

A GREAT TREASON.

CHAPTER I.

THE FAIR AMERICAN.

Now, afore heaven, 'tis shame such wrongs are borne.

KING RICHARD II.

"Ef the Lord will, Ma'am, in five minutes more we shall be in Massachusetts Bay."

It was about noon of the 15th of December in the year of grace 1773, and the snow, *Fair American*, Captain Eliphalet Ward, with a cargo of hemp and three passengers, was just off Cape Cod. The low sandhills were half veiled in a light-gray mist, which drifted down with the wind. The Captain declared he could make out Cape Ann; but though the passengers did their best, all they could honestly say they saw was a darker patch on a bank of gray. As the afternoon wore on, a white streak could be seen here and there; the Captain said these were lighthouses, and grinned when Miss Digby compared them to so many statues of Lot's wife.

All the passengers were on deck, and had been there (except when they went below to dinner) since early morning. They were thirty-five days out, and had not seen land for a month, and even a sandbank was worth looking at. So they stood in a little group by the taffrail, straining their eyes, and anxiously watching the wind—a shrewd north-wester, which, as Miss Digby said, seemed to blow thither straight from the North Pole. She said this to a very young man, who was standing next her—as indeed he usually did.

He had a handsome dark face and a shapely figure; and as he turned to reply, there was a mixture of softness and haughtiness observable in his manner, very far removed from provincial rudeness, and even perhaps belonging to an earlier time than the eighteenth century.