed and repassed it with apparent indifference, as he went to and fro, between his pantry and kitchen, busy as a bee in preparing his noontide meal for the day. This man seemed to have the islet all to himself, however, no one else being visible on any part of it. He sang his song, in a cracked, contre alto voice, and appeared to be happy in his solitude. Occasionally he talked to himself aloud, most probably because he had no one else to speak to. We shall record one of his recitatives, which came in between the strains of a very inharmonious air, the words of which treated of the seas, while the steward's assistant was stirring an exceedingly savoury mess that he had concocted of the ingredients to be found in the united larders of the Swash and the Mexican schooner.

"Stephen Spike is a capital willian!" exclaimed Jack, smelling at a ladle filled with his soup "a capital willian, I call him. To think, at his time of life, of such a handsome and pleasant young thing as this Rose Budd; and then to try to get her by underhand means, and by making a fool of her silly old aunt. It 's wonderful what fools some old aunts be! Quite wonderful! If I was as great a simpleton as this Mrs. Budd, I'd never cross my threshhold. Yes, Stephen Spike is a prodigious willian, as his best friend must own! Well, I gave him a thump on the head that he'll not forget this v'y'ge. To think of carryin' off that pretty Rose Budd in his very arms, in so indecent a manner! Yet, the man has his good p'ints, if a body could only forget his bad ones. He's a first−rate seaman. How he worked the brig till he doubled the reef, a'ter she got into open water; and how he made her walk off afore the wind, with stun'sails alow and aloft, as soon as ever he could make 'em draw! My life for it, he 'll tire the legs of Uncle Sam's man, afore he can fetch up with him. For running away, when hard chased, Stephen Spike has n't his equal on 'arth. But, he's a great willian a prodigious willian! I cannot say I actually wish him hanged; but I would rather have him hanged than see him get pretty Rose in his power. What has he to do with girls of nineteen? If the rascal is one year old, he's fifty−six. I hope the sloop−of−war will find her match, and I think she will. The Molly's a great traveller, and not to be outdone easily. 'T would be a thousand pities so lovely a craft should be cut off in the flower of her days, as it might be, and I do hope she'll lead that bloody sloop on some sunken rock.

"Well, there's the other bag of doubloons. It seems Stephen could not get it. That's odd, too, for he's great at grabbin' gold. The man bears his age well; but he's a willian! I wonder whether he or Mulford made that half−board in the narrow channel. It was well done, and Stephen is a perfect sailor; but he says Mulford is the same. Nice young man, that Mulford; just fit for Rose, and Rose for him. Pity to part them. Can find no great fault with him, except that he has too much conscience. There's such a thing as having too much, as well as too little conscience. Mulford has too much, and Spike has too little. For him to think of carryin' off a gal of nineteen! I say he's fifty−six, if he's a day. How fond he used to be of this very soup! If I've seen him eat a quart of it, I've seen him eat a puncheon full of it, in my time. What an appetite the man has when he's had a hard day's duty on 't! There 's a great deal to admire, and a great deal to like in Stephen Spike, but he's a reg'lar willian. I dare say he fancies himself a smart, jaunty youth ag'in, as I can remember him; a lad of twenty, which was about his years when I first saw him, by the sign that I was very little turned of fifteen myself. Spike was comely then, though I acknowledge he's a willian. I can see him now, with his deep blue roundabout, his bell−mouthed trowsers, both of fine cloth too fine for such a willian but fine it was, and much did it become him."

Here Jack made a long pause, during which, though he may have thought much, he said nothing. Nevertheless, he was n't idle the while. On the contrary, he passed no less than three several times from the fire to the tent, and returned. Each time, in going and coming, he looked intentlyat the bag of doubloons, though he did not stop at it or touch it. Some associations connected with Spike's fruitless attempts to obtain it must have formed its principal interest with this singular being, as he muttered his captain's name each time in passing, though he said no more audibly. The concerns of the dinner carried him back and forth; and in his last visit to the tent, he began to set a small table one that had been brought for the convenience of Mrs. Budd and her niece, from the brig, and which of course still remained on the islet. It was while thus occupied, that Jack Tier recommenced his soliloquy.

"I hope that money may do some worthy fellow good yet. It's Mexican gold, and that's inemy's gold, and might be condemned by law, I do suppose. Stephen had a hankerin' a'ter it, but he did not get it. It come easy enough to the next man that tried. That Spike 's a willian, and the gold was too good for him. He has no conscience at all to think of a gal of nineteen! And one fit for his betters, in the bargain. The time has been when Stephen Spike might have pretended to Rose Budd's equal. That much I'll ever maintain, but that time's gone; and, what is more, it will never come again. I should like Mulford better if he had a little less conscience. Conscience may do for Uncle Sam's ships, but it is sometimes in the way aboard a trading craft. What can a fellow do with a conscience when dollars is to be smuggled off, or tobacco smuggled ashore? I do suppose I've about as much conscience as it is useful to have, and I've got ashore in my day twenty thousand dollars' worth of stuff, of one sort or another, if I've got ashore the valie of ten dollars. But Spike carries on business on too large a scale, and many's the time I've told him so. I could have forgiven him anything but this attempt on Rose Budd; and he's altogether too old for that, to say nothing of other people's rights. He's an up−and−down willian, and a body can make no more, nor any less of him. That soup must be near done, and I'll hoist the signal for grub."

This signal was a blue−peter of which one had been brought ashore to signal the brig; and with which Jack now signalled the schooner. If the reader will turn his eyes toward the last named vessel, he will find the guests whom Tier expected to surround his table. Rose, her aunt, andBiddy were all seated, under an awning made by a sail, on the deck of the schooner, which now floated so buoyantly as to show that she had materially lightened since last seen. Such indeed was the fact, and he who had been the instrument of producing this change, appeared on deck in the person of Mulford, as soon as he was told that the blue−peter of Jack Tier was flying.

The boat of the light−house, that in which Spike had landed in quest of Rose, was lying alongside of the schooner, and sufficiently explained the manner in which the mate had left the brig. This boat, in fact, had been fastened astern, in the hurry of getting from under the sloop−of−war's fire, and Mulford had taken the opportunity of the consternation and frantic efforts produced by the explosion of the last shell thrown, to descend from his station on the coach−house into this boat, to cut the painter, and to let the Swash glide away from him. This the vessel had done with great rapidity, leaving him unseen under the cover of her stern. As soon as in the boat, the mate had seized an oar, and sculled to an islet that was within fifty yards, concealing the boat behind a low hummock that formed a tiny bay. All this was done so rapidly, that united to the confusion on board the Swash, no one discovered the mate or the boat. Had he been seen, however, it is very little probable that Spike would have lost a moment of time, in the attempt to recover either. But he was not seen, and it was the general opinion on board the Swash, for quite an hour, that her handsome mate had been knocked overboard and killed, by a fragment of the shell that had seemed to explode almost in the ears of her people. When the reef was doubled, however, and Spike made his preparations for meeting the rough water, he hove to, and ordered his own yawl, which was also towing astern, to be hauled up alongside, in order to be hoisted in. Then, indeed, some glimmerings of the truth were shed on the crew, who missed the light−house boat. Though many contended that its painter must also have been cut by a fragment of the shell, and that the mate had died loyal to roguery and treason. Mulford was much liked by the crew, and he was highly valued by Spike, on account of his seamanship and integrity, this latter being a quality that is just as necessary for one of the captain's character to meet with in those hetrusts as to any other man. But Spike thought differently of the cause of Mulford's disappearance, from his crew. He ascribed it altogether to love for Rose, when, in truth, it ought in justice to have been quite as much imputed to a determination to sail no longer with a man who was clearly guilty of treason. Of smuggling, Mulford had long suspected Spike, though he

had no direct proof of the fact; but now he could not doubt that he was not only engaged in supplying the enemy with the munitions of war, but was actually bargaining to sell his brig for a hostile cruiser, and possibly to transfer himself and crew along with her.

It is scarcely necessary to speak of the welcome Mulford received when he reached the islet of the tent. He and Rose had a long private conference, the result of which was to let the handsome mate into the secret of his pretty companion's true feelings toward himself. She had received him with tears, and a betrayal of emotion that gave him every encouragement, and now she did not deny her preference. In that interview the young people plighted to each other their troth. Rose never doubted of obtaining her aunt's consent in due time, all her prejudices being in favour of the sea and sailors; and should she not, she would soon be her own mistress, and at liberty to dispose of herself and her pretty little fortune as she might choose. But a cypher as she was, in all questions of real moment, Mrs. Budd was not a person likely to throw any real obstacle in the way of the young people's wishes; the true grounds of whose present apprehensions were all to be referred to Spike, his intentions, and his well−known perseverance. Mulford was convinced that the brig would be back in quest of the remaining doubloons, as soon as she could get clear of the sloop−of−war, though he was not altogether without a hope that the latter, when she found it impossible to overhaul her chase, might also return in order to ascertain what discoveries could be made in and about the schooner. The explosion of the powder, on the islet, must have put the man−of−war's men in possession of the secret of the real quality of the flour that had composed her cargo, and it doubtless had awakened all their distrust on the subject of the Swash's real business in the Gulf. Under all the circumstances, therefore, it did appear quite as probable that one of theparties should reappear at the scene of their recent interview as the other.

Bearing all these things in mind, Mulford had lost no time in completing his own arrangements. He felt that he had some atonement to make to the country, for the part he had seemingly taken in the late events, and it occurred to him, could he put the schooner in a state to be moved, then place her in the hands of the authorities, his own peace would be made, and his character cleared. Rose no sooner understood his plans and motives, than she entered into them with all the ardour and self−devotion of her sex; for the single hour of confidential and frank communication which had just passed, doubled the interest she felt in Mulford and in all that belonged to him. Jack Tier was useful on board a vessel, though his want of stature and force rendered him less so than was common with sea−faring men. His proper sphere certainly had been the cabins, where his usefulness was beyond all cavil; but he was now very serviceable to Mulford on the deck of the schooner. The first two days, Mrs. Budd had been left on the islet, to look to the concerns of the kitchen, while Mulford, accompanied by Rose, Biddy and Jack Tier, had gone off to the schooner, and set her pumps in motion again. It was little that Rose could do, or indeed attempt to do, at this toil, but the pumps being small and easily worked, Biddy and Jack were of great service. By the end of the second day the pumps sucked; the cargo that remained in the schooner, as well as the form of her bottom, contributing greatly to lessen the quantity of the water that was to be got out of her.

Then it was that the doubloons fell into Mulford's hands, along with everything else that remained below decks. It was perhaps fortunate that the vessel was thoroughly purified by her immersion, and the articles that were brought on deck to be dried were found in a condition to give no great offence to those who removed them. By leaving the hatches off, and the cabin doors open, the warm winds of the trades effectually dried the interior of the schooner in the course of a single night; and when Mulford repaired on board of her, on the morning of the third day, he found her in a condition to be fitted for his purposes. On this occasion Mrs. Budd had expressed a wish to go off to look ather future accommodations, and Jack was left on the islet to cook the dinner, which will explain the actual state of things as described in the opening of this chapter.

As those who toil usually have a relish for their food, the appearance of the blue−peter was far from being unwelcome to those on board of the schooner. They got into the boat, and were sculled ashore by Mulford, who, seaman−like, used only one hand in performing this service. In a very few minutes they were all seated at the little table, which was brought out into the tent−verandah for the enjoyment of the breeze.

"So far, well," said Mulford, after his appetite was mainly appeased; Rose picking crumbs, and affecting to eat, merely to have the air of keeping him company; one of the minor proofs of the little attentions that spring from the affections. "So far, well. The sails are bent, and though they might be never and better, they can be made to answer. It was fortunate to find anything like a second suit on board a Mexican craft of that size at all. As it is, we have foresail, mainsail, and jib, and with that canvas I think we might beat the schooner down to Key West in the course of a day and a night. If I dared to venture outside of the reef, it might be done sooner even, for they tell me there is a four−knot current sometimes in that track; but I do not like to venture outside, so short−handed. The current inside must serve our turn, and we shall get smooth water by keeping under the lee of the rocks. I only hope we shall not get into an eddy as we go further from the end of the reef, and into the bight of the coast."

"Is there danger of that?" demanded Rose, whose quick intellect had taught her many of these things, since her acquaintance with vessels.

"There may be, looking at the formation of the reef and islands, though I know nothing of the fact by actual observation. This is my first visit in this quarter."

"Eddies are serious matters," put in Mrs. Budd, "and my poor husband could not abide them. Tides are good things; but eddies are very disagreeable."

"Well, aunty, I should think eddies might sometimes be as welcome as tides. It must depend, however, very much on the way one wishes to go."

"Rose, you surprise me! All that you have read, and all that you have heard, must have shown you the difference. Do they not say 'a man is floating with the tide,' when things are prosperous with him and don't ships drop down with the tide, and beat the wind with the tide? And don't vessels sometimes 'tide it up to town,' as it is called, and is n't it thought an advantage to have the tide with you?"

"All very true, aunty; but I do not see how that makes eddies any the worse."

"Because eddies are the opposite of tides, child. When the tide goes one way, the eddy goes another is n't it so, Harry Mulford? You never heard of one's floating in an eddy."

