



Jack Tier

or, the Florida Reef



Part 1: Chapter 7

Thou art the same, eternal sea!
The earth has many shapes and forms,
Of hill and valley, flower and tree;
Fields that the fervid noon tide warms,
Or winter's rugged grasp deforms,
Or bright with autumn's golden store;
Thou coverest up thy face with storms,
Or smilest serene,—but still thy roar
And dashing foam go up to vex the sea-beat shore:

—Lunt.

We shall now advance the time eight-and-forty hours. The baffling winds and calms that succeeded the tornado had gone, and the trades blew in their stead. Both vessels had disappeared, the brig leading, doubling the western extremity of the reef, and going off before both wind and current, with flowing sheets, fully three hours before the sloop-of-war could beat up against the latter, to a point that enabled her to do the same thing. By that time, the *Swash* was five-and-twenty miles to the eastward, and consequently but just discernible in her loftiest sails, from the ship's royal yards. Still, the latter continued the chase; and that evening both vessels were beating down along the southern margin of the Florida Reef, against the trades, but favoured by a three or four knot current, the brig out of sight to windward. Our narrative leads us to lose sight of both these vessels, for a time, in order to return to the islets of the Gulf. Eight-and-forty hours had made some changes in and around the haven of the Dry Tortugas. The tent still stood, and a small fire that was boiling its pot and its kettle,



at no great distance from it, proved that the tent was still inhabited. The schooner also rode at her anchors, very much as she had been abandoned by Spike. The bag of doubloons, however, had been found, and there it lay, tied but totally unguarded, in the canvas verandah of Rose Budd's habitation. Jack Tier passed and repassed it with apparent indifference, as he went to and fro, between his pantry and kitchen, busy as a bee in preparing his noontide meal for the day. This man seemed to have the islet all to himself, however, no one else being visible on any part of it. He sang his song, in a cracked, contre alto voice, and appeared to be happy in his solitude. Occasionally he talked to himself aloud, most probably because he had no one else to speak to. We shall record one of his recitatives, which came in between the strains of a very inharmonious air, the words of which treated of the seas, while the steward's assistant was stirring an exceedingly savoury mess that he had concocted of the ingredients to be found in the united larders of the *Swash* and the Mexican schooner.

"Stephen Spike is a capital willian!" exclaimed Jack, smelling at a ladle filled with his soup—"a capital willian, I call him. To think, at his time of life, of such a handsome and pleasant young thing as this Rose Budd; and then to try to get her by underhand means, and by making a fool of her silly old aunt. It 's wonderful what fools some old aunts be! Quite wonderful! If I was as great a simpleton as this Mrs. Budd, I'd never cross my threshhold. Yes, Stephen Spike is a prodigious willian, as his best friend must own! Well, I gave him a thump on the head that he'll not forget this v'y'ge. To think of carryin' off that pretty Rose Budd in his very arms, in so indecent a manner! Yet, the man has his good p'ints, if a body could only forget his bad ones. He's a first-rate seaman. How he worked the brig till he doubled the reef, a'ter she got into open water; and how he made her walk off afore the wind, with stun'sails alow and aloft, as soon as ever he could make 'em draw! My life for it, he 'll tire the legs of Uncle Sam's man, afore he can fetch up with him. For running away, when hard chased, Stephen Spike hasn't his equal on 'arth. But, he's a great willian—a prodigious willian! I cannot say I actually wish him hanged; but I would rather have him hanged than see him get pretty Rose in his power. What has he to do with girls of nineteen? If the rascal is one year old, he's fifty-six. I hope the sloop-of-war will find her match, and I think she will. The *Molly*'s a great traveller, and not to be outdone easily. 'T would be a thousand pities so lovely a craft should be cut off in the flower of her days, as it might be, and I do hope she'll lead that bloody sloop on some sunken rock.

"Well, there's the other bag of doubloons. It seems Stephen could not get it. That's odd, too, for he's great at grabbin' gold. The man bears his age well; but he's a willian!

I wonder whether he or Mulford made that half-board in the narrow channel. It was well done, and Stephen is a perfect sailor; but he says Mulford is the same. Nice young man, that Mulford; just fit for Rose, and Rose for him. Pity to part them. Can find no great fault with him, except that he has too much conscience. There's such a thing as having too much, as well as too little conscience. Mulford has too much, and Spike has too little. For him to think of carryin' off a gal of nineteen! I say he's fifty-six, if he's a day. How fond he used to be of this very soup! If I've seen him eat a quart of it, I've seen him eat a puncheon full of it, in my time. What an appetite the man has when he's had a hard day's duty on 't! There 's a great deal to admire, and a great deal to like in Stephen Spike, but he's a reg'lar willian. I dare say he fancies himself a smart, jaunty youth ag'in, as I can remember him; a lad of twenty, which was about his years when I first saw him, by the sign that I was very little turned of fifteen myself. Spike was comely then, though I acknowledge he's a willian. I can see him now, with his deep blue roundabout, his bell-mouthing trowsers, both of fine cloth—too fine for such a willian—but fine it was, and much did it become him."

Here Jack made a long pause, during which, though he may have thought much, he said nothing. Nevertheless, he wasn't idle the while. On the contrary, he passed no less than three several times from the fire to the tent, and returned. Each time, in going and coming, he looked intently at the bag of doubloons, though he did not stop at it or touch it. Some associations connected with Spike's fruitless attempts to obtain it must have formed its principal interest with this singular being, as he muttered his captain's name each time in passing, though he said no more audibly. The concerns of the dinner carried him back and forth; and in his last visit to the tent, he began to set a small table—one that had been brought for the convenience of Mrs. Budd and her niece, from the brig, and which of course still remained on the islet. It was while thus occupied, that Jack Tier recommenced his soliloquy.

