

in my embassy official coat, "explain to me the navigation. Is that all open, bold, plain-sailin' between that island and the main?"

"No, Sir, there is a long shoal sand-bar, stretchin' off to the nor'-west. I guess it was onct high land. The channel is between that and the shore."

"Jist so. How is it about the islands?"

"Deep enough for a seventy-four."

"Exactly," sais I. "I have two courses before me: to entice him on to that bar and then slip thro' the islands, and dodge him and his guns, or to hail him, and go on board boldly. But I prefer the first, for therè is more fun in it. Don't go one inch beyond the bar, but beat between that and the island, it will make him think the channel is there; and if his pilot is a Bay-of-Fundy man, I know they aint much acquainted with this part of the South coast. Is all right, Mr. Bent?"

"All right, Sir."

"See the dcecks are covered over with some of the house-sand we took in at Petite Rivière; it will absorb any moisture left by the swabs; and when I pass the word, let it be swept off. Mate, hoist the pennant, and place the flag where a commodore's ought to be."

"He is nearing us fast, Mr. Slick," said the pilot.

"Yes; but it is time she sheered off to the left, aint it?" sais I.

"Well, it is," said he. "'Bout ship, there. Hold up well for the passage between the islands, there, now."

"Pilot," sais I, "if he clears the bar, lay the 'Black Hawk' to, and I'll board him, show him my commission, and advise him to be cautious how he interferes with our fishin' crafts, unless he wants to bring on a war; talk big in a soft way, and all that. If I don't confustrigate him, it's a pity, that's all. Mr. Bent, get the gig ready; see the davits are all clear; and do you and four picked hands stand by to jump in at onct. We must lead off fust in this game, if we want to win. Move quick."

"Aye, aye, Sir."

"Eldad! Yellow Jack is a trump card; aint he?"

"Guess he is," said he. "But your father spoiled a good Captin in the navy, to make a wooden clockmaker of you, that's a fact."

"This is an awkward scrape, and there is no two ways about it. But what in the world does the Britisher mean? Aint he got a chart on board? He'll be ashore in a minit as sure as fate. There he is! I thought so, hard and fast; it's a wonder his masts didn't go. Ease off the mainsail a bit—there she goes! Now's our time, in the confusion, for a run. Lay down flat, men, in case he fires. We are all safe now, I believe."

Just as I spoke the words, bang went a gun, and a shot skipped by our stern so close as to throw the spray on us.

"A miss is as good as a mile," said Eldad.