"That's what we mean by an eddy, Mrs. Budd," answered the handsome mate, delighted to hear Rose's aunt call him by an appellation so kind and familiar, a thing she had never done previously to the intercourse which had been the consequence of their present situation. "Though I agree with Rose in thinking an eddy may be a good or a bad thing, and very much like a tide, as one wishes to steer."

"You amaze me, both of you! Tides are always spoken of favourably, but eddies never. If a ship gets ashore, the tide can float her off; that I've heard a thousand times. Then, what do the newspapers say of President ,and Governor , and Congressman ? Why, that they all 'float in the tide of public opinion,' and that must mean something particularly good, as they are always in office. No, no, Harry; I'll acknowledge that you do know something about ships; a good deal, considering how young you are; but you have something to learn about eddies. Never trust one as long as you live."

Mulford was silent, and Rose took the occasion to change the discourse.

"I hope we shall soon be able to quit this place," she said; "for I confess to some dread of Captain Spike's return."

"Captain Stephen Spike has greatly disappointed me,"observed the aunt, gravely. "I do not know that I was ever before deceived in judging a person. I could have sworn he was an honest, frank, well−meaning sailor a character, of all others, that I love; but it has turned out otherwise."

"He's a willian!" mutttered Jack Tier.

Mulford smiled; at which speech we must leave to conjecture; but he answered Rose, as he ever did, promptly and with pleasure.

"The schooner is ready, and this must be our last meal ashore," he said. "Our outfit will be no great matter; but if it will carry us down to Key West, I shall ask no more of it. As for the return of the Swash, I look upon it as certain. She could easily get clear of the sloop−of−war, with the start she had, and Spike is a man that never yet abandoned a doubloon, when he knew where one was to be found."

"Stephen Spike is like all his fellow−creatures," put in Jack Tier, pointedly. "He has his faults, and he has his virtues."

"Virtue is a term I should never think of applying to such a man," returned Mulford, a little surprised at the fellow's earnestness. "The word is a big one, and belongs to quite another class of persons." Jack muttered a few syllables that were unintelligible, when again the conversation changed.

Rose now inquired of Mulford as to their prospects of getting to Key West. He told her that the distance was about sixty miles; their route lying along the north or inner side of the Florida Reef. The whole distance was to be made against the trade−wind, which was then blowing about an eight−knot breeze, though, bating eddies, they might expect to be favoured with the current, which was less strong inside than outside of the reef. As for handling the schooner, Mulford saw no great difficulty in that. She was not large, and was both lightly sparred and lightly rigged. All her top−hamper had been taken down by Spike, and nothing remained but the plainest and most readily−managed gear. A fore−and−aft vessel, sailing close by the wind, is not difficult to steer; will almost steer herself, indeed, in smooth water. Jack Tier could take his trick at the helm, in any weather, even in running before the wind, the time when it is most difficult to guide a craft, and Rose might be made to understand the use of the tiller, and taught to govern the motions of a vessel so small and so simply rigged, when on a wind and in smooth water. On the score of managing the schooner, therefore, Mulford thought there would be little cause for apprehension. Should the weather continue settled, he had little doubt of safely landing the whole party at Key West, in the course of the next four−and−twenty hours. Short sail he should be obliged to carry, as well on account of the greater facility of managing it, as on account of the circumstance that the schooner was now in light ballast trim, and would not bear much canvas. He thought that the sooner they left the islets the better, as it could not be long ere the brig would be seen hovering around the spot. All these matters were discussed as the party still sat at table; and when they left it, which was a few minutes later, it was to remove the effects they intended to carry away to the boat. This was soon done, both Jack Tier and Biddy proving very serviceable, while Rose tripped backward and forward, with a step elastic as a gazelle's, carrying light burdens. In half an hour the boat was ready. "Here lies the bag of doubloons still," said Mulford, smiling. "Is it to be left, or shall we give it up to the admiralty court at Key West, and put in a claim for salvage?"

"Better leave it for Spike," said Jack unexpectedly. "Should he come back, and find the doubloons, he may be satisfied, and not look for the schooner. On the other hand, when the vessel is missing, he will think that the money is in her. Better leave it for old Stephen."

"I do not agree with you, Tier," said Rose, though she looked as amicably at the steward's assistant, as she thus opposed his opinion, as if anxious to persuade rather than coerce. "I do not quite agree with you. This money belongs to the Spanish merchant; and, as we take away with us his vessel, to give it up to the authorities at Key West, I do not think we have a right to put his gold on the shore and abandon it."

This disposed of the question. Mulford took the bag, and carried it to the boat, without waiting to ascertain if Jack had any objection; while the whole party followed. In afew minutes everybody and everything in the boat were transferred to the deck of the schooner. As for the tent, the old sails of which it was made, the furniture it

contained, and such articles of provisions as were not wanted, they were left on the islet, without regret. The schooner had several casks of fresh water, which were found in her hold, and she had also a cask or two of salted meats, besides several articles of food more delicate, that had been provided by Señor Montefalderon for his own use, and which had not been damaged by the water. A keg of Boston crackers were among these eatables, quite half of which were still in a state to be eaten. They were Biddy's delight; and it was seldom that she could be seen when not nibbling at one of them. The bread of the crew was hopelessly damaged. But Jack had made an ample provision of bread when sent ashore, and there was still a hundred barrels of the flour in the schooner's hold. One of these had been hoisted on deck by Mulford, and opened. The injured flour was easily removed, leaving a considerable quantity fit for the uses of the kitchen. As for the keg of gunpowder, it was incontinently committed to the deep.

Thus provided for, Mulford decided that the time had arrived when he ought to quit his anchorage. He had been employed most of that morning in getting the schooner's anchor, a work of great toil to him, though everybody had assisted. He had succeeded, and the vessel now rode by a kedge, that he could easily weigh by means of a deck tackle. It remained now, therefore, to lift this kedge and to stand out of the bay of the islets. No sooner was the boat secured astern, and its freight disposed of, than the mate began to make sail. In order to hoist the mainsail well up, he was obliged to carry the halyards to the windlass. Thus aided, he succeeded without much difficulty. He and Jack Tier and Biddy got the jib hoisted by hand; and as for the foresail, that would almost set itself. Of course, it was not touched until the kedge was aweigh. Mulford found little difficulty in lifting the last, and he soon had the satisfaction of finding his craft clear of the ground. As Jack Tier was every way competent to take charge of the forecastle, Mulford now sprang aft, and took his own station at the helm; Rose acting as his pretty assistant on the quarter−deck.

There is little mystery in getting a fore−and−aft vessel under way. Her sails fill almost as a matter of course, and motion follows as a necessary law. Thus did it prove with the Mexican schooner, which turned out to be a fast−sailing and an easily−worked craft. She was, indeed, an American bottom, as it is termed, having been originally built for the Chesapeake; and, though not absolutely what is understood by a Baltimore clipper, so nearly of that mould and nature as to possess some of the more essential qualities. As usually happens, however, when a foreigner gets hold of an American schooner, the Mexicans had shortened her masts and lessened her canvas. This circumstance was rather an advantage to Mulford, who would probably have had more to attend to than he wished under the original rig of the craft.

Everybody, even to the fastidious Mrs. Budd, was delighted with the easy and swift movement of the schooner. Mulford, now he had got her under canvas, handled her without any difficulty, letting her stand toward the channel through which he intended to pass, with her sheets just taken in, though compelled to keep a little off, in order to enter between the islets. No difficulty occurred, however, and in less than ten minutes the vessel was clear of the channels, and in open water. The sheets were now flattened in, and the schooner brought close by the wind. A trial of the vessel on this mode of sailing was no sooner made, than Mulford was induced to regret he had taken so many precautions against any increasing power of the wind. To meet emergencies, and under the notion he should have his craft more under command, the young man had reefed his mainsail, and taken the bonnets off of the foresail and jib. As the schooner stood up better than he had anticipated, the mate felt as all seamen are so apt to feel, when they see that their vessels might be made to perform more than is actually got out of them. As the breeze was fresh, however, he determined not to let out the reef; and the labour of lacing on the bonnets again was too great to be thought of just at that moment.

We all find relief on getting in motion, when pressed by circumstances. Mulford had been in great apprehension of the re−appearance of the Swash all that day; for it wasabout the time when Spike would be apt to return, in the event of his escaping from the sloop−of−war, and he dreaded Rose's again falling into the hands of a man so desperate. Nor is it imputing more than a very natural care to the young man, to say that he had some misgivings concerning himself. Spike, by this time, must be convinced that his business in the Gulf was known; and one who had openly thrown off his service, as his mate had done, would unquestionably be regarded as a traitor to his

interests, whatever might be the relation in which he would stand to the laws of the country. It was probable such an alleged offender would not be allowed to appear before the tribunals of the land, to justify himself and to accuse the truly guilty, if it were in the power of the last to prevent it. Great, therefore, was the satisfaction of our handsome young mate when he found himself again fairly in motion, with a craft under him, that glided ahead in a way to prove that she might give even the Swash some trouble to catch her, in the event of a trial of speed.

Everybody entered into the feelings of Mulford, as the schooner passed gallantly out from between the islets, and entered the open water. Fathom by fathom did her wake rapidly increase, until it could no longer be traced back as far as the sandy beaches that had just been left. In a quarter of an hour more, the vessel had drawn so far from the land, that some of the smaller and lowest of the islets were getting to be indistinct. At that instant everybody had come aft, the females taking their seats on the trunk, which, in this vessel as in the Swash herself, gave space and height to the cabin.

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Budd, who found the freshness of the sea air invigorating, as well as their speed exciting, "this is what I call maritime, Rosy, dear. This is what is meant by the Maritime States, about which we read so much, and which are commonly thought to be so important. We are now in a Maritime State, and I feel perfectly happy after all our dangers and adventures!"

"Yes, aunty, and I am delighted that you are happy," answered Rose, with frank affection. "We are now rid of that infamous Spike, and may hope never to see his face more."

"Stephen Spike has his good p'ints as well as another," said Jack Tier, abruptly.

"I know that he is an old shipmate of yours, Tier, and that you cannot forget how he once stood connected with you, and am sorry I have said so much against him," answered Rose, expressing her concern even more by her looks and tones, than by her words.

Jack was mollified by this, and he let his feeling be seen, though he said no more than to mutter, "He's a willian!" words that had frequently issued from his lips within the last day or two.

"Stephen Spike is a capital seaman, and that is something in any man," observed the relict of Captain Budd. "He learned his trade from one who was every way qualified to teach him, and it's no wonder he should be expert. Do you expect, Mr. Mulford, to beat the wind the whole distance to Key West?"

It was not possible for any one to look more grave than the mate did habitually, while the widow was floundering through her sea−terms. Rose had taught him that respect for her aunt was to be one of the conditions of her own regard, though Rose had never opened her lips to him on the subject.

"Yes, ma'am," answered the mate, respectfully, "we are in the trades, and shall have to turn to windward, every inch of the way to Key West."

"Of what lock is this place the key, Rosy?" asked the aunt, innocently enough. "I know that forts and towns are sometimes called keys, but they always have locks of some sort or other. Now, Gibraltar is the key of the Mediterranean, as your uncle has told me fifty times; and I have been there, and can understand why it should be, but I do not know of what lock this West is the key."

"It is not that sort of key which is meant, aunty, at all but quite a different thing. The key meant is an island."

"And why should any one be so silly as to call an island a key?"

"The place where vessels unload is sometimes called a key," answered Mulford; "the French calling it a quai, and the Dutch kaye. I suppose our English word is derived from these. Now, a low, sandy island, looking somewhatlike keys, or wharves, seamen have given them this name. Key West is merely a low island."

"Then there is no lock to it, or anything to be unfastened," said the widow, in her most simple manner.

"It may turn out to be the key to the Gulf of Mexico, one of these days, ma'am. Uncle Sam is surveying the reef, and intends to do something here, I believe. When Uncle Sam is really in earnest, he is capable of performing great things."

Mrs. Budd was satisfied with this explanation, though she told Biddy that evening, that "locks and keys go together, and that the person who christened the island to which they were going, must have been very weak in his upper story." But these reflections on the intellects of her fellow−creatures were by no means uncommon with the worthy relict; and we cannot say that her remarks made any particular impression on her Irish maid.

In the mean time, the Mexican schooner behaved quite to Mulford's satisfaction. He thought her a little tender in the squalls, of which they had several that afternoon; but he remarked to Rose, who expressed her uneasiness at the manner in which the vessel lay over in one of them, that "she comes down quite easy to her bearings, but it is hard forcing her beyond them. The vessel needs more cargo to ballast her, though, on the whole, I find her as stiff as one could expect. I am now glad that I reefed, and reduced the head sails, though I was sorry at having done so when we first came out. At this rate of sailing, we ought to be up with Key West by morning."

But that rate of sailing did not continue. Toward evening, the breeze lessened almost to a calm again, the late tornado appearing to have quite deranged the ordinary stability of the trades. When the sun set, and it went down into the broad waters of the Gulf a flood of flame, there was barely a two−knot breeze, and Mulford had no longer any anxiety on the subject of keeping his vessel on her legs. His solicitude, now, was confined to the probability of falling in with the Swash. As yet, nothing was visible, either in the shape of land or in that of a sail. Between the islets of the Dry Tortugas and the next nearest visible keys, there is a space of open water, of some forty miles in width. Thereef extends across it, of course; but nowhere does the rock protrude itself above the surface of the sea. The depth of water on this reef varies essentially. In some places, a ship of size might pass on to it, if not across it; while in others a man could wade for miles. There is one deep and safe channel safe to those who are acquainted with it through the centre of this open space, and which is sometimes used by vessels that wish to pass from one side to the other; but it is ever better for those whose business does not call them in that direction, to give the rocks a good berth, more especially in the night.