"I hope that money may do some worthy fellow good yet. It's Mexican gold, and that's inemy's gold, and might be condemned by law, I do suppose. Stephen had a hankerin' a'ter it, but he did not get it. It come easy enough to the next man that tried. That Spike 's a willian, and the gold was too good for him. He has no conscience at all to think of a gal of nineteen! And one fit for his betters, in the bargain. The time has been when Stephen Spike might have pretended to Rose Budd's equal. That much I'll ever maintain, but that time's gone; and, what is more, it will never come again. I should like Mulford better if he had a little less conscience. Conscience may do for Uncle Sam's ships, but it is sometimes in the way aboard a trading craft. What can a



fellow do with a conscience when dollars is to be smuggled off, or tobacco smuggled ashore? I do suppose I've about as much conscience as it is useful to have, and I've got ashore in my day twenty thousand dollars' worth of stuff, of one sort or another, if I've got ashore the value of ten dollars. But Spike carries on business on too large a scale, and many's the time I've told him so. I could have forgiven him anything but this attempt on Rose Budd; and he's altogether too old for that, to say nothing of other people's rights. He's an up-and-down willian, and a body can make no more, nor any less of him. That soup must be near done, and I'll hoist the signal for grub."

This signal was a blue-peter of which one had been brought ashore to signal the brig; and with which Jack now signalled the schooner. If the reader will turn his eyes toward the last named vessel, he will find the guests whom Tier expected to surround his table. Rose, her aunt, and Biddy were all seated, under an awning made by a sail, on the deck of the schooner, which now floated so buoyantly as to show that she had materially lightened since last seen. Such indeed was the fact, and he who had been the instrument of producing this change, appeared on deck in the person of Mulford, as soon as he was told that the blue-peter of Jack Tier was flying.

The boat of the light-house, that in which Spike had landed in quest of Rose, was lying alongside of the schooner, and sufficiently explained the manner in which the mate had left the brig. This boat, in fact, had been fastened astern, in the hurry of getting from under the sloop-of-war's fire, and Mulford had taken the opportunity of the consternation and frantic efforts produced by the explosion of the last shell thrown, to descend from his station on the coach-house into this boat, to cut the painter, and to let the *Swash* glide away from him. This the vessel had done with great rapidity, leaving him unseen under the cover of her stern. As soon as in the boat, the mate had seized an oar, and sculled to an islet that was within fifty yards, concealing the boat behind a low hummock that formed a tiny bay. All this was done so rapidly, that united to the confusion on board the *Swash*, no one discovered the mate or the boat. Had he been seen, however, it is very little probable that Spike would have lost a moment of time, in the attempt to recover either. But he was not seen, and it was the general opinion on board the *Swash*, for quite an hour, that her handsome mate had been knocked overboard and killed, by a fragment of the shell that had seemed to explode almost in the ears of her people. When the reef was doubled, however, and Spike made his preparations for meeting the rough water, he hove to, and ordered his own yawl, which was also towing astern, to be hauled up alongside, in order to be hoisted in. Then, indeed, some glimmerings of the truth were shed on the crew, who missed the

light-house boat. Though many contended that its painter must also have been cut by a fragment of the shell, and that the mate had died loyal to roguery and treason. Mulford was much liked by the crew, and he was highly valued by Spike, on account of his seamanship and integrity, this latter being a quality that is just as necessary for one of the captain's character to meet with in those he trusts as to any other man. But Spike thought differently of the cause of Mulford's disappearance, from his crew. He ascribed it altogether to love for Rose, when, in truth, it ought in justice to have been quite as much imputed to a determination to sail no longer with a man who was clearly guilty of treason. Of smuggling, Mulford had long suspected Spike, though he had no direct proof of the fact; but now he could not doubt that he was not only engaged in supplying the enemy with the munitions of war, but was actually bargaining to sell his brig for a hostile cruiser, and possibly to transfer himself and crew along with her.

It is scarcely necessary to speak of the welcome Mulford received when he reached the islet of the tent. He and Rose had a long private conference, the result of which was to let the handsome mate into the secret of his pretty companion's true feelings toward himself. She had received him with tears, and a betrayal of emotion that gave him every encouragement, and now she did not deny her preference. In that interview the young people plighted to each other their troth. Rose never doubted of obtaining her aunt's consent in due time, all her prejudices being in favour of the sea and sailors; and should she not, she would soon be her own mistress, and at liberty to dispose of herself and her pretty little fortune as she might choose. But a cypher as she was, in all questions of real moment, Mrs. Budd was not a person likely to throw any real obstacle in the way of the young people's wishes; the true grounds of whose present apprehensions were all to be referred to Spike, his intentions, and his well-known perseverance. Mulford was convinced that the brig would be back in quest of the remaining doubloons, as soon as she could get clear of the sloop-of-war, though he was not altogether without a hope that the latter, when she found it impossible to overhaul her chase, might also return in order to ascertain what discoveries could be made in and about the schooner. The explosion of the powder, on the islet, must have put the man-of-war's men in possession of the secret of the real quality of the flour that had composed her cargo, and it doubtless had awakened all their distrust on the subject of the *Swash*'s real business in the Gulf. Under all the circumstances, therefore, it did appear quite as probable that one of the parties should reappear at the scene of their recent interview as the other.

