

It was an ominous circumstance, that we learned in a few days to designate the new master by a nickname, and that the name stuck,—a misfortune which almost never befalls the truly superior man. He had, however, a certain dash of cleverness about him; and observing that I was of potent influence among my school-fellows, he set himself to determine the grounds on which my authority rested. Copy and arithmetic books in schools in which there was liberty used in those ancient times to be charged with curious revelations. In the parish school, for instance, which excelled, as I have said, every other school in the world in its knowledge of barks and carvels, it was not uncommon to find a book which, when opened at the right end, presented only copy-lines or arithmetical questions, that when opened at the wrong one, presented only ships and boats. And there were cases on record in which, on the grand annual examination-day that heralded the vacation, the worthy parish minister, by beginning to turn over the leaves of some exhibited book at the reverse end, found himself engaged, when expecting only the questions of Cocker, or the ship-lines of Butterworth, amid whole fleets of smacks, frigates, and brigantines. My new master, professionally acquainted with this secret property of arithmetic and copy-books, laid hold of mine, and, bringing them to his desk, found them charged with very extraordinary revelations indeed. The blank spaces were occupied with deplorably scabbled couplets and stanzas, blent with occasional remarks in rude prose, that dealt chiefly with natural phenomena. One note, for instance, which the master took the trouble of deciphering, referred to the supposed *fact*, familiar as a matter of sensation to boys located on the sea-coast, that during the bathing season the water is warmer in windy days, when the waves break high, than during dead calms; and accounted for it (I fear, not very philosophically) on the hypothesis that the “waves, by slapping against each other, engender heat, as heat may be engendered by clapping the hands.” The master read on, evidently with much difficulty, and apparently with considerable scepticism: he inferred that I had been borrow-