Mulford had gleaned many of the leading facts connected with the channels, and the navigation of those waters, from Spike and the older seamen of the brig, during the time they had been lying at the Tortugas. Such questions and answers are common enough on board ships, and, as they are usually put and given with intelligence, one of our mate's general knowledge of his profession, was likely to carry away much useful information. By conversations of this nature, and by consulting the charts, which Spike did not affect to conceal after the name of his port became known, the young man, in fact, had so far made himself master of the subject, as to have tolerably accurate notions of the courses, distances, and general peculiarities of the reef. When the sun went down, he supposed himself to be about half−way across the space of open water, and some five−and−twenty miles dead to windward of his port of departure. This was doing very well for the circumstances, and Mulford believed himself and his companions clear of spike, when, as night drew its veil over the tranquil sea, nothing was in sight.

A very judicious arrangement was made for the watches on board the Mexican schooner, on this important night. Mrs. Budd had a great fancy to keep a watch, for once in her life, and, after the party had supped, and the subject came up in the natural course of things, a dialogue like this occurred:

"Harry must be fatigued," said Rose, kindly, "and must want sleep. The wind is so light, and the weather appears to be so settled, that I think it would be better for him to 'turn in,' as he calls it;" here Rose laughed so prettilythat the handsome mate wished she would repeat the words, "better that he should 'turn in' now, and we can call him, should there be need of his advice or assistance. I dare say Jack Tier and I can take very good care of the schooner until daylight."

Mrs. Budd thought it would be no more than proper for one of her experience and years to rebuke this levity, as well as to enlighten the ignorance her niece had betrayed.

"You should be cautious, my child, how you propose anything to be done on a ship's board," observed the aunt. "It requires great experience and a suitable knowledge of rigging to give maritime advice. Now, as might have been expected, considering your years, and the short time you have been at sea, you have made several serious mistakes in what you have proposed. In the first place, there should always be a mate on the deck, as I have heard your dear departed uncle say, again and again; and how can there be a mate on the deck if Mr. Mulford 'turns in,' as you propose, seeing that he's the only mate we have. Then you should never laugh at any maritime expression, for each and all are, as a body might say, solemnized by storms and dangers. That Harry is fatigued I think is very probable; and he must set our watches, as they call it, when he can make his arrangements for the night, and take his rest as is usual. Here is my watch to begin with; and I'll engage he does not find it two minutes out of the way, though yours, Rosy dear, like most girl's time−pieces, is, I'll venture to say, dreadfully wrong. Where is your chronometer, Mr. Mulford? let us see how this excellent watch of mine, which was once my poor departed Mr. Budd's, will agree with that piece of your's, which I have heard you say is excellent."

Here was a flight in science and nautical language that poor Mulford could not have anticipated, even in the captain's relict! That Mrs. Budd should mistake "setting the watch" for "setting our watches," was not so very violent a blunder that one ought to be much astonished at it in her; but that she should expect to find a chronometer that was intended to keep the time of Greenwich, agreeing with a watch that was set for the time of New York, betrayed a degree of ignorance that the handsome mate was afraid Rose would resent on him, when the mistake was made toappear. As the widow held out her own watch for the comparison, however, he could not refuse to produce his own. By Mrs. Budd's watch it was past seven o'clock, while by his own, or the Greenwich−set chronometer, it was a little past twelve.

"How very wrong your watch is, Mr. Mulford," cried the good lady, "notwithstanding all you have said in its favour. It's quite five hours too fast, I do declare; and now, Rosy dear, you see the importance of setting watches on a ship's board, as is done every evening, my departed husband has often told me."

"Harry's must be what he calls a dog−watch, aunty," said Rose, laughing, though she scarce knew at what.

"The watch goes, too," added the widow, raising the chronometer to her ear, "though it is so very wrong. Well, set it, Mr. Mulford; then we will set Rose's, which I'll engage is half an hour out of the way, though it can never be as wrong as yours."

Mulford was a good deal embarrassed, but he gained courage by looking at Rose, who appeared to him to be quite as much mystified as her aunt. For once he hoped Rose was ignorant; for nothing would be so likely to diminish the feeling produced by the exposure of the aunt's mistake, as to include the niece in the same category.

"My watch is a chronometer, you will recollect, Mrs. Budd," said the young man.

"I know it; and they ought to keep the very best time that I've always heard. My poor Mr. Budd had two, and they were as large as compasses, and sold for hundreds after his lamented decease."

"They were ship's chronometers, but mine was made for the pocket. It is true, chronometers are intended to keep the most accurate time, and usually they do; this of mine, in particular, would not lose ten seconds in a twelvemonth, did I not carry it on my person."

"No, no, it does not seem to lose any, Harry; it only gains," cried Rose, laughing.

Mulford was now satisfied, notwithstanding all that had passed on a previous occasion, that the laughing, bright−eyed, and quick−witted girl at his elbow, knew no more of the uses of a chronometer than her unusually dull and ignorantaunt; and he felt himself relieved from all embarrassment at once. Though he dared not even seem to distrust Mrs. Budd's intellect or knowledge before Rose, he did not scruple to laugh at Rose herself, to Rose. With her there was no jealousy on the score of capacity, her quickness being almost as obvious to all who approached her as her beauty.

"Rose Budd, you do not understand the uses of a chronometer, I see," said the mate, firmly, "notwithstanding all I have told you concerning them."

"It is to keep time, Harry Mulford, is it not?"

"True, to keep time but to keep the time of a particular meridian; you know what meridian means, I hope?"

Rose looked intently at her lover, and she looked singularly lovely, for she blushed slightly, though her smile was as open and amicable as ingenuousness and affection could make it.

"A meridian means a point over our heads the spot where the sun is at noon," said Rose, doubtingly.

"Quite right; but it also means longitude, in one sense. If you draw a line from one pole to the other, all the places it crosses are on the same meridian. As the sun first appears in the east, it follows that he rises sooner in places that are east, than in places that are further west. Thus it is, that at Greenwich, in England, where there is an observatory made for nautical purposes, the sun rises about five hours sooner than it does here. All this difference is subject to rules, and we know exactly how to measure it."

"How can that be, Harry? You told me this but the other day, yet have I forgotten it."

"Quite easily. As the earth turns round in just twenty−four hours, and its circumference is divided into three hundred and sixty equal parts, called degrees, we have only to divide 360 by 24, to know how many of these degrees are included in the difference produced by one hour of time. There are just fifteen of them, as you will find by multiplying 24 by 15. It follows that the sun rises just one hour later, each fifteen degrees of longitude, as you go west, or one hour earlier each fifteen degrees of longitude as you go east. Having ascertained the difference by the hour, it is easy enough to calculate for the minutes and seconds."

"Yes, yes," said Rose, eagerly, "I see all that go on."

"Now a chronometer is nothing but a watch, made with great care, so as not to lose or gain more than a few seconds in a twelvemonth. Its whole merit is in keeping time accurately."

"Still I do not see how that can be anything more than a very good watch."

"You will see in a minute, Rose. For purposes that you will presently understand, books are calculated for certain meridians, or longitudes, as at Greenwich and Paris, and those who use the books calculated for Greenwich, get their chronometers set at Greenwich, and those who use the Paris, get their chronometers set to Paris time. When I was last in England, I took this watch to Greenwich, and had it set at the Observatory by the true solar time. Ever

since it has been running by that time, and what you see here is the true Greenwich time, after allowing for a second or two that it may have lost or gained."

"All that is plain enough," said the much interested Rose "but of what use is it all?"

"To help mariners to find their longitude at sea, and thus know where they are. As the sun passes so far north, and so far south of the equator each year, it is easy enough to find the latitude, by observing his position at noon−day; but for a long time seamen had great difficulty in ascertaining their longitudes. That, too, is done by observing the different heavenly bodies, and with greater accuracy than by any other process; but this thought of measuring the time is very simple, and so easily put in practice, that we all run by it now."

"Still I cannot understand it," said Rose, looking so intently, so eagerly, and so intelligently into the handsome mate's eyes, that he found it was pleasant to teach her other things besides how to love.

"I will explain it. Having the Greenwich time in the watch, we observe the sun, in order to ascertain the true time, wherever we may happen to be. It is a simple thing to ascertain the true time of day by an observation of the sun, which marks the hours in his track; and when we get our observation, we have some one to note the time at a particular instant on the chronometer. By noting the hour,minutes, and seconds, at Greenwich, at the very instant we observe here, when we have calculated from that observation the time here, we have only to add, or subtract, the time here from that of Greenwich, to know precisely how far east or west we are from Greenwich, which gives us our longitude."

"I begin to comprehend it again," exclaimed Rose, delighted at the acquisition in knowledge she had just made. "How beautiful it is, yet how simple but why do I forget it?"

"Perfectly simple, and perfectly sure, too, when the chronometer is accurate, and the observations are nicely made. It is seldom we are more than eight or ten miles out of the way, and for them we keep a look−out. It is only to ascertain the time where you are, by means that are easily used, then look at your watch to learn the time of day at Greenwich, or any other meridian you may have selected, and to calculate your distance, east or west, from that meridian, by the difference in the two times."

Rose could have listened all night, for her quick mind readily comprehended the principle which lies at the bottom of this useful process, though still ignorant of some of the details. This time she was determined to secure her acquisition, though it is quite probable that, woman−like, they were once more lost, almost as easily as made. Mulford, however, was obliged to leave her, to look at the vessel, before he stretched himself on the deck, in an old sail; it having been previously determined that he should sleep first, while the wind was light, and that Jack Tier, assisted by the females, should keep the first watch. Rose would not detain the mate, therefore, but let him go his way, in order to see that all was right before he took his rest.

Mrs. Budd had listened to Mulford's second explanation of the common mode of ascertaining the longitude, with all the attention of which she was capable; but it far exceeded the powers of her mind to comprehend it. There are persons who accustom themselves to think so superficially, that it becomes a painful process to attempt to dive into any of the arcana of nature, and who ever turn from such investigations wearied and disgusted. Many of these persons, perhaps most of them, need only a little patience and perseveranceto comprehend all the more familiar phenomena, but they cannot command even that much of the two qualities named to obtain the knowledge they would fain wish to possess. Mrs. Budd did not belong to a division as high in the intellectual scale as even this vapid class. Her intellect was unequal to embracing anything of an abstracted character, and only received the most obvious impressions, and those quite half the time it received wrong. The mate's reasoning, therefore, was not only inexplicable to her, but it sounded absurd and impossible.

"Rosy, dear," said the worthy relict, as soon as she saw Mulford stretch his fine frame on his bed of canvas, speaking at the same time in a low, confidential tone to her niece, "what was it that Harry was telling you a little while ago? It sounded to me like rank nonsense; and men will talk nonsense to young girls, as I have so often warned you, child. You must never listen to their nonsense, Rosy; but remember your catechism and confirmation vow, and be a good girl."

To how many of the feeble−minded and erring do those offices of the church prove a stay and support, when their own ordinary powers of resistance would fail them! Rose, however, viewed the matter just as it was, and answered accordingly.

"But this was nothing of that nature, aunty," she said, "and only an account of the mode of finding out where a ship is, when out of sight of land, in the middle of the ocean. We had the same subject up the other day."

"And how did Harry tell you, this time, that was done, my dear?"

"By finding the difference in the time of day between two places just as he did before."

"But there is no difference in the time of day, child, when the clocks go well."

"Yes, there is, aunty dear, as the sun rises in one place before it does in another."

"Rose you've been listening to nonsense now! Remember what I have so often told you about young men, and their way of talking. I admit Harry Mulford is a respectable youth, and has respectable connections, and since you like one another, you may have him, with all my heart, assoon as he gets a full−jiggered ship, for I am resolved no niece of my poor dear husband's shall ever marry a mate, or a captain even, unless he has a full−jiggered ship under his feet. But do not talk nonsense with him. Nonsense is nonsense, though a sensible man talks it. As for all this stuff about the time of day, you can see it is nonsense, as the sun rises but once in twenty−four hours, and of course there cannot be two times, as you call it."

"But, aunty dear, it is not always noon at London when it is noon at New York."

"Fiddle−faddle, child; noon is noon, and there are no more two noons than two suns, or two times. Distrust what young men tell you, Rosy, if you would be safe, though they should tell you you are handsome."

Poor Rose sighed, and gave up the explanation in despair. Then a smile played around her pretty mouth. It was not at her aunt that she smiled; this she never permitted herself to do, weak as was that person, and weak as she saw her to be; she smiled at the recollection how often Mulford had hinted at her good looks for Rose was a female, and had her own weaknesses, as well as another. But the necessity of acting soon drove these thoughts from her mind, and Rose sought Jack Tier, to confer with him on the subject of their new duties.

