

"Eldad! Yellow Jack is a trump card; ain't 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? Ain't 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.

"Crowd on all sail now, my men, out with the studdin' sails—be quick there; steer straight for that headland, and that will keep the island between us and the 'Spitfire' Cutler," said I, and he was on deck in a minit, "we are safe now, and I surrender my command to you."

"Where is the man-of-war?" said he, lookin' round.

"On the sand-bar, on the other side of the island," I replied. "I guess they are goin' to grave her, or perhaps survey the channel, for their chart don't seem no good," and I gave him a wink, but he didn't smile.

"Mr Slick," said he, "that commission puts it out of your power to act the boy, and play tricks that way. You are the last man that ought to compromise the government."

"Cutler," said I, "you are as correct as a boot-jack, and I respect your scruples. I admit it was a thoughtless frolic, and it shan't happen again."

"That's right," said he, "I knew you were only doin' of it out of fun, but there are times when we must not commit ourselves. If any cruiser interferes with us in our lawful pursuits, I will resist to the death, but I never will draw blood in defendin' a wrong act." Cutler was right; *if we begin to do wrong in fun we are apt to end by doin' wrong in airnist.*

"Well, Eldad," said I, "what do you think of that dodge, eh? I am afeard," said I, winkin' to him, for the mate was within hearin', "I am afeard we shall all be took up, tried in court, and ruinated in damages, for decoyin' that vessel ashore."

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