Bearing all these things in mind, Mulford had lost no time in completing his own arrangements. He felt that he had some atonement to make to the country, for the part



he had seemingly taken in the late events, and it occurred to him, could he put the schooner in a state to be moved, then place her in the hands of the authorities, his own peace would be made, and his character cleared. Rose no sooner understood his plans and motives, than she entered into them with all the ardour and self-devotion of her sex; for the single hour of confidential and frank communication which had just passed, doubled the interest she felt in Mulford and in all that belonged to him. Jack Tier was useful on board a vessel, though his want of stature and force rendered him less so than was common with sea-faring men. His proper sphere certainly had been the cabins, where his usefulness was beyond all cavil; but he was now very serviceable to Mulford on the deck of the schooner. The first two days, Mrs. Budd had been left on the islet, to look to the concerns of the kitchen, while Mulford, accompanied by Rose, Biddy and Jack Tier, had gone off to the schooner, and set her pumps in motion again. It was little that Rose could do, or indeed attempt to do, at this toil, but the pumps being small and easily worked, Biddy and Jack were of great service. By the end of the second day the pumps sucked; the cargo that remained in the schooner, as well as the form of her bottom, contributing greatly to lessen the quantity of the water that was to be got out of her.

Then it was that the doubloons fell into Mulford's hands, along with everything else that remained below decks. It was perhaps fortunate that the vessel was thoroughly purified by her immersion, and the articles that were brought on deck to be dried were found in a condition to give no great offence to those who removed them. By leaving the hatches off, and the cabin doors open, the warm winds of the trades effectually dried the interior of the schooner in the course of a single night; and when Mulford repaired on board of her, on the morning of the third day, he found her in a condition to be fitted for his purposes. On this occasion Mrs. Budd had expressed a wish to go off to look at her future accommodations, and Jack was left on the islet to cook the dinner, which will explain the actual state of things as described in the opening of this chapter.

As those who toil usually have a relish for their food, the appearance of the blue-peter was far from being unwelcome to those on board of the schooner. They got into the boat, and were sculled ashore by Mulford, who, seaman-like, used only one hand in performing this service. In a very few minutes they were all seated at the little table, which was brought out into the tent-verandah for the enjoyment of the breeze.

"So far, well," said Mulford, after his appetite was mainly appeased; Rose picking crumbs, and affecting to eat, merely to have the air of keeping him company; one of the minor proofs of the little attentions that spring from the affections. "So far, well.



The sails are bent, and though they might be never and better, they can be made to answer. It was fortunate to find anything like a second suit on board a Mexican craft of that size at all. As it is, we have foresail, mainsail, and jib, and with that canvas I think we might beat the schooner down to Key West in the course of a day and a night. If I dared to venture outside of the reef, it might be done sooner even, for they tell me there is a four-knot current sometimes in that track; but I do not like to venture outside, so short-handed. The current inside must serve our turn, and we shall get smooth water by keeping under the lee of the rocks. I only hope we shall not get into an eddy as we go further from the end of the reef, and into the bight of the coast."

"Is there danger of that?" demanded Rose, whose quick intellect had taught her many of these things, since her acquaintance with vessels.

"There may be, looking at the formation of the reef and islands, though I know nothing of the fact by actual observation. This is my first visit in this quarter."

"Eddies are serious matters," put in Mrs. Budd, "and my poor husband could not abide them. Tides are good things; but eddies are very disagreeable."

"Well, aunty, I should think eddies might sometimes be as welcome as tides. It must depend, however, very much on the way one wishes to go."

"Rose, you surprise me! All that you have read, and all that you have heard, must have shown you the difference. Do they not say 'a man is floating with the tide,' when things are prosperous with him—and don't ships drop down with the tide, and beat the wind with the tide? And don't vessels sometimes 'tide it up to town,' as it is called, and isn't it thought an advantage to have the tide with you?"

"All very true, aunty; but I do not see how that makes eddies any the worse."

"Because eddies are the opposite of tides, child. When the tide goes one way, the eddy goes another—isn't it so, Harry Mulford? You never heard of one's floating in an eddy."

"That's what we mean by an eddy, Mrs. Budd," answered the handsome mate, delighted to hear Rose's aunt call him by an appellation so kind and familiar,—a thing she had never done previously to the intercourse which had been the consequence of their present situation. "Though I agree with Rose in thinking an eddy may be a good or a bad thing, and very much like a tide, as one wishes to steer."

"You amaze me, both of you! Tides are always spoken of favourably, but eddies never. If a ship gets ashore, the tide can float her off; that I've heard a thousand times. Then, what do the newspapers say of President—, and Governor—, and Congressman—? Why, that they all 'float in the tide of public opinion,' and that must

mean something particularly good, as they are always in office. No, no, Harry; I'll acknowledge that you do know something about ships; a good deal, considering how young you are; but you have something to learn about eddies. Never trust one as long as you live."

Mulford was silent, and Rose took the occasion to change the discourse.

"I hope we shall soon be able to quit this place," she said; "for I confess to some dread of Captain Spike's return."

"Captain Stephen Spike has greatly disappointed me," observed the aunt, gravely. "I do not know that I was ever before deceived in judging a person. I could have sworn he was an honest, frank, well-meaning sailor—a character, of all others, that I love; but it has turned out otherwise."

"He's a willian!" muttered Jack Tier.

Mulford smiled; at which speech we must leave to conjecture; but he answered Rose, as he ever did, promptly and with pleasure.