As for Harry Mulford, his head was no sooner laid on its bunch of sail than he fell into a profound sleep. There he lay, slumbering as the seaman slumbers, with no sense of surrounding things. The immense fatigues of that and of the two preceding days, for he had toiled at the pumps even long after night had come, until the vessel was clear, weighed him down, and nature was now claiming her influence, and taking a respite from exertion. Had he been left to himself, it is probable the mate would not have arisen until the sun had reappeared some hours.

It is now necessary to explain more minutely the precise condition, as well as the situation of the schooner. On quitting his port, Mulford had made a stretch of some two leagues in length, toward the northward and eastward, when he tacked and stood to the southward. There was enough of southing in the wind, to make his last course nearly due south. As he neared the reef, he found that he fell in somemiles to the eastward of the islets, proof that he was doing very well, and that there was no current to do him any material harm, if, indeed, there were not

actually a current in his favour. He next tacked to the northward again, and stood in that direction until near night, when he once more went about. The wind was now so light that he saw little prospect of getting in with the reef again, until the return of day; but as he had left orders with Jack Tier to be called at twelve o'clock, at all events, this gave him no uneasiness. At the time when the mate lay down to take his rest, therefore, the schooner was quite five−and−twenty miles to windward of the Dry Tortugas, and some twenty miles to the northward of the Florida Reef, with the wind quite light at east−south−east. Such, then, was the position or situation of the schooner.

As respects her condition, it is easily described. She had but the three sails bent, mainsail, foresail, and jib. Her topmasts had been struck, and all the hamper that belonged to them was below. The mainsail was single reefed, and the foresail and jib were without their bonnets, as has already been mentioned. This was somewhat short canvas, but Mulford knew that it would render his craft more manageable in the event of a blow. Usually, at that season and in that region, the east trades prevailed with great steadiness, sometimes diverging a little south of east, as at present, and generally blowing fresh. But, for a short time previously to, and ever since the tornado, the wind had been unsettled, the old currents appearing to regain their ascendancy by fits, and then losing it, in squalls, contrary currents, and even by short calms.

The conference between Jack Tier and Rose was frank and confidential.

"We must depend mainly on you," said the latter, turning to look toward the spot where Mulford lay, buried in the deepest sleep that had ever gained power over him. "Harry is so fatigued! It would be shameful to awaken him a moment sooner than is necessary."

"Ay, ay; so it is always with young women, when they lets a young man gain their ears," answered Jack, without the least circumlocution; "so it is, and so it always will be, I'm afeard. Nevertheless, men is willians."

Rose was not affronted at this plain allusion to the power that Mulford had obtained over her feelings. It would seem that Jack had got to be so intimate in the cabins, that his sex was, in a measure, forgotten; and it is certain that his recent services were not. Without a question, but for his interference, the pretty Rose Budd would, at that moment, have been the prisoner of Spike, and most probably the victim of his design to compel her to marry him.

"All men are not Stephen Spikes," said Rose, earnestly, "and least of all is Harry Mulford to be reckoned as one of his sort. But, we must manage to take care of the schooner the whole night, and let Harry get his rest. He wished to be called at twelve, but we can easily let the hour go by, and not awaken him."

"The commanding officer ought not to be sarved so, Miss Rose. What he says is to be done."

"I know it, Jack, as to ordinary matters; but Harry left these orders that we might have our share of rest, and for no other reason at all. And what is to prevent our having it? We are four, and can divide ourselves into two watches; one watch can sleep while the other keeps a look−out."

"Ay, ay, and pretty watches they would be! There's Madam Budd, now; why, she's quite a navigator, and knows all about weerin' and haulin', and I dares to say could put the schooner about, to keep her off the reef, on a pinch; though which way the craft would come round, could best be told a'ter it has been done. It's as much as I'd undertake myself, Miss Rose, to take care of the schooner, should it come on to blow; and as for you, Madam Budd, and that squalling Irishwoman, you'd be no better than so many housewives ashore."

"We have strength, and we have courage, and we can pull, as you have seen. I know very well which way to put the helm now, and Biddy is as strong as you are yourself, and could help me all I wished. Then we could always call you, at need, and have your assistance. Nay, Harry himself can be called, if there should be a real necessity for it, and I do wish he may not be disturbed until there is that necessity."

It was with a good deal of reluctance that Jack allowed himself to be persuaded into this scheme. He insisted, for a long time, that an officer should be called at the hour mentioned by himself, and declared he had never known such an order neglected, "marchant−man, privateer, or man−of−war." Rose prevailed over his scruples, however, and there was a meeting of the three females to make the final arrangements. Mrs. Budd, a kind−hearted woman, at the worst, gave her assent most cheerfully, though Rose was a little startled with the nature of the reasoning, with which it was accompanied.

"You are quite right, Rosy dear," said the aunt, "and the thing is very easily done. I've long wanted to keep one watch, at sea; just one watch; to complete my maritime education. Your poor uncle used to say, 'Give my wife but one night−watch, and you'd have as good a seaman in her as heart could wish.' I'm sure I've had night−watches enough with him and his ailings; but it seems that they were not the sort of watches he meant. Indeed, I did n't know till this evening there were so many watches in the world, at all. But this is just what I want, and just what I'm resolved to have. Tier shall command one watch and I'll command the other. Jack's shall be the 'dog−watch,' as they call it, and mine shall be the 'middle−watch,' and last till morning. You shall be in Jack's watch, Rose, and Biddy shall be in mine. You know a good deal that Jack do n't know, and Biddy can do a good deal I'm rather too stout to do. I do n't like pulling ropes, but as for ordering, I'll turn my back on no captain's widow out of York."

Rose had her own misgivings on the subject of her aunt's issuing orders on such a subject to any one, but she made the best of necessity, and completed the arrangements without further discussion. Her great anxiety was to secure a good night's rest for Harry, already feeling a woman's care in the comfort and ease of the man she loved. And Rose did love Harry Mulford warmly and sincerely. If the very decided preference with which she regarded him before they sailed, had not absolutely amounted to passion, it had come so very near it as to render that access of feeling certain, under the influence of the association and events which succeeded. We have not thought it necessary to relate a tithe of the interviews and intercourse that had taken place between the handsome mate and the pretty Rose Budd, duringthe month they had now been shipmates, having left the reader to imagine the natural course of things, under such circumstances. Nevertheless, the plighted troth had not been actually given until Harry joined her on the islet, at a moment when she fancied herself abandoned to a fate almost as serious as death. Rose had seen Mulford quit the brig, had watched the mode and manner of his escape, and in almost breathless amazement, and felt how dear to her he had become, by the glow of delight which warmed her heart, when assured that he could not, would not, forsake her, even though he remained at the risk of life. She was now, true to the instinct of her sex, mostly occupied in making such a return for an attachment so devoted as became her tenderness and the habits of her mind.

As Mrs. Budd chose what she was pleased to term the 'middle−watch,' giving to Jack Tier and Rose her 'dog−watch,' the two last were first on duty. It is scarcely necessary to say, the captain's widow got the names of the watches all wrong, as she got the names of everything else about a vessel; but the plan was to divide the night equally between these quasi mariners, giving the first half to those who were first on the look−out, and the remainder to their successors. It soon became so calm, that Jack left the helm, and came and sat by Rose, on the trunk, where they conversed confidentially for a long time. Although the reader will, hereafter, be enabled to form some plausible conjectures on the subject of this dialogue, we shall give him no part of it here. All that need now be said, is to add, that Jack did most of the talking, that his past life was the principal theme, and that the terrible Stephen Spike, he from whom they were now so desirous of escaping, was largely mixed up with the adventures recounted. Jack found in his companion a deeply interested listener, although this was by no means the first time they had gone over together the same story and discussed the same events. The conversation lasted until Tier, who watched the glass, seeing that its sands had run out for the last time, announced the hour of midnight. This was the moment when Mulford should have been called, but when Mrs. Budd and Biddy Noon were actually awakened in his stead.

"Now, dear aunty," said Rose, as she parted from thenew watch to go and catch a little sleep herself, "remember you are not to awaken Harry first, but to call Tier and myself. It would have done your heart good to have seen how sweetly he has been sleeping all this time. I do not think he has stirred once since his head was laid on that

bunch of sails, and there he is, at this moment, sleeping like an infant!"

"Yes," returned the relict, "it is always so with your true maritime people. I have been sleeping a great deal more soundly, the whole of the dog−watch, than I ever slept at home, in my own excellent bed. But it's your watch below, Rosy, and contrary to rule for you to stay on the deck, after you've been relieved. I've heard this a thousand times."

Rose was not sorry to lie down; and her head was scarcely on its pillow, in the cabin, before she was fast asleep. As for Jack, he found a place among Mulford's sails, and was quickly in the same state.

To own the truth, Mrs. Budd was not quite as much at ease, in her new station, for the first half hour, as she had fancied to herself might prove to be the case. It was a flat calm, it is true; but the widow felt oppressed with responsibility and the novelty of her situation. Time and again had she said, and even imagined, she should be delighted to fill the very station she then occupied, or to be in charge of a deck, in a "middle watch." In this instance, however, as in so many others, reality did not equal anticipation. She wished to be doing everything, but did not know how to do anything. As for Biddy, she was even worse off than her mistress. A month's experience, or for that matter a twelvemonth's, could not unravel to her the mysteries of even a schooner's rigging. Mrs. Budd had placed her "at the wheel," as she called it, though the vessel had no wheel, being steered by a tiller on deck, in the 'long−shore fashion. In stationing Biddy, the widow told her that she was to play "tricks at the wheel," leaving it to the astounded Irish woman's imagination to discover what those tricks were. Failing in ascertaining what might be the nature of her "tricks at the wheel," Biddy was content to do nothing, and nothing, under the circumstances, was perhaps the very best thing she could have done.

Little was required to be done for the first four hours of Mrs. Budd's watch. All that time, Rose slept in her berth, and Mulford and Jack Tier on their sail, while Biddy had played the wheel a "trick," indeed, by lying down on deck, and sleeping, too, as soundly as if she were in the county Down itself. But there was to be an end of this tranquillity. Suddenly the wind began to blow. At first, the breeze came in fitful puffs, which were neither very strong nor very lasting. This induced Mrs. Budd to awaken Biddy. Luckily, a schooner without a topsail could not very well be taken aback, especially as the head−sheets worked on travellers, and Mrs. Budd and her assistant contrived to manage the tiller very well for the first hour that these varying puffs of wind lasted. It is true, the tiller was lashed, and it is also true, the schooner ran in all directions, having actually headed to all the cardinal points of the compass, under her present management. At length, Mrs. Budd became alarmed. A puff of wind came so strong, as to cause the vessel to lie over so far as to bring the water into the lee scuppers. She called Jack Tier herself, therefore, and sent Biddy down to awaken Rose. In a minute, both these auxiliaries appeared on deck. The wind just then lulled, and Rose, supposing her aunt was frightened at trifles, insisted on it that Harry should be permitted to sleep on. He had turned over once, in the course of the night, but not once had he raised his head from his pillow.

As soon as reinforced, Mrs. Budd began to bustle about, and to give commands, such as they were, in order to prove that she was unterrified. Jack Tier gaped at her elbow, and by way of something to do, he laid his hand on the painter of the Swash's boat, which boat was towing astern, and remarked that "some know−nothing had belayed it with three half−hitches." This was enough for the relict. She had often heard the saying that "three half−hitches lost the king's long−boat," and she busied herself, at once, in repairing so imminent an evil. It was far easier for the good woman to talk than to act; she became what is called "all fingers and thumbs," and in loosening the third half−hitch, she cast off the two others. At that instant, a puff of wind struck the schooner again, and the end of the painter got away from the widow, who had a last glimpse at the boat, as the vessel darted ahead, leaving its little tender to vanish in the gloom of the night.

Jack was excessively provoked at this accident, for he had foreseen the possibility of having recourse to that boat yet, in order to escape from Spike. By abandoning the schooner, and pulling on to the reef, it might have been possible to get out of their pursuer's hands, when all other means should fail them. As he was at the tiller, he put

his helm up, and ran off, until far enough to leeward to be to the westward of the boat, when he might tack, fetch and recover it. Nevertheless, it now blew much harder than he liked, for the schooner seemed to be unusually tender. Had he had the force to do it, he would have brailed the foresail. He desired Rose to call Mulford, but she hesitated about complying.

"Call him call the mate, I say," cried out Jack, in a voice that proved how much he was in earnest. "These puffs come heavy, I can tell you, and they come often, too. Call him call him, at once, Miss Rose, for it is time to tack if we wish to recover the boat. Tell him, too, to brail the foresail, while we are in stays that's right; another call will start him up."

The other call was given, aided by a gentle shake from Rose's hand. Harry was on his feet in a moment. A passing instant was necessary to clear his faculties, and to recover the tenor of his thoughts. During that instant, the mate heard Jack Tier's shrill cry of "Hard a−lee get in that foresail bear a−hand in with it, I say!"

The wind came rushing and roaring, and the flaps of the canvas were violent and heavy.

"In with the foresail, I say," shouted Jack Tier. "She files round like a top, and will be off the wind on the other tack presently. Bear a−hand! bear a−hand! It looks black as night to windward."

