

NORVEL HASTINGS;

OR,

THE FRIGATE IN THE OFFING.

CHAPTER I.

THE shades of night were gradually stealing over a small secluded inlet of the sea, till its dark blue waters grew inky black, and reflected the stars like diamonds sparkling on a belt of velvet. The willow, with its fragile and bending arms, leaned over it and met their arching tops mid-way, while the stiff-leaved pine and gnarl-limbed oak interlocked their branches half-way across in rough companionship, increasing the gloom.

This inlet did not penetrate more than a mile and a half inland from the shore of the romantic bay of which it was an arm, when it received a narrow but romantic creek (or what in England would be termed a river), of which the inlet was only the embouchure or outlet to the ocean.

The little river,—which had as many windings, and as graceful ones, as a Brazilian serpent when he moves slowly over the green savannah,—was navigable for small craft nearly a mile and a half beyond the inlet, and three miles from the bay coast. The bay in question was one of the numerous indentures in the coast of Maine that give to its geographical outline on the charts, for a hundred leagues' extent, the scalloped irregularity of the border of a lady's lace cape. Its