"The schooner is ready, and this must be our last meal ashore," he said. "Our outfit will be no great matter; but if it will carry us down to Key West, I shall ask no more of it. As for the return of the *Swash*, I look upon it as certain. She could easily get clear of the sloop-of-war, with the start she had, and Spike is a man that never yet abandoned a doubloon, when he knew where one was to be found."

"Stephen Spike is like all his fellow-creatures," put in Jack Tier, pointedly. "He has his faults, and he has his virtues."

"Virtue is a term I should never think of applying to such a man," returned Mulford, a little surprised at the fellow's earnestness. "The word is a big one, and belongs to quite another class of persons." Jack muttered a few syllables that were unintelligible, when again the conversation changed.

Rose now inquired of Mulford as to their prospects of getting to Key West. He told her that the distance was about sixty miles; their route lying along the north or inner side of the Florida Reef. The whole distance was to be made against the trade-wind, which was then blowing about an eight-knot breeze, though, bating eddies, they might expect to be favoured with the current, which was less strong inside than outside of the reef. As for handling the schooner, Mulford saw no great difficulty in that. She was not large, and was both lightly sparrowed and lightly rigged. All her top-hamper had been taken down by Spike, and nothing remained but the plainest and most readily-managed gear. A fore-and-aft vessel, sailing close by the wind, is not difficult to steer; will almost steer herself, indeed, in smooth water. Jack Tier could take his trick at the



helm, in any weather, even in running before the wind, the time when it is most difficult to guide a craft, and Rose might be made to understand the use of the tiller, and taught to govern the motions of a vessel so small and so simply rigged, when on a wind and in smooth water. On the score of managing the schooner, therefore, Mulford thought there would be little cause for apprehension. Should the weather continue settled, he had little doubt of safely landing the whole party at Key West, in the course of the next four-and-twenty hours. Short sail he should be obliged to carry, as well on account of the greater facility of managing it, as on account of the circumstance that the schooner was now in light ballast trim, and would not bear much canvas. He thought that the sooner they left the islets the better, as it could not be long ere the brig would be seen hovering around the spot. All these matters were discussed as the party still sat at table; and when they left it, which was a few minutes later, it was to remove the effects they intended to carry away to the boat. This was soon done, both Jack Tier and Biddy proving very serviceable, while Rose tripped backward and forward, with a step elastic as a gazelle's, carrying light burdens. In half an hour the boat was ready. "Here lies the bag of doubloons still," said Mulford, smiling. "Is it to be left, or shall we give it up to the admiralty court at Key West, and put in a claim for salvage?"

"Better leave it for Spike," said Jack unexpectedly. "Should he come back, and find the doubloons, he may be satisfied, and not look for the schooner. On the other hand, when the vessel is missing, he will think that the money is in her. Better leave it for old Stephen."

"I do not agree with you, Tier," said Rose, though she looked as amicably at the steward's assistant, as she thus opposed his opinion, as if anxious to persuade rather than coerce. "I do not quite agree with you. This money belongs to the Spanish merchant; and, as we take away with us his vessel, to give it up to the authorities at Key West, I do not think we have a right to put his gold on the shore and abandon it."

This disposed of the question. Mulford took the bag, and carried it to the boat, without waiting to ascertain if Jack had any objection; while the whole party followed. In a few minutes everybody and everything in the boat were transferred to the deck of the schooner. As for the tent, the old sails of which it was made, the furniture it contained, and such articles of provisions as were not wanted, they were left on the islet, without regret. The schooner had several casks of fresh water, which were found in her hold, and she had also a cask or two of salted meats, besides several articles of food more delicate, that had been provided by Señor Montefalderon for his own use, and which had not been damaged by the water. A keg of Boston crackers were among



these eatables, quite half of which were still in a state to be eaten. They were Biddy's delight; and it was seldom that she could be seen when not nibbling at one of them. The bread of the crew was hopelessly damaged. But Jack had made an ample provision of bread when sent ashore, and there was still a hundred barrels of the flour in the schooner's hold. One of these had been hoisted on deck by Mulford, and opened. The injured flour was easily removed, leaving a considerable quantity fit for the uses of the kitchen. As for the keg of gunpowder, it was incontinently committed to the deep.

Thus provided for, Mulford decided that the time had arrived when he ought to quit his anchorage. He had been employed most of that morning in getting the schooner's anchor, a work of great toil to him, though everybody had assisted. He had succeeded, and the vessel now rode by a kedge, that he could easily weigh by means of a deck tackle. It remained now, therefore, to lift this kedge and to stand out of the bay of the islets. No sooner was the boat secured astern, and its freight disposed of, than the mate began to make sail. In order to hoist the mainsail well up, he was obliged to carry the halyards to the windlass. Thus aided, he succeeded without much difficulty. He and Jack Tier and Biddy got the jib hoisted by hand; and as for the fore-sail, that would almost set itself. Of course, it was not touched until the kedge was aweigh. Mulford found little difficulty in lifting the last, and he soon had the satisfaction of finding his craft clear of the ground. As Jack Tier was every way competent to take charge of the forecastle, Mulford now sprang aft, and took his own station at the helm; Rose acting as his pretty assistant on the quarter-deck.