Mulford then regained all his powers. He sprang to the fore−sheet, calling on the others for aid. The violent surges produced by the wind prevented his grasping the sheet as soon as he could wish, and the vessel whirled round on her heel, like a steed that is frightened. At that critical and dangerous instant, when the schooner was nearly without motion through the water, a squall struck the flattened sails,and bowed her down as the willow bends to the gale. Mrs. Budd and Biddy screamed as usual, and Jack shouted until his voice seemed cracked, to "let go the head−sheets." Mulford did make one leap forward, to execute this necessary office, when the inclining plane of the deck told him it was too late. The wind fairly howled for a minute, and over went the schooner, the remains of her cargo shifting as she capsized, in a way to bring her very nearly bottom upward.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ay, fare you well, fair gentleman.

As You Like it.

While the tyro believes the vessel is about to capsize at every puff of wind, the practised seaman alone knows when danger truly besets him in this particular form. Thus it was with Harry Mulford, when the Mexican schooner went over, as related in the close of the preceding chapter. He felt no alarm until the danger actually came. Then, indeed, no one there was so quickly, or so thoroughly apprized of what the result would be, and he directed all his exertions to meet the exigency. While there was the smallest hope of success, he did not lessen, in the least, his endeavours to save the vessel; making almost superhuman efforts to cast off the fore−sheet, so as to relieve the schooner from the pressure of one of her sails. But, no sooner did he hear the barrels in the hold surging to leeward, and feel by the inclination of the deck beneath his feet, that nothing could save the craft, than he abandoned the sheet, and sprang to the assistance of Rose. It was time he did; for, having followed him into the vessel's lee−waist, she was the first to be submerged in the sea, and would have been hopelessly drowned, but for Mulford's timely succour. Women might swim more readily than men, and do so swim, in those portions of the world where the laws of nature are not counteracted by human conventions. Rose Budd, however, had received the vicious education which civilized society inflicts onher sex, and, as a matter of course, was totally helpless in an element in which it was the design of Divine Providence she should possess the common means of sustaining herself, like every other being endued with animal life. Not so with Mulford: he swam with ease and force, and had no difficulty in sustaining Rose until the schooner had settled into her new berth, or in hauling her on the

vessel's bottom immediately after.

Luckily, there was no swell, or so little as not to endanger those who were on the schooner's bilge; and Mulford had no sooner placed her in momentary safety at least, whom he prized far higher than his own life, than he bethought him of his other companions. Jack Tier had hauled himself up to windward by the rope that steadied the tiller, and he had called on Mrs. Budd to imitate his example. It was so natural for even a woman to grasp anything like a rope at such a moment, that the widow instinctively obeyed, while Biddy seized, at random, the first thing of the sort that offered. Owing to these fortunate chances, Jack and Mrs. Budd succeeded in reaching the quarter of the schooner, the former actually getting up on the bottom of the wreck, on to which he was enabled to float the widow, who was almost as buoyant as cork, as indeed was the case with Jack himself. All the stern and bows of the vessel were under water, in consequence of her leanness forward and aft; but though submerged, she offered a precarious footing, even in these extremities, to such as could reach them. On the other hand, the place where Rose stood, or the bilge of the vessel, was two or three feet above the surface of the sea, though slippery and inclining in shape.

It was not half a minute from the time that Mulford sprang to Rose's succour, ere he had her on the vessel's bottom. In another half minute, he had waded down on the schooner's counter, where Jack Tier was lustily calling to him for "help!" and assisted the widow to her feet, and supported her until she stood at Rose's side. Leaving the last in her aunt's arms, half distracted between dread and joy, he turned to the assistance of Biddy. The rope at which the Irish woman had caught, was a straggling end that had been made fast to the main channels of the schooner, for the support of a fender, and had been hauled partly in−board tokeep it out of the water. Biddy had found no difficulty in dragging herself up to the chains, therefore; and had she been content to sustain herself by the rope, leaving as much of her body submerged as comported with breathing, her task would have been easy. But, like most persons who do not know how to swim, the good woman was fast exhausting her strength, by vain efforts to walk on the surface of an element that was never made to sustain her. Unpractised persons, in such situations, cannot be taught to believe that their greatest safety is in leaving as much of their bodies as possible beneath the water, keeping the mouth and nose alone free for breath. But we have seen even instances in which men, who were in danger of drowning, seemed to believe it might be possible for them to craw! over the waves on their hands and knees. The philosophy of the contrary course is so very simple, that one would fancy a very child might be made to comprehend it; yet, it is rare to find one unaccustomed to the water, and who is suddenly exposed to its dangers, that does not resort, under the pressure of present alarm, to the very reverse of the true means to save his or her life.

Mulford had no difficulty in finding Bridget, whose exclamations of "murther!" "help!" "he−l−lup!" "Jasus!" and other similar cries, led him directly to the spot, where she was fast drowning herself by her own senseless struggles. Seizing her by the arm, the active young mate soon placed her on her feet, though her cries did not cease until she was ordered by her mistress to keep silence.

Having thus rescued the whole of his companions from immediate danger, Mulford began to think of the future. He was seized with sudden surprise that the vessel did not sink, and for a minute he was unable to account for the unusual fact. On the former occasion, the schooner had gone down almost as soon as she fell over; but now she floated with so much buoyancy as to leave most of her keel and all of her bilge on one side quite clear of the water. As one of the main hatches was off, and the cabin−doors, and booby−hatch doors forward were open, and all were under water, it required a little reflection on the part of Mulford to understand on what circumstance all their lives now depended. The mate soon ascertained the truth, however, and we may as well explain it to the reader in our own fashion, in order to put him on a level with the young seaman.

The puff of wind, or little squall, had struck the schooner at the most unfavourable moment for her safety. She had just lost her way in tacking, and the hull not moving ahead, as happens when a craft is thus assailed with the motion on her, all the power of the wind was expended in the direction necessary to capsize her. Another disadvantage arose from the want of motion. The rudder, which acts solely by pressing against the water as the

vessel meets it, was useless, and it was not possible to luff, and throw the wind from the sails, as is usually practised by fore−and−aft rigged craft, in moments of such peril. In consequence of these united difficulties, the shifting of the cargo in the hold, the tenderness of the craft itself, and the force of the squall, the schooner had gone so far over as to carry all three of the openings to her interior suddenly under water, where they remained, held by the pressure of the cargo that had rolled to leeward. Had not the water completely covered these openings, or hatches, the schooner must have sunk in a minute or two, or by the time Mulford had got all his companions safe on her bilge. But they were completely submerged, and so continued to be, which circumstance alone prevented the vessel from sinking, as the following simple explanation will show.

Any person who will put an empty tumbler, bottom upwards, into a bucket of water, will find that the water will not rise within the tumbler more than an inch at most. At that point it is arrested by the resistance of the air, which, unable to escape, and compressed into a narrow compass, forms a body that the other fluid cannot penetrate. It is on this simple and familiar principle, that the chemist keeps his gases, in inverted glasses, placing them on shelves, slightly submerged in water. Thus it was, then, that the schooner continued to float, though nearly bottom upward, and with three inlets open, by which the water could and did penetrate. A considerable quantity of the element had rushed in at the instant of capsizing, but meeting with resistance from the compressed and pent air, its progress had been arrested, and the wreck continued to float, sustained by the buoyancy that was imparted to it, in containing so large abody of a substance no heavier than atmospheric air. After displacing its weight of water, enough of buoyancy remained to raise the keel a few feet above the level of the sea.

As soon as Mulford had ascertained the facts of their situation, he communicated them to his companions, encouraging them to hope for eventual safety. It was true, their situation was nearly desperate, admitting that the wreck should continue to float for ever, since they were almost without food, or anything to drink, and had no means of urging the hull through the water. They must float, too, at the mercy of the winds and waves, and should a sea get up, it might soon be impossible for Mulford himself to maintain his footing on the bottom of the wreck. All this the young man had dimly shadowed forth to him, through his professional experience; but the certainty of the vessel's not sinking immediately had so far revived his spirits, as to cause him to look on the bright side of the future, pale as that glimmering of hope was made to appear whenever reason cast one of its severe glances athwart it.

Harry had no difficulty in making Rose comprehend their precise situation. Her active and clear mind understood at once the causes of their present preservation, and most of the hazards of the future. It was not so with Jack Tier. He was composed, even resigned; but he could not see the reason why the schooner still floated.

"I know that the cabin−doors were open," he said, "and if they wasn't, of no great matter would it be, since the joints ar'n't caulked, and the water would run through them as through a sieve. I'm afeard, Mr. Mulford, we shall find the wreck going from under our feet afore long, and when we least wish it, perhaps."

"I tell you the wreck will float so long as the air remains in its hold," returned the mate, cheerfully. "Do you not see how buoyant it is? the certain proof that there is plenty of air within. So long as that remains, the hull must float."

"I've always understood," said Jack, sticking to his opinion, "that wessels floats by vartue of water, and not by vartue of air; and, that when the water gets on the wrong side on 'em, there's little hope left of keepin' 'em up."

"What has become of the boat?" suddenly cried the mate. "I have been so much occupied as to have forgottenthe boat. In that boat we might all of us still reach Key West. I see nothing of the boat!"

A profound silence succeeded this sudden and unexpected question. All knew that the boat was gone, and all knew that it had been lost by the widow's pertinacity and clumsiness; but no one felt disposed to betray her at that grave moment. Mulford left the bilge, and waded as far aft as it was at all prudent for him to proceed, in the vain

hope that the boat might be there, fastened by its painter to the schooner's tafferel, as he had left it, but concealed from view by the darkness of the night. Not finding what he was after, he returned to his companions, still uttering exclamations of surprise at the unaccountable loss of the boat. Rose now told him that the boat had got adrift some ten or fifteen minutes before the accident befell them, and that they were actually endeavouring to recover it when the squall which capsized the schooner struck them.

"And why did you not call me, Rose?" asked Harry, with a little of gentle reproach in his manner. "It must have soon been my watch on deck, and it would have been better that I should lose half an hour of my watch below, than that we should lose the boat."

Rose was now obliged to confess that the time for calling him had long been past, and that the faint streak of light, which was just appearing in the east, was the near approach of day. This explanation was made gently, but frankly; and Mulford experienced a glow of pleasure at his heart, even in that moment of jeopardy, when he understood Rose's motive for not having him disturbed. As the boat was gone, with little or no prospect of its being recovered again, no more was said about it; and the window, who had stood on thorns the while, had the relief of believing that her awkwardness was forgotten.

It was such a relief from an imminent danger to have escaped from drowning when the schooner capsized, that those on her bottom did not, for some little time, realize all the terrors of their actual situation. The inconvenience of being wet was a trifle not to be thought of, and, in fact, the light summer dresses worn by all, linen or cotton as they were entirely, were soon effectually dried in the wind. The keel made a tolerably convenient seat, and the wholeparty placed themselves on it to await the return of day, in order to obtain a view of all that their situation offered in the way of a prospect. While thus awaiting, a broken and short dialogue occurred.

"Had you stood to the northward the whole night?" asked Mulford, gloomily, of Jack Tier; for gloomily he began to feel, as all the facts of their case began to press more closely on his mind. "If so, we must be well off the reef, and out of the track of wreckers and turtlers. How had you the wind, and how did you head before the accident happened?"

"The wind was light the whole time, and for some hours it was nearly calm," answered Jack, in the same vein; "I kept the schooner's head to the nor'ard, until I thought we were getting too far off our course, and then I put her about. I do not think we could have been any great distance from the reef, when the boat got away from us, and I suppose we are in its neighbourhood now, for I was tacking to fall in with the boat when the craft went over."

"To fall in with the boat! Did you keep off to leeward of it, then, that you expected to fetch it by tacking?"

"Ay, a good bit; and I think the boat is now away here to windward of us, drifting athwart our bows."

This was important news to Mulford. Could he only get that boat, the chances of being saved would be increased a hundred fold, nay, would almost amount to a certainty; whereas, so long as the wind held to the southward and eastward, the drift of the wreck must be toward the open water, and consequently so much the further removed from the means of succor. The general direction of the trades, in that quarter of the world, is east, and should they get round into their old and proper quarter, it would not benefit them much; for the reef running south−west, they could scarcely hope to hit the Dry Tortugas again, in their drift, were life even spared them sufficiently long to float the distance. Then there might be currents, about which Mulford knew nothing with certainty; they might set them in any direction; and did they exist, as was almost sure to be the case, were much more powerful than the wind in controlling the movements of a wreck.

The mate strained his eyes in the direction pointed out by Jack Tier, in the hope of discovering the boat through the haze of the morning, and he actually did discern something that, it appeared to him, might be the much desired little craft. If he were right, there was every reason to think the boat would drift down so near them as to enable

him to recover it by swimming. This cheering intelligence was communicated to his companions, who received it with gratitude and delight. But the approach of day gradually dispelled that hope, the object which Mulford had mistaken for the boat, within two hundred yards of the wreck, turning out to be a small, low, but bare hummock of the reef, at a distance of more than two miles.

"That is a proof that we are not far from the reef, at least," cried Mulford, willing to encourage those around him all he could, and really much relieved at finding himself so near even this isolated fragment of terra firma. "This fact is the next encouraging thing to finding ourselves near the boat, or to falling in with a sail."

"Ay, ay," said Jack, gloomily; "boat or no boat, 't will make no great matter of difference now. There's customers that'll be sartain to take all the grists you can send to their mill."

"What things are those glancing about the vessel?" cried Rose, almost in the same breath; "those dark, sharp−looking sticks see, there are five or six of them! and they move as if fastened to something under the water that pulls them about."

