

fact they would actually carry off the lighted candle before my eyes, or come down and dip the oil out of the lamp with their tails; till between danger of fire and risk to myself, I was on the point of throwing up the engagement. The barque lay opposite Clark's Point, from which she used often to be passed by one of the watermen plying there, a curious character, well known at the time, and destined to cause a sensation in town before long. This was an old wooden-legged black with a boat to match, half dinky and half canoe, whose wife and family kept a sort of nigger slop-store behind the wharf, combined, I believe, with a peltry and curiosity trade among coloured people in general. He came originally from New Orleans, and commonly went by the name of 'Possum Sippy, owing to an odd turn he had, at every chance, for what he chose to call fishing and hunting; his real name being, according to himself, Mississippi Jones, though by the first word he meant Scipio with a handle to it. He had turned an eye in my direction, much more than I cared for; and somehow got an idea of the barque's infested state. Indeed I had a pretty shrewd notion already as to the kind of game he was in the habit of looking after. He offered to come on board that very night with suitable tackle and a special bait of his own; he was also to bring his dog, a woolly white poodle, of the sort peculiar to negroes, which always kept him company on such occasions; promising to make a clean sweep of the rats in the barque. I knew old Sippy to be quite respectable; the truth was, that a worthier man of his colour could not well be found, or one with less impudence about him; though being well-to-do, and particularly fond of showing his free-papers, he was a little self-consequential at best. But in my position, I did not wish to get mixed up with him; accordingly, I put him off for the time, and soon fell in with what I thought a lucky chance in the circumstances.

When in town shortly after, I heard from an American acquaintance that a friend of his, a drayman, had bought a kangaroo-dog from the crew of an Australian ship on their way to the mines, and wanted to get rid of it at any price. He had forgotten to get its name, and was under the impression it was going mad; in fact, he had it chained in his stable, where he seemed to have kept by turns jobbing at it with a pitchfork, and flourishing at it with his whip. I went at once, saw the dog, and bought him; and a splendid animal he was, about the biggest dog I ever saw, though as yet scarce full-grown. I at once took him on board, where he was quite at home, evidently knowing all

about a ship; I gave him the name of "King," and turned him loose on deck the same evening, as I required to go ashore. Having stayed a little later than usual on the strength of this, and coming alongside in the dusk, I could not get aboard for him myself; after about an hour's trial, it was all I could do to scramble up the rigging and come down naturally upon him, which he took in a quieter way. Subsequently King was all I could wish; the rats were more than we could manage, but they soon gave up running over us, and as to old Sippy offering to bring his poodle aboard, the very sight of it in the boat made King wild; whilst in regard to keeping ship, I could have left her safe with him all night if I chose.

Not far off us was a large New York ship, the *Cornucopia*, fitting up for passengers home, and such return-freights as were got at the time. She had a crew to get together besides—no very easy matter; meanwhile there was a regular ship-keeper, in addition to whom the steward generally slept aboard, and occasionally the captain himself. Captain Simmerall was a thorough Southerner, very open-mannered and pleasant. He got into the way of noticing me as he passed the barque, and more especially the dog seemed to draw his attention. I once or twice had an opportunity of obliging him by the use of my boat, after which he proposed to buy King at a handsome price if I would part with him, which I did not wish to do. My notion was, after leaving the *Quincey Adams*, to find a companion and try a settler's life over on the Contra Costa, towards the red-woods, where money could be made by game for the market. It was not long, however, before Captain Simmerall surprised me by the offer of an engagement to keep his ship for a week or two, after which she would most probably sail. The man previously in charge had finished his time, and gone to some other employment in town; at the same time it did not always suit the captain to sleep aboard for company to his steward, and he thought her rather too large for a single hand to take charge of in his absence. She was just then hauling out to an anchorage half a mile off, opposite the island of Yerba Buena, in the line of the roadstead; where little more would be required to get her ready. Still the riggers or others would be there all day, and as there was no cargo, all that was needed was to help the steward, be regularly aboard before sundown, tend the cable, look sharp as to fire, and know how to use the proper signals if required.

The terms otherwise were the best I had yet been offered; I therefore did not hesitate