There is little mystery in getting a fore-and-aft vessel under way. Her sails fill almost as a matter of course, and motion follows as a necessary law. Thus did it prove with the Mexican schooner, which turned out to be a fast-sailing and an easily-worked craft. She was, indeed, an American bottom, as it is termed, having been originally built for the Chesapeake; and, though not absolutely what is understood by a Baltimore clipper, so nearly of that mould and nature as to possess some of the more essential qualities. As usually happens, however, when a foreigner gets hold of an American schooner, the Mexicans had shortened her masts and lessened her canvas. This circumstance was rather an advantage to Mulford, who would probably have had more to attend to than he wished under the original rig of the craft.

Everybody, even to the fastidious Mrs. Budd, was delighted with the easy and swift movement of the schooner. Mulford, now he had got her under canvas, handled her without any difficulty, letting her stand toward the channel through which he intended to pass, with her sheets just taken in, though compelled to keep a little off, in order to

enter between the islets. No difficulty occurred, however, and in less than ten minutes the vessel was clear of the channels, and in open water. The sheets were now flattened in, and the schooner brought close by the wind. A trial of the vessel on this mode of sailing was no sooner made, than Mulford was induced to regret he had taken so many precautions against any increasing power of the wind. To meet emergencies, and under the notion he should have his craft more under command, the young man had reefed his mainsail, and taken the bonnets off of the foresail and jib. As the schooner stood up better than he had anticipated, the mate felt as all seamen are so apt to feel, when they see that their vessels might be made to perform more than is actually got out of them. As the breeze was fresh, however, he determined not to let out the reef; and the labour of lacing on the bonnets again was too great to be thought of just at that moment.

We all find relief on getting in motion, when pressed by circumstances. Mulford had been in great apprehension of the re-appearance of the *Swash* all that day; for it was about the time when Spike would be apt to return, in the event of his escaping from the sloop-of-war, and he dreaded Rose's again falling into the hands of a man so desperate. Nor is it imputing more than a very natural care to the young man, to say that he had some misgivings concerning himself. Spike, by this time, must be convinced that his business in the Gulf was known; and one who had openly thrown off his service, as his mate had done, would unquestionably be regarded as a traitor to his interests, whatever might be the relation in which he would stand to the laws of the country. It was probable such an alleged offender would not be allowed to appear before the tribunals of the land, to justify himself and to accuse the truly guilty, if it were in the power of the last to prevent it. Great, therefore, was the satisfaction of our handsome young mate when he found himself again fairly in motion, with a craft under him, that glided ahead in a way to prove that she might give even the *Swash* some trouble to catch her, in the event of a trial of speed.

Everybody entered into the feelings of Mulford, as the schooner passed gallantly out from between the islets, and entered the open water. Fathom by fathom did her wake rapidly increase, until it could no longer be traced back as far as the sandy beaches that had just been left. In a quarter of an hour more, the vessel had drawn so far from the land, that some of the smaller and lowest of the islets were getting to be indistinct. At that instant everybody had come aft, the females taking their seats on the trunk, which, in this vessel as in the *Swash* herself, gave space and height to the cabin.

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Budd, who found the freshness of the sea air invigorating, as well as their speed exciting, "this is what I call maritime, Rosy, dear. This is what is

meant by the Maritime States, about which we read so much, and which are commonly thought to be so important. We are now in a Maritime State, and I feel perfectly happy after all our dangers and adventures!"

"Yes, aunty, and I am delighted that you are happy," answered Rose, with frank affection. "We are now rid of that infamous Spike, and may hope never to see his face more."

"Stephen Spike has his good p'ints as well as another," said Jack Tier, abruptly.

"I know that he is an old shipmate of yours, Tier, and that you cannot forget how he once stood connected with you, and am sorry I have said so much against him," answered Rose, expressing her concern even more by her looks and tones, than by her words.

Jack was mollified by this, and he let his feeling be seen, though he said no more than to mutter, "He's a willian!" words that had frequently issued from his lips within the last day or two.

"Stephen Spike is a capital seaman, and that is something in any man," observed the relict of Captain Budd. "He learned his trade from one who was every way qualified to teach him, and it's no wonder he should be expert. Do you expect, Mr. Mulford, to beat the wind the whole distance to Key West?"

It was not possible for any one to look more grave than the mate did habitually, while the widow was floundering through her sea-terms. Rose had taught him that respect for her aunt was to be one of the conditions of her own regard, though Rose had never opened her lips to him on the subject.

"Yes, ma'am," answered the mate, respectfully, "we are in the trades, and shall have to turn to windward, every inch of the way to Key West."

"Of what lock is this place the key, Rosy?" asked the aunt, innocently enough. "I know that forts and towns are sometimes called keys, but they always have locks of some sort or other. Now, Gibraltar is the key of the Mediterranean, as your uncle has told me fifty times; and I have been there, and can understand why it should be,—but I do not know of what lock this West is the key."

"It is not that sort of key which is meant, aunty, at all—but quite a different thing. The key meant is an island."

"And why should any one be so silly as to call an island a key?"

"The place where vessels unload is sometimes called a key," answered Mulford;—"the French calling it a quai, and the Dutch kaye. I suppose our English word is derived from these. Now, a low, sandy island, looking somewhat like keys, or wharves, seamen have given them this name. Key West is merely a low island."



"Then there is no lock to it, or anything to be unfastened," said the widow, in her most simple manner.

"It may turn out to be the key to the Gulf of Mexico, one of these days, ma'am. Uncle Sam is surveying the reef, and intends to do something here, I believe. When Uncle Sam is really in earnest, he is capable of performing great things."