"Them's the customers I mean, Miss Rose," answered Jack, in the same strain as that in which he had first spoken; "they're the same thing at sea as lawyers be ashore, and seem made to live on other folks. Them's sharks."

"And yonder is truly the boat!" added Mulford, with a sigh that almost amounted to a groan. The light had, by this time, so far returned as to enable the party not only to see the fins of half a dozen sharks, which were already prowling about the wreck, the almost necessary consequence of their proximity to a reef in that latitude, but actually to discern the boat drifting down toward them, at a distance that promised to carry it past, within the reach of Mulford's powers of swimming, though not as near as he could havewished, even under more favourable circumstances. Had their extremity been greater, or had Rose begun to suffer from hunger or thirst, Mulford might have attempted the experiment of endeavoring to regain the boat, though the chances of death by means of the sharks would be more than equal to those of escape; but still fresh, and not yet feeling even the heat of the sun of that low latitude, he was not quite goaded into such an act of desperation. All that remained for the party, therefore, was to sit on the keel of the wreck, and gaze with longing eyes at a little object floating past, which, once at their command, might so readily be made to save them from a fate that already began to appear terrible in the perspective. Near an hour was thus consumed, ere the boat was about half a mile to leeward; during which scarcely an eye was turned from it for one instant, or a word was spoken.

"It is beyond my reach now," Mulford at length exclaimed, sighing heavily, like one who became conscious of some great and irretrievable loss. "Were there no sharks, I could hardly venture to attempt swimming so far, with the boat drifting from me at the same time."

"I should never consent to let you make the trial, Harry," murmured Rose, "though it were only half as far."

Another pause succeeded.

"We have now the light of day," resumed the mate, a minute or two later, "and may see our true situation. No sail is in sight, and the wind stands steadily in its old quarter. Still I do not think we leave the reef. There, you may see breakers off here at the southward, and it seems as if more rocks rise above the sea, in that direction. I do not know that our situation would be any the better, however, were we actually on them, instead of being on this floating wreck."

"The rocks will never sink," said Jack Tier, with so much emphasis as to startle the listeners.

"I do not think this hull will sink until we are taken off it, or are beyond caring whether it sink or swim," returned Mulford.

"I do not know that, Mr. Mulford. Nothing keeps us up but the air in the hold, you say."

"Certainly not; but that air will suffice as long as it remains there."

"And what do you call these things?" rejoined the assistant steward, pointing at the water near him, in or on which no one else saw anything worthy of attention.

Mulford, however, was not satisfied with a cursory glance, but went nearer to the spot where Tier was standing. Then, indeed, he saw to what the steward alluded, and was impressed by it, though he said nothing. Hundreds of little bubbles rose to the surface of the water, much as one sees them rising in springs. These bubbles are often met with in lakes and other comparatively shallow waters, but they are rarely seen in those of the ocean. The mate understood, at a glance, that those he now beheld were produced by the air which escaped from the hold of the wreck; in small quantities at a time, it was true, but by a constant and increasing process. The great pressure of the water forced this air through crevices so minute that, under ordinary circumstances, they would have proved impenetrable to this, as they were still to the other fluid, though they now permitted the passage of the former. It might take a long time to force the air from the interior of the vessel by such means, but the result was as certain as it might be slow. As constant dropping will wear a stone, so might the power that kept the wreck afloat be exhausted by the ceaseless rising of these minute air−bubbles.

Although Mulford was entirely sensible of the nature of this new source of danger, we cannot say he was much affected by it at the moment. It seemed to him far more probable that they must die of exhaustion, long before the wreck would lose all of its buoyancy by this slow process, than that even the strongest of their number could survive for such a period. The new danger, therefore, lost most of its terrors under this view of the subject, though it certainly did not add to the small sense of security that remained, to know that inevitably their fate must be sealed through its agency, should they be able to hold out for a sufficient time against hunger and thirst. It caused Mulford to muse in silence for many more minutes.

"I hope we are not altogether without food," the mate at length said. "It sometimes happens that persons at seacarry pieces of biscuit in their pockets, especially those who keep watch at night. The smallest morsel is now of the last importance."

At this suggestion, every one set about an examination. The result was, that neither Mrs. Budd nor Rose had a particle of food, of any sort, about their persons. Biddy produced from her pockets, however, a whole biscuit, a large bunch of excellent raisins that she had filched from the steward's stores, and two apples, the last being the remains of some fruit that Spike had procured a month earlier in New York. Mulford had half a biscuit, at which he had been accustomed to nibble in his watches; and Jack lugged out, along with a small plug of tobacco, a couple of sweet oranges. Here, then, was everything in the shape of victuals or drink, that could be found for the use of five persons, in all probability for many days. The importance of securing it for equal distribution, was so obvious, that Mulford's proposal to do so met with a common assent. The whole was put in Mrs. Budd's bag, and she was intrusted with the keeping of this precious store.

"It may be harder to abstain from food at first, when we have not suffered from its want, than it will become after a little endurance," said the mate. "We are now strong, and it will be wiser to fast as long as we conveniently can, to−day, and relieve our hunger by a moderate allowance toward evening, than to waste our means by too much indulgence at a time when we are strong. Weakness will be sure to come if we remain long on the wreck."

"Have you ever suffered in this way, Harry?" demanded Rose, with interest.

"I have, and that dreadfully. But a merciful Providence came to my rescue then, and it may not fail me now. The seaman is accustomed to carry his life in his hand, and to live on the edge of eternity."

The truth of this was so apparent as to produce a thoughtful silence. Anxious glances were cast around the horizon from time to time, in quest of any sail that might come in sight, but uselessly. None appeared, and the day advanced without bringing the slightest prospect of relief. Mulford could see, by the now almost sunken hummocks, that they were slowly drifting along the reef, toward the southwardand eastward, a current no doubt acting slightly from the north−west. Their proximity to the reef, however, was of no advantage, as the distance was still so great as to render any attempt to reach it, even on the part of the mate, unavailable. Nor would he have been any better off could he have gained a spot on the rocks that was shallow enough to admit of his walking, since wading about in such a place would have been less desirable than to be floating where he was.

The want of water to drink threatened to be the great evil. Of this, the party on the wreck had not a single drop! As the warmth of the day was added to the feverish feeling produced by excitement, they all experienced thirst, though no one murmured. So utterly without means of relieving this necessity did each person know them all to be, that no one spoke on the subject at all. In fact, shipwreck never produced a more complete destitution of all the ordinary agents of helping themselves, in any form or manner, than was the case here. So sudden and complete had been the disaster, that not a single article, beyond those on the persons of the sufferers, came even in view. The masts, sails, rigging, spare spars, in a word, everything belonging to the vessel was submerged and hidden from their sight, with the exception of a portion of the vessel's bottom, which might be forty feet in length, and some ten or fifteen in width, including that which was above water on both sides of the keel, though one only of these sides was available to the females, as a place to move about on. Had Mulford only a boat−hook, he would have felt it a relief; for not only did the sharks increase in number, but they grew more audacious, swimming so near the wreck that, more than once, Mulford apprehended that some one of the boldest of them might make an effort literally to board them. It is true, he had never known of one of these fishes attempting to quit his own element in pursuit of his prey; but such things were reported, and those around the wreck swam so close, and seemed so eager to get at those who were on it, that there really might be some excuse for fancying they might resort to unusual means of effecting their object. It is probable that, like all other animals, they were emboldened by their own numbers, and wereacting in a sort of concert, that was governed by some of the many mysterious laws of nature that have still escaped human observation.

Thus passed the earlier hours of that appalling day. Toward noon, Mulford had insisted on the females dividing one of the oranges between them, and extracting its juice by way of assuaging their thirst. The effect was most grateful, as all admitted, and even Mrs. Budd urged Harry and Tier to take a portion of the remaining orange; but this both steadily refused. Mulford did consent to receive a small portion of one of the apples, more with a view of moistening his throat than to appease his hunger, though it had, in a slight degree, the latter effect also. As for Jack Tier, he declined even the morsel of apple, saying that tobacco answered his purpose, as indeed it temporarily might.

It was near sunset, when the steward's assistant called Mulford aside, and whispered to him that he had something private to communicate. The mate bade him say on, as they were out of ear−shot of their companions.

"I've been in sitiations like this afore," said Jack, "and one l'arns exper'ence by exper'ence. I know how cruel it is on the feelin's to have the hopes disapp'inted in these cases, and therefore shall proceed with caution. But, Mr. Mulford, there's a sail in sight, if there is a drop of water in the Gulf!"

"A sail, Jack! I trust in Heaven you are not deceived!"

"Old eyes are true eyes in such matters, sir. Be careful not to start the women. They go off like gunpowder, and, Lord help 'em! have no more command over themselves, when you loosen 'em once, than so many flying−fish with a dozen dolphins a'ter them. Look hereaway, sir, just clear of the Irishwoman's bonnet, a little broad off the spot where the reef was last seen if that an't a sail, my flame is not Jack Tier."

A sail there was, sure enough! It was so very distant, however, as to render its character still uncertain, though Mulford fancied it was a square−rigged vessel heading to the northward. By its position, it must be in one of the channels of the reef, and by its course, if he were not deceived, it was standing through, from the main passagealong the southern side of the rocks, to come out on the northern. All this was favourable, and at first the young mate felt such a throbbing of the heart as we all experience when great and unexpected good intelligence is received. A moment's reflection, however, made him aware how little was to be hoped for from this vessel. In the first place, her distance was so great as to render it uncertain even which way she was steering. Then, there was the probability that she would pass at so great a distance as to render it impossible to perceive an object as low as the wreck, and the additional chance of her passing in the night. Under all the circumstances, therefore, Mulford felt convinced that there was very little probability of their receiving any succour from the strange sail; and he fully appreciated Jack Tier's motive in forbearing to give the usual call of "Sail, ho!" when he made this discovery. Still, he could not deny himself the pleasure of communicating to Rose the cheering fact that a vessel was actually in sight. She could not reason on the circumstances as he had done, and might at least pass several hours of comparative happiness by believing that there was some visible chance of delivery.

The females received the intelligence with very different degrees of hope. Rose was delighted. To her their rescue appeared an event so very probable now, that Harry Mulford almost regretted he had given rise to an expectation which he himself feared was to be disappointed. The feelings of Mrs. Budd were more suppressed. The wreck and her present situation were so completely at variance with all her former notions of the sea and its incidents, that she was almost dumb−founded, and feared either to speak or to think. Biddy differed from either of her mistresses the young or the old; she appeared to have lost all hope, and her physical energy was fast giving way under her profound moral debility.

From the return of light that day, Mulford had thought, if it were to prove that Providence had withdrawn its protecting hand from them, Biddy, who to all appearance ought to be the longest liver among the females at least, would be the first to sink under her sufferings. Such is the influence of moral causes on the mere animal.

Rose saw the night shut in around them, amid the solemnsolitude of the ocean, with a mingled sensation of awe and hope. She had prayed devoutly, and often, in the course of the preceding day, and her devotions had contributed to calm her spirits. Once or twice, while kneeling with her head bowed to the keel, she had raised her eyes toward Harry with a look of entreaty, as if she would implore him to humble his proud spirit and place himself at her side, and ask that succour from God which was so much needed, and which indeed it began most seriously to appear that God alone could yield. The young mate did not comply, for his pride of profession and of manhood offered themselves as stumbling−blocks to prevent submission to his secret wishes. Though he rarely prayed, Harry Mulford was far from being an unbeliever, or one altogether regardless of his duties and obligations to his Divine Creator. On the contrary, his heart was more disposed to resort to such means of self−abasement and submission, than he put in practice, and this because he had been taught to believe that the Anglo−Saxon mariner did not call on Hercules, on every occasion of difficulty and distress that occurred, as was the fashion with the Italian and Romish seamen, but he put his own shoulder to the wheel, confident that Hercules would not forget to help him who knew how to help himself. But Harry had great difficulty in withstanding Rose's silent appeal that evening, as she knelt at the keel for the last time, and turned her gentle eyes upward at him, as if to ask him once more to take his place at her side. Withstand the appeal he did, however, though in his inward spirit he prayed fervently to God to put away this dreadful affliction from the young and innocent creature before him. When these evening devotions were ended, the whole party became thoughtful and silent.

It was necessary to sleep, and arrangements were made to do so, if possible, with a proper regard for their security. Mulford and Tier were to have the look−out, watch and watch. This was done that no vessel might pass near them unseen, and that any change in the weather might be noted and looked to. As it was, the wind had fallen, and seemed about to vary, though it yet stood in its old quarter, or a little more easterly, perhaps. As a consequence, the drift of the wreck, insomuch as it depended on the currents of the air, was more nearly in a line with the direction of the reef, and there was little ground for apprehending that they might be driven further from

it in the night. Although that reef offered in reality no place of safety, that was available to his party, Mulford felt it as a sort of relief, to be certain that it was not distant, possibly influenced by a vague hope that some passing wrecker or turtler might yet pick them up.