Mrs. Budd was satisfied with this explanation, though she told Biddy that evening, that "locks and keys go together, and that the person who christened the island to which they were going, must have been very weak in his upper story." But these reflections on the intellects of her fellow-creatures were by no means uncommon with the worthy relict; and we cannot say that her remarks made any particular impression on her Irish maid.

In the mean time, the Mexican schooner behaved quite to Mulford's satisfaction. He thought her a little tender in the squalls, of which they had several that afternoon; but he remarked to Rose, who expressed her uneasiness at the manner in which the vessel lay over in one of them, that "she comes down quite easy to her bearings, but it is hard forcing her beyond them. The vessel needs more cargo to ballast her, though, on the whole, I find her as stiff as one could expect. I am now glad that I reefed, and reduced the head sails, though I was sorry at having done so when we first came out. At this rate of sailing, we ought to be up with Key West by morning."

But that rate of sailing did not continue. Toward evening, the breeze lessened almost to a calm again, the late tornado appearing to have quite deranged the ordinary stability of the trades. When the sun set, and it went down into the broad waters of the Gulf a flood of flame, there was barely a two-knot breeze, and Mulford had no longer any anxiety on the subject of keeping his vessel on her legs. His solicitude, now, was confined to the probability of falling in with the *Swash*. As yet, nothing was visible, either in the shape of land or in that of a sail. Between the islets of the Dry Tortugas and the next nearest visible keys, there is a space of open water, of some forty miles in width. The reef extends across it, of course; but nowhere does the rock protrude itself above the surface of the sea. The depth of water on this reef varies essentially. In some places, a ship of size might pass on to it, if not across it; while in others a man could wade for miles. There is one deep and safe channel—safe to those who are acquainted with it—through the centre of this open space, and which is sometimes used by vessels that wish to pass from one side to the other; but it is ever better for those whose business does not call them in that direction, to give the rocks a good berth, more especially in the night.

Mulford had gleaned many of the leading facts connected with the channels, and the navigation of those waters, from Spike and the older seamen of the brig, during



the time they had been lying at the Tortugas. Such questions and answers are common enough on board ships, and, as they are usually put and given with intelligence, one of our mate's general knowledge of his profession, was likely to carry away much useful information. By conversations of this nature, and by consulting the charts, which Spike did not affect to conceal after the name of his port became known, the young man, in fact, had so far made himself master of the subject, as to have tolerably accurate notions of the courses, distances, and general peculiarities of the reef. When the sun went down, he supposed himself to be about half-way across the space of open water, and some five-and-twenty miles dead to windward of his port of departure. This was doing very well for the circumstances, and Mulford believed himself and his companions clear of spike, when, as night drew its veil over the tranquil sea, nothing was in sight.

A very judicious arrangement was made for the watches on board the Mexican schooner, on this important night. Mrs. Budd had a great fancy to keep a watch, for once in her life, and, after the party had supped, and the subject came up in the natural course of things, a dialogue like this occurred:

"Harry must be fatigued," said Rose, kindly, "and must want sleep. The wind is so light, and the weather appears to be so settled, that I think it would be better for him to 'turn in,' as he calls it;"—here Rose laughed so prettily that the handsome mate wished she would repeat the words,—"better that he should 'turn in' now, and we can call him, should there be need of his advice or assistance. I dare say Jack Tier and I can take very good care of the schooner until daylight."

Mrs. Budd thought it would be no more than proper for one of her experience and years to rebuke this levity, as well as to enlighten the ignorance her niece had betrayed.

"You should be cautious, my child, how you propose anything to be done on a ship's board," observed the aunt. "It requires great experience and a suitable knowledge of rigging to give maritime advice. Now, as might have been expected, considering your years, and the short time you have been at sea, you have made several serious mistakes in what you have proposed. In the first place, there should always be a mate on the deck, as I have heard your dear departed uncle say, again and again; and how can there be a mate on the deck if Mr. Mulford 'turns in,' as you propose, seeing that he's the only mate we have. Then you should never laugh at any maritime expression, for each and all are, as a body might say, solemnized by storms and dangers. That Harry is fatigued I think is very probable; and he must set our watches, as they call it, when he can make his arrangements for the night, and take his rest as is usual. Here is



my watch to begin with; and I'll engage he does not find it two minutes out of the way, though yours, Rosy dear, like most girl's time-pieces, is, I'll venture to say, dreadfully wrong. Where is your chronometer, Mr. Mulford? Let us see how this excellent watch of mine, which was once my poor departed Mr. Budd's, will agree with that piece of yours, which I have heard you say is excellent."

Here was a flight in science and nautical language that poor Mulford could not have anticipated, even in the captain's relict! That Mrs. Budd should mistake "setting the watch" for "setting our watches," was not so very violent a blunder that one ought to be much astonished at it in her; but that she should expect to find a chronometer that was intended to keep the time of Greenwich, agreeing with a watch that was set for the time of New York, betrayed a degree of ignorance that the handsome mate was afraid Rose would resent on him, when the mistake was made to appear. As the widow held out her own watch for the comparison, however, he could not refuse to produce his own. By Mrs. Budd's watch it was past seven o'clock, while by his own, or the Greenwich-set chronometer, it was a little past twelve.

"How very wrong your watch is, Mr. Mulford," cried the good lady, "notwithstanding all you have said in its favour. It's quite five hours too fast, I do declare; and now, Rosy dear, you see the importance of setting watches on a ship's board, as is done every evening, my departed husband has often told me."

"Harry's must be what he calls a dog-watch, aunty," said Rose, laughing, though she scarce knew at what.