The bottom of the schooner and the destitute condition of the party admitted of only very simple arrangements for the night. The females placed themselves against the keel in the best manner they could, and thus endeavoured to get a little of the rest they so much needed. The day had been warm, as a matter of course, and the contrast produced by the setting of the sun was at first rather agreeable than otherwise. Luckily Rose had thrown a shawl over her shoulders, not long before the vessel capsized, and in this shawl she had been saved. It had been dried, and it now served for a light covering to herself and her aunt, and added essentially to their comfort. As for Biddy, she was too hardy to need a shawl, and she protested that she should not think of using one, had she been better provided. The patient, meek manner in which that humble, but generous−hearted creature submitted to her fate, and the earnestness with which she had begged that "Miss Rosy" might have her morsel of the portion of biscuit each received for a supper, had sensibly impressed Mulford in her favour; and knowing how much more necessary food was to sustain one of her robust frame and sturdy habits, than to Rose, he had contrived to give the woman, unknown to herself, a double allowance. Nor was it surprising that Biddy did not detect this little act of fraud in her favour, for this double allowance was merely a single mouthful. The want of water had made itself much more keenly felt than the want of food, for as yet anxiety, excitement and apprehension prevented the appetite from being much awakened, while the claims of thirst were increased rather than the reverse, by these very causes. Still, no one had complained, on this or any other account, throughout the whole of the long and weary day which had passed.

Mulford took the first look−out, with the intention of catching a little sleep, if possible, during the middle hours of thenight, and of returning to his duty as morning approached. For the first hour nothing occurred to divert his attention from brooding on the melancholy circumstances of their situation. It seemed as if all around him had actually lost the sense of their cares in sleep, and no sound was audible amid that ocean waste, but the light washing of the water, as the gentle waves rolled at intervals against the weather side of the wreck. It was now that Mulford found a moment for prayer, and seated on the keel, that he called on the Divine aid, in a fervent but silent petition to God, to put away this trial from the youthful and beautiful Rose, at least, though he himself perished. It was the first prayer that Mulford had made in many months, or since he had joined the Swash a craft in which that duty was very seldom thought of.

A few minutes succeeded this petition, when Biddy spoke.

"Missus Madam Budd dear Missus" half whispered the Irish woman, anxious not to disturb Rose, who lay furthest from her "Missus, bees ye asleep at sich a time as this?"

"No, Biddy; sleep and I are strangers to each other, and are likely to be till morning. What do you wish to say?"

"Anything is better than my own t'oughts, missus dear, and I wants to talk to ye. Is it no wather at all they'll give us so long as we stay in this place?"

"There is no one to give it to us but God, poor Biddy, and he alone can say what, in his gracious mercy, it may please him to do. Ah! Biddy, I fear me that I did an unwise and thoughtless thing, to bring my poor Rose to such a place as this. Were it to be done over again, the riches of Wall Street would not tempt me to be guilty of so wrong a thing!"

The arm of Rose was thrown around her aunt's neck, and its gentle pressure announced how completely the offender was forgiven.

"I's very sorry for Miss Rose," rejoined Biddy "and I suffers so much the more meself in thinking how hard it must be for the like of her to be wantin' in a swallow of fresh wather."

"It is no harder for me to bear it, poor Biddy," answered the gentle voice of our heroine, "than it is for yourself."

"Is it meself then? Sure am I, that if I had a quar−r−t of good, swate wather from our own pump, and that's far betther is it than the Crothon the best day the Crothon ever seed but had I a quar−r−t of it, every dhrap would I give to you, Miss Rose, to app'ase your thirst, I would."

"Water would be a great relief to us all, just now, my excellent Biddy," answered Rose, "and I wish we had but a tumbler full of that you name, to divide equally among the whole five of us."

"Is it divide? Then it would be ag'in dividin' that my voice would be raised, for that same ra'son that the tumbler would never hold as much as you could dhrink yourself, Miss Rose."

"Yet the tumbler full would be a great blessing for us all, just now," murmured Mrs. Budd.

"And is n't mutthon good 'atin', ladies! Och! if I had but a good swate pratie, now, from my own native Ireland, and a dhrap of milk to help wash it down! It's mighty little that a body thinks of sich thrifles when there's abundance of them; but when there's none at all, they get to be stronger in the mind than riches and honours."

"You say the truth, Biddy," rejoined the mistress, "and there is a pleasure in talking of them, if one can't enjoy them. I've been thinking all the afternoon, Rose, what a delicious food is a good roast turkey, with cranberry sauce; and I wonder, now, that I have not been more grateful for the very many that Providence has bestowed on me in my time. My poor Mr. Budd was passionately fond of mutton, and I used wickedly to laugh at his fondness for it, sometimes, when he always had his answer ready, and that was that there are no sheep at sea. How true that is, Rosy dear! there are indeed no sheep at sea!"

"No, aunty," answered Rose's gentle voice from beneath the shawl; "there are no such animals on the ocean, but God is with us here as much as he would be in New York."

A long silence succeeded this simple remark of his well beloved, and the young mate hoped that there would be no more of a dialogue, every syllable of which was a dagger to his feelings. But nature was stronger than reflection in Mrs. Budd and Biddy, and the latter spoke again, after a pause of near a quarter of an hour.

"Pray for me, Missus," she said, moaningly, "that I may sleep. A bit of sleep would do a body almost as much good as a bit of bread I won't say as much as a dhrap of wather."

"Be quiet, Biddy, and we will pray for you," answered Rose, who fancied by her breathing that her aunt was about to forget her sufferings for a brief space, in broken slumbers.

"Is it for you I'll do that and sure will I, Miss Rose. Niver would I have quitted Ireland, could I have thought there was sich a spot on this earth as a place where no wather was to be had."

This was the last of Biddy's audible complaints, for the remainder of this long and anxious watch of Mulford. He then set himself about an arrangement which shall be mentioned in its proper place. At twelve o'clock, or when he thought it was twelve, he called Jack Tier, who in turn called the mate again at four.

"It looks dark and threatening," said Mulford, as he rose to his feet and began to look about him once more, "though there does not appear to be any wind."

"It's a flat calm, Mr. Mate, and the darkness comes from yonder cloud, which seems likely to bring a little rain."

"Rain! Then God is indeed with us here. You are right, Jack; rain must fall from that cloud. We must catch some of it, if it be only a drop to cool Rose's parched tongue."

"In what?" answered Tier, gloomily. "She may wring her clothes when the shower is over, and in that way get a drop. I see no other method."

"I have bethought me of all that, and passed most of my watch in making the preparations."

Mulford then showed Tier what he had been about, in the long and solitary hours of the first watch. It would seem that the young man had dug a little trench with his knife, along the schooner's bottom, commencing two or three feet from the keel, and near the spot where Rose was lying, and carrying it as far as was convenient toward the run, until he reached a point where he had dug out a sort of reservoir to contain the precious fluid, should any be sent them by Providence. While doing this, there were no signs of rain; but the young man knew that a shower alone could save them from insanity, if not from death; and in speculating on the means of profiting by one, should it come, he had bethought him of this expedient. The large knife of a seaman had served him a good turn, in carrying on his work, to complete which there remained now very little to do, and that was in enlarging the receptacle for the water. The hole was already big enough to contain a pint, and it might easily be sufficiently enlarged to hold double that quantity.

Jack was no sooner made acquainted with what had been done, than he out knife and commenced tearing splinter after splinter from the planks, to help enlarge the reservoir. This could only be done by cutting on the surface, for the wood was not three inches in thickness, and the smallest hole through the plank, would have led to the rapid escape of the air and to the certain sinking of the wreck. It required a good deal of judgment to preserve the necessary level also, and Mulford was obliged to interfere more than once to prevent his companion from doing more harm than good. He succeeded, however, and had actually made a cavity that might contain more than a quart of water, when the first large drop fell from the heavens. This cavity was not a hole, but a long, deep trench deep for the circumstances so nicely cut on the proper level, as to admit of its holding a fluid in the quantity mentioned.

"Rose dearest rise, and be ready to drink," said Mulford, tenderly disturbing the uneasy slumbers of his beloved. "It is about to rain, and God is with us here, as he might be on the land."

"Wather!" exclaimed Biddy, who was awoke with the same call. "What a blessed thing is good swate wather, and sure am I we ought all to be thankful that there is such a precious gift in the wor−r−ld."

"Come, then," said Mulford, hurriedly, "it will soon rain I hear it pattering on the sea. Come hither, all of you, and drink, as a merciful God furnishes the means."

This summons was not likely to be neglected. All arose in haste, and the word "water" was murmured from every lip. Biddy had less self−command than the others, and she was heard saying aloud, "Och! and did n't I dhrame of the blessed springs and wells of Ireland the night, andhaven't I dhrunk at 'em all? but now it's over, and I am awake, no good has't done me, and I'm ready to die for one dhrap of wather."

That drop soon came, however, and with it the blessed relief which such a boon bestows. Mulford had barely time to explain his arrangements, and to place the party on their knees, along his little reservoir and the gutter which led to it, when the pattering of the rain advanced along the sea, with a deep rushing sound. Presently, the uplifted faces and open mouths caught a few heavy straggling drops, to cool the parched tongues, when the water came tumbling down upon them in a thousand little streams. There was scarcely any wind, and merely the skirt of a large black cloud floated over the wreck, on which the rain fell barely one minute. But it fell as rain comes down

within the tropics, and in sufficient quantities for all present purposes. Everybody drank, and found relief, and, when all was over, Mulford ascertained by examination that his receptacle for the fluid was still full to overflowing. The abstinence had not been of sufficient length, nor the quantity taken of large enough amount, to produce injury, though the thirst was generally and temporarily appeased. It is probable that the coolness of the hour, day dawning as the cloud moved past, and the circumstance that the sufferers were wetted to their skins, contributed to the change.

"Oh, blessed, blessed wather!" exclaimed Biddy, as she rose from her knees; "America, afther all, isn't as dhry a country as some say. I've niver tasted swater wather in Ireland itself!"

Rose murmured her thanksgiving in more appropriate language. A few exclamations also escaped Mrs. Budd, and Jack Tier had his sententious eulogy on the precious qualities of sweet water.

The wind rose as the day advanced, and a swell began to heave the wreck with a power that had hitherto been dormant. Mulford understood this to be a sign that there had been a blow at some distance from them, that had thrown the sea into a state of agitation, which extended itself beyond the influence of the wind. Eagerly did the young mate examine the horizon, as the curtain of night arose, inch by inch, as it might be, on the watery panorama, in the hope that a vessel of some sort or other might be brought within the view. Nor was he wholly disappointed. The strange sail seen the previous evening was actually there; and what was more, so near as to allow her hull to be distinctly visible. It was a ship, under her square canvas, standing from between divided portions of the reef, as if getting to the northward, in order to avoid the opposing current of the Gulf Stream. Vessels bound to Mobile, New Orleans, and other ports along the coast of the Republic, in that quarter of the ocean, often did this; and when the young mate first caught glimpses of the shadowy outline of this ship, he supposed it to be some packet, or cotton−droger, standing for her port on the northern shore. But a few minutes removed the veil, and with it the error of this notion. A seaman could no longer mistake the craft. Her length, her square and massive hamper, with the symmetry of her spars, and the long, straight outline of the hull, left no doubt that it was a cruiser, with her hammocks unstowed. Mulford now cheerfully announced to his companions, that the ship they so plainly saw, scarcely a gun−shot distant from them, was the sloop−of−war which had already become a sort of an acquaintance.

"If we can succeed in making them see our signal," cried Mulford, "all will yet be well. Come, Jack, and help me to put abroad this shawl, the only ensign we can show."

The shawl of Rose was the signal spread. Tier and Mulford stood on the keel, and holding opposite corners, let the rest of the cloth blow out with the wind. For near an hour did these two extend their arms, and try all possible expedients to make their signal conspicuous. But, unfortunately, the wind blew directly toward the cruiser, and instead of exposing a surface of any breadth to the vision of those on board her, it must, at most, have offered little more than a flitting, waving line.

As the day advanced, sail was made on the cruiser. She had stood through the passage, in which she had been becalmed most of the night, under short canvas; but now she threw out fold after fold of her studding−sails, and moved away to the westward, with the stately motion of a ship before the wind. No sooner had she got far enough to thenorthward of the reef, than she made a deviation from her course as first seen, turning her stern entirely to the wreck, and rapidly becoming less and less distinct to the eyes of those who floated on it.

Mulford saw the hopelessness of their case, as it respected relief from this vessel; still, he persevered in maintaining his position on the keel, tossing and waving the shawl, in all the variations that his ingenuity could devise. He well knew, however, that their chances of being seen would have been trebled could they have been ahead instead of astern of the ship. Mariners have few occasions to look behind them, while a hundred watchful eyes are usually turned ahead, more especially when running near rocks and shoals. Mrs. Budd wept like an infant when she saw the sloop−of−war gliding away, reaching a distance that rendered sight useless, in detecting an

object that floated as low on the water as the wreck. As for Biddy, unable to control her feelings, the poor creature actually called to the crew of the departing vessel, as if her voice had the power to make itself heard, at a distance which already exceeded two leagues. It was only by means of the earnest remonstrances of Rose, that the faithful creature could be quieted.

"Why will ye not come to our relaif?" she cried at the top of her voice. "Here are we, helpless as new−born babies, and ye sailing away from us in a conthrary way! D'ye not bethink you of the missus, who is much of a sailor, but not sich a one as to sail on a wrack; and poor Miss Rose, who is the char−rm and delight of all eyes. Only come and take off Miss Rose, and lave the rest of us, if ye so likes; for it's a sin and a shame to lave the likes of her to die in the midst of the ocean, as if she was no betther nor a fish. Then it will be soon that we shall ag'in feel the want of wather, and that, too, with nothing but wather to be seen on all sides of us."