"The watch goes, too," added the widow, raising the chronometer to her ear, "though it is so very wrong. Well, set it, Mr. Mulford; then we will set Rose's, which I'll engage is half an hour out of the way, though it can never be as wrong as yours."

Mulford was a good deal embarrassed, but he gained courage by looking at Rose, who appeared to him to be quite as much mystified as her aunt. For once he hoped Rose was ignorant; for nothing would be so likely to diminish the feeling produced by the exposure of the aunt's mistake, as to include the niece in the same category.

"My watch is a chronometer, you will recollect, Mrs. Budd," said the young man.

"I know it; and they ought to keep the very best time—that I've always heard. My poor Mr. Budd had two, and they were as large as compasses, and sold for hundreds after his lamented decease."

"They were ship's chronometers, but mine was made for the pocket. It is true, chronometers are intended to keep the most accurate time, and usually they do; this of



mine, in particular, would not lose ten seconds in a twelvemonth, did I not carry it on my person."

"No, no, it does not seem to lose any, Harry; it only gains," cried Rose, laughing.

Mulford was now satisfied, notwithstanding all that had passed on a previous occasion, that the laughing, bright-eyed, and quick-witted girl at his elbow, knew no more of the uses of a chronometer than her unusually dull and ignorant aunt; and he felt himself relieved from all embarrassment at once. Though he dared not even seem to distrust Mrs. Budd's intellect or knowledge before Rose, he did not scruple to laugh at Rose herself, to Rose. With her there was no jealousy on the score of capacity, her quickness being almost as obvious to all who approached her as her beauty.

"Rose Budd, you do not understand the uses of a chronometer, I see," said the mate, firmly, "notwithstanding all I have told you concerning them."

"It is to keep time, Harry Mulford, is it not?"

"True, to keep time—but to keep the time of a particular meridian; you know what meridian means, I hope?"

Rose looked intently at her lover, and she looked singularly lovely, for she blushed slightly, though her smile was as open and amicable as ingenuousness and affection could make it.

"A meridian means a point over our heads—the spot where the sun is at noon," said Rose, doubtfully.

"Quite right; but it also means longitude, in one sense. If you draw a line from one pole to the other, all the places it crosses are on the same meridian. As the sun first appears in the east, it follows that he rises sooner in places that are east, than in places that are further west. Thus it is, that at Greenwich, in England, where there is an observatory made for nautical purposes, the sun rises about five hours sooner than it does here. All this difference is subject to rules, and we know exactly how to measure it."

"How can that be, Harry? You told me this but the other day, yet have I forgotten it."

"Quite easily. As the earth turns round in just twenty-four hours, and its circumference is divided into three hundred and sixty equal parts, called degrees, we have only to divide 360 by 24, to know how many of these degrees are included in the difference produced by one hour of time. There are just fifteen of them, as you will find by multiplying 24 by 15. It follows that the sun rises just one hour later, each fifteen degrees of longitude, as you go west, or one hour earlier each fifteen degrees of longitude as you go east. Having ascertained the difference by the hour, it is easy enough to calculate for the minutes and seconds."



“Yes, yes,” said Rose, eagerly, “I see all that—go on.”

“Now a chronometer is nothing but a watch, made with great care, so as not to lose or gain more than a few seconds in a twelvemonth. Its whole merit is in keeping time accurately.”

“Still I do not see how that can be anything more than a very good watch.”

“You will see in a minute, Rose. For purposes that you will presently understand, books are calculated for certain meridians, or longitudes, as at Greenwich and Paris, and those who use the books calculated for Greenwich, get their chronometers set at Greenwich, and those who use the Paris, get their chronometers set to Paris time. When I was last in England, I took this watch to Greenwich, and had it set at the Observatory by the true solar time. Ever since it has been running by that time, and what you see here is the true Greenwich time, after allowing for a second or two that it may have lost or gained.”

“All that is plain enough,” said the much interested Rose—“but of what use is it all?”

“To help mariners to find their longitude at sea, and thus know where they are. As the sun passes so far north, and so far south of the equator each year, it is easy enough to find the latitude, by observing his position at noon-day; but for a long time seamen had great difficulty in ascertaining their longitudes. That, too, is done by observing the different heavenly bodies, and with greater accuracy than by any other process; but this thought of measuring the time is very simple, and so easily put in practice, that we all run by it now.”

“Still I cannot understand it,” said Rose, looking so intently, so eagerly, and so intelligently into the handsome mate’s eyes, that he found it was pleasant to teach her other things besides how to love.

“I will explain it. Having the Greenwich time in the watch, we observe the sun, in order to ascertain the true time, wherever we may happen to be. It is a simple thing to ascertain the true time of day by an observation of the sun, which marks the hours in his track; and when we get our observation, we have some one to note the time at a particular instant on the chronometer. By noting the hour, minutes, and seconds, at Greenwich, at the very instant we observe here, when we have calculated from that observation the time here, we have only to add, or subtract, the time here from that of Greenwich, to know precisely how far east or west we are from Greenwich, which gives us our longitude.”

“I begin to comprehend it again,” exclaimed Rose, delighted at the acquisition in knowledge she had just made. “How beautiful it is, yet how simple—but why do I forget it?”

“Perfectly simple, and perfectly sure, too, when the chronometer is accurate, and the observations are nicely made. It is seldom we are more than eight or ten miles out of the way, and for them we keep a look-out. It is only to ascertain the time where you are, by means that are easily used, then look at your watch to learn the time of day at Greenwich, or any other meridian you may have selected, and to calculate your distance, east or west, from that meridian, by the difference in the two times.”