"It is of no use," said Harry, mournfully, stepping down from the keel, and laying aside the shawl. "They cannot see us, and the distance is now so great as to render it certain they never will. There is only one hope left. We are evidently set to and fro by the tides, and it is possible that by keeping in or near this passage, some other craft may appear, and we be more fortunate. The relief of therain is a sign that we are not forgotten by Divine Providence, and with such a protector we ought not to despair."

A gloomy and scanty breaking of the fast succeeded. Each person had one large mouthful of bread, which was all that prudence would authorize Mulford to distribute. He attempted a pious fraud, however, by placing his own allowance along with that of Rose's, under the impression that her strength might not endure privation as well as his own. But the tender solicitude of Rose was not to be thus deceived. Judging of his wishes and motives by her own, she at once detected the deception, and insisted on retaining no more than her proper share. When this distribution was completed, and the meagre allowance taken, only sufficient bread remained to make one more similar scanty meal, if meal a single mouthful could be termed. As for the water, a want of which would be certain to be felt as soon as the sun obtained its noon−day power, the shawl was extended over it, in a way to prevent evaporation as much as possible, and at the same time to offer some resistance to the fluid's being washed from its shallow receptacle by the motion of the wreck, which was sensibly increasing with the increase of the wind and waves.

Mulford had next an anxious duty to perform. Throughout the whole of the preceding day he had seen the air escaping from the hull, in an incessant succession of small bubbles, which were formidable through their numbers, if not through their size. The mate was aware that this unceasing loss of the buoyant property of the wreck, must eventually lead to their destruction, should no assistance come, and he had marked the floating line, on the bottom of the vessel with his knife, ere darkness set in, on the previous evening. No sooner did his thoughts recur to this fact, after the excitement of the first hour of daylight was over, than he stepped to the different places thus marked, and saw, with an alarm that it would be difficult to describe, that the wreck had actually sunk into the water several inches within the last few hours. This was, indeed, menacing their security in a most serious manner, setting a limit to their existence, which rendered all precaution on the subject of food and water useless. By the calculations of the mate, the wreck could not float more than eight−and−fortyhours, should it continue to lose the air at the rate at which it had been hitherto lost. Bad as all this appeared, things were fated to become much more serious. The motion of the water quite sensibly increased, lifting the wreck at times in a way greatly to increase the danger of their situation. The reader will understand this movement did not proceed from the waves of the existing wind, but from what is technically called a ground−swell, or the long, heavy undulations that are left by the tempest that is past, or by some distant gale. The waves of the present breeze were not very formidable, the reef making a lee; though they might possibly become inconvenient from breaking on the weather side of the wreck, as soon as the drift carried the latter fairly abreast of the passage already mentioned. But the dangers that proceeded from the heavy ground−swell, which now began to give a considerable motion to the wreck, will best explain itself by narrating the incidents as they occurred.

Harry had left his marks, and had taken his seat on the keel at Rose's side, impatiently waiting for any turn that Providence might next give to their situation, when a heavy roll of the wreck first attracted his attention to this new circumstance.

"If any one is thirsty," he observed quietly, "he or she had better drink now, while it may be done. Two or three more such rolls as this last will wash all the water from our gutters."

"Wather is a blessed thing," said Biddy, with a longing expression of the eyes, "and it would be betther to swallow it than to let it be lost."

"Then drink, for Heaven's sake, good woman it may be the last occasion that will offer."

"Sure am I that I would not touch a dhrap, while the missus and Miss Rosy was a sufferin'."

"I have no thirst at all," answered Rose, sweetly, "and have already taken more water than was good for me, with so little food on my stomach."

"Eat another morsel of the bread, beloved," whispered Harry, in a manner so urgent that Rose gratefully complied. "Drink, Biddy, and we will come and share with you before the water is wasted by this increasing motion."

Biddy did as desired, and each knelt in turn and took a little of the grateful fluid, leaving about a gill in the gutters for the use of those whose lips might again become parched.

"Wather is a blessed thing," repeated Biddy, for the twentieth time "a blessed, blessed thing is wather!"

A little scream from Mrs. Budd, which was dutifully taken up by the maid, interrupted the speech of the latter, and every eye was turned on Mulford, as if to ask an explanation of the groaning sound that had been heard within the wreck. The young mate comprehended only too well. The rolling of the wreck had lifted a portion of the open hatchway above the undulating surface of the sea, and a large quantity of the pent air within the hold had escaped in a body. The entrance of water to supply the vacuum had produced the groan. Mulford had made new marks on the vessel's bottom with his knife, and he stepped down to them, anxious and nearly heart−broken, to note the effect. That one surging of the wreck had permitted air enough to escape to lower it in the water several inches. As yet, however, the visible limits of their floating foundation had not been sufficiently reduced to attract the attention of the females; and the young man said nothing on the subject. He thought that Jack Tier was sensible of the existence of this new source of danger, but if he were, that experienced mariner imitated his own reserve, and made no allusion to it. Thus passed the day. Occasionally the wreck rolled heavily, when more air escaped, the hull settling lower and lower in the water as a necessary consequence. The little bubbles continued incessantly to rise, and Mulford became satisfied that another day must decide their fate. Taking this view of their situation, he saw no use in reserving their food, but encouraged his companions to share the whole of what remained at sunset. Little persuasion was necessary, and when night once more came to envelope them in darkness, not a mouthful of food or a drop of water remained to meet the necessities of the coming morn. It had rained again for a short time, in the course of the afternoon, when enough water had been caught to allay their thirst, and what was almost of as much importance to the females now, a sufficiency of sun had succeeded to dry their clothes, thus enabling them to sleep without enduring the chilling dampsthat might otherwise have prevented it. The wind had sensibly fallen, and the ground−swell was altogether gone, but Mulford was certain that the relief had come too late. So much air had escaped while it lasted as scarce to leave him the hope that the wreck could float until morning. The rising of the bubbles was now incessant, the crevices by which they escaped having most probably opened a little, in consequence of the pressure and the unceasing action of the currents, small as the latter were.

Just as darkness was shutting in around them for the second time, Rose remarked to Mulford that it seemed to her that they had not as large a space for their little world as when they were first placed on it. The mate, however,

successfully avoided an explanation; and when the watch was again set for the night, the females lay down to seek their repose, more troubled with apprehensions for a morrow of hunger and thirst, than by any just fears that might so well have arisen from the physical certainty that the body which alone kept them from being engulfed in the sea, could float but a few hours longer. This night Tier kept the look−out until Jupiter reached the zenith, when Mulford was called to hold the watch until light returned.

It may seem singular that any could sleep at all in such a situation. But we get accustomed, in an incredibly short time, to the most violent changes; and calamities that seem insupportable, when looked at from a distance, lose half their power if met and resisted with fortitude. The last may, indeed, be too insignificant a word to be applied to all of the party on the wreck, on the occasion of which we are writing, though no one of them all betrayed fears that were troublesome. Of Mulford it is unnecessary to speak. His deportment had been quiet, thoughtful, and full of a manly interest in the comfort of others, from the first moment of the calamity. That Rose should share the largest in his attentions was natural enough, but he neglected no essential duty to her companions. Rose, herself, had little hope of being rescued. Her naturally courageous character, however, prevented any undue exhibitions of despair, and now it was that the niece became the principal support of the aunt, completely changing the relations that had formerly existed between them. Mrs. Budd had lost all the little buoyancy of her mind. Not a syllable did she now utter concerning ships and their manœuvres. She had been, at first, a little disposed to be querulous and despairing, but the soothing and pious conversation of Rose awakened a certain degree of resolution in her, and habit soon exercised its influence over even her inactive mind. Biddy was a strange mixture of courage, despair, humility, and consideration for others. Not once had she taken her small allowance of food without first offering it, and that, too, in perfect good faith, to her "Missus and Miss Rosy;" yet her moanings for this sort of support, and her complaints of bodily suffering much exceeded that of all the rest of the party put together. As for Jack Tier, his conduct singularly belied his appearance. No one would have expected any great show of manly resolution from the little rotund, lymphatic figure of Tier; but he had manifested a calmness that denoted either great natural courage, or a resolution derived from familiarity with danger. In this particular, even Mulford regarded his deportment with surprise, not unmingled with respect.

"You have had a tranquil watch, Jack," said Harry, when he was called by the person named, and had fairly aroused himself from his slumbers. "Has the wind stood as it is since sunset?"

"No change whatever, sir. It has blown a good working breeze the whole watch, and what is surprising not as much lipper has got up as would frighten a colt on a sea−beach."

"We must be near the reef, by that. I think the only currents we feel come from the tide, and they seem to be setting us back and forth, instead of carrying us in any one settled direction."

"Quite likely, sir; and this makes my opinion of what I saw an hour since all the more probable."

"What you saw! In the name of a merciful Providence, Tier, do not trifle with me! Has any thing been seen near by?"

"Don't talk to me of your liquors and other dhrinks," murmured Biddy in her sleep. "It's wather that is a blessed thing; and I wish I lived, the night and the day, by the swate pump that's in our own yard, I do."

"The woman has been talking in her sleep, in this fashion,most of the watch," observed Jack, coolly, and perhaps a little contemptuously. "But, Mr. Mulford, unless my eyes have cheated me, we are near that boat again. The passage through the reef is close aboard us, here, on our larboard bow, as it might be, and the current has sucked us in it in a fashion to bring it in a sort of athwart−hawse direction to us."

"If that boat, after all, should be sent by Providence to our relief! How long is it since you saw it, Jack."

"But a bit since, sir; or, for that matter, I think I see it now. Look hereaway, sir, just where the dead−eyes of the fore−rigging would bear from us, if the craft stood upon her legs, as she ought to do. If that isn't a boat, it's a rock out of water."

Mulford gazed through the gloom of midnight, and saw, or fancied he saw, an object that might really be the boat. It could not be very distant either; and his mind was instantly made up as to the course he would pursue. Should it actually turn out to be that which he now so much hoped for, and its distance in the morning did not prove too great for human powers, he was resolved to swim for it at the hazard of his life. In the meantime, or until light should return, there remained nothing to do but to exercise as much patience as could be summoned, and to confide in God, soliciting his powerful succour by secret prayer.

Mulford was no sooner left alone, as it might be, by Tier's seeking a place in which to take his rest, than he again examined the state of the wreck. Little as he had hoped from its long−continued buoyancy, he found matters even worse than he apprehended they would be. The hull had lost much air, and had consequently sunk in the water in an exact proportion to this loss. The space that was actually above the water, was reduced to an area not more than six or seven feet in one direction, by some ten or twelve in the other. This was reducing its extent, since the evening previous, by fully one−half; and there could be no doubt that the air was escaping, in consequence of the additional pressure, in a ratio that increased by a sort of arithmetical progression. The young man knew that the whole wreck, under its peculiar circumstances, might sink entirely beneath the surface, and yet possess sufficientbuoyancy to sustain those that were on it for a time longer, but this involved the terrible necessity of leaving the females partly submerged themselves.

Our mate heard his own heart beat, as he became satisfied of the actual condition of the wreck, and of the physical certainty that existed of its sinking, at least to the point last mentioned, ere the sun came to throw his glories over the last view that the sufferers would be permitted to take of the face of day. It appeared to him that no time was to be lost. There lay the dim and shapeless object that seemed to be the boat, distant, as he thought, about a mile. It would not have been visible at all but for the perfect smoothness of the sea, and the low position occupied by the observer. At times it did disappear altogether, when it would rise again, as if undulating in the ground−swell. This last circumstance, more than any other, persuaded Harry that it was not a rock, but some floating object that he beheld. Thus encouraged, he delayed no longer. Every moment was precious, and all might be lost by indecision. He did not like the appearance of deserting his companions, but, should he fail, the motive would appear in the act. Should he fail, every one would alike soon be beyond the reach of censure, and in a state of being that would do full justice to all.

Harry threw off most of his clothes, reserving only his shirt and a pair of light summer trowsers. He could not quit the wreck, however, without taking a sort of leave of Rose. On no account would he awake her, for he appreciated the agony she would feel during the period of his struggles. Kneeling at her side, he made a short prayer, then pressed his lips to her warm cheek, and left her. Rose murmured his name at that instant, but it was as the innocent and young betray their secrets in their slumbers. Neither of the party awoke.

It was a moment to prove the heart of man, that in which Harry Mulford, in the darkness of midnight, alone, unsustained by any encouraging eye, or approving voice, with no other aid than his own stout arm, and the unknown designs of a mysterious Providence, committed his form to the sea. For an instant he paused, after he had waded down on the wreck to a spot where the water alreadymounted to his breast, but it was not in misgivings. He calculated the chances, and made an intelligent use of such assistance as could be had. There had been no sharks near the wreck that day, but a splash in the water might bring them back again in a crowd. They were probably prowling over the reef, near at hand. The mate used great care, therefore, to make no noise. There was the distant object, and he set it by a bright star, that wanted about an hour before it would sink beneath the horizon. That star was his beacon, and muttering a few words in earnest prayer, the young man threw his body forward, and left the wreck, swimming lightly but with vigour.

END OF VOL. I.