Rose could have listened all night, for her quick mind readily comprehended the principle which lies at the bottom of this useful process, though still ignorant of some of the details. This time she was determined to secure her acquisition, though it is quite probable that, woman-like, they were once more lost, almost as easily as made. Mulford, however, was obliged to leave her, to look at the vessel, before he stretched himself on the deck, in an old sail; it having been previously determined that he should sleep first, while the wind was light, and that Jack Tier, assisted by the females, should keep the first watch. Rose would not detain the mate, therefore, but let him go his way, in order to see that all was right before he took his rest.

Mrs. Budd had listened to Mulford’s second explanation of the common mode of ascertaining the longitude, with all the attention of which she was capable; but it far exceeded the powers of her mind to comprehend it. There are persons who accustom themselves to think so superficially, that it becomes a painful process to attempt to dive into any of the arcana of nature, and who ever turn from such investigations wearied and disgusted. Many of these persons, perhaps most of them, need only a little patience and perseverance to comprehend all the more familiar phenomena, but they cannot command even that much of the two qualities named to obtain the knowledge they would fain wish to possess. Mrs. Budd did not belong to a division as high in the intellectual scale as even this vapid class. Her intellect was unequal to embracing anything of an abstracted character, and only received the most obvious impressions, and those quite half the time it received wrong. The mate’s reasoning, therefore, was not only inexplicable to her, but it sounded absurd and impossible.

“Rosy, dear,” said the worthy relict, as soon as she saw Mulford stretch his fine frame on his bed of canvas, speaking at the same time in a low, confidential tone to her niece, “what was it that Harry was telling you a little while ago? It sounded to me like rank nonsense; and men will talk nonsense to young girls, as I have so often warned you, child. You must never listen to their nonsense, Rosy; but remember your catechism and confirmation vow, and be a good girl.”



To how many of the feeble-minded and erring do those offices of the church prove a stay and support, when their own ordinary powers of resistance would fail them! Rose, however, viewed the matter just as it was, and answered accordingly.

“But this was nothing of that nature, aunty,” she said, “and only an account of the mode of finding out where a ship is, when out of sight of land, in the middle of the ocean. We had the same subject up the other day.”

“And how did Harry tell you, this time, that was done, my dear?”

“By finding the difference in the time of day between two places—just as he did before.”

“But there is no difference in the time of day, child, when the clocks go well.”

“Yes, there is, aunty dear, as the sun rises in one place before it does in another.”

“Rose you’ve been listening to nonsense now! Remember what I have so often told you about young men, and their way of talking. I admit Harry Mulford is a respectable youth, and has respectable connections, and since you like one another, you may have him, with all my heart, as soon as he gets a full-jiggered ship, for I am resolved no niece of my poor dear husband’s shall ever marry a mate, or a captain even, unless he has a full-jiggered ship under his feet. But do not talk nonsense with him. Nonsense is nonsense, though a sensible man talks it. As for all this stuff about the time of day, you can see it is nonsense, as the sun rises but once in twenty-four hours, and of course there cannot be two times, as you call it.”

“But, aunty dear, it is not always noon at London when it is noon at New York.”

“Fiddle-faddle, child; noon is noon, and there are no more two noons than two suns, or two times. Distrust what young men tell you, Rosy, if you would be safe, though they should tell you you are handsome.”

Poor Rose sighed, and gave up the explanation in despair. Then a smile played around her pretty mouth. It was not at her aunt that she smiled; this she never permitted herself to do, weak as was that person, and weak as she saw her to be; she smiled at the recollection how often Mulford had hinted at her good looks—for Rose was a female, and had her own weaknesses, as well as another. But the necessity of acting soon drove these thoughts from her mind, and Rose sought Jack Tier, to confer with him on the subject of their new duties.

As for Harry Mulford, his head was no sooner laid on its bunch of sail than he fell into a profound sleep. There he lay, slumbering as the seaman slumbers, with no sense of surrounding things. The immense fatigues of that and of the two preceding days,—for he had toiled at the pumps even long after night had come, until the vessel



was clear,—weighed him down, and nature was now claiming her influence, and taking a respite from exertion. Had he been left to himself, it is probable the mate would not have arisen until the sun had reappeared some hours.

It is now necessary to explain more minutely the precise condition, as well as the situation of the schooner. On quitting his port, Mulford had made a stretch of some two leagues in length, toward the northward and eastward, when he tacked and stood to the southward. There was enough of southing in the wind, to make his last course nearly due south. As he neared the reef, he found that he fell in some miles to the eastward of the islets,—proof that he was doing very well, and that there was no current to do him any material harm, if, indeed, there were not actually a current in his favour. He next tacked to the northward again, and stood in that direction until near night, when he once more went about. The wind was now so light that he saw little prospect of getting in with the reef again, until the return of day; but as he had left orders with Jack Tier to be called at twelve o'clock, at all events, this gave him no uneasiness. At the time when the mate lay down to take his rest, therefore, the schooner was quite five-and-twenty miles to windward of the Dry Tortugas, and some twenty miles to the northward of the Florida Reef, with the wind quite light at east-south-east. Such, then, was the position or situation of the schooner.

As respects her condition, it is easily described. She had but the three sails bent,—mainsail, foresail, and jib. Her topmasts had been struck, and all the hamper that belonged to them was below. The mainsail was single reefed, and the foresail and jib were without their bonnets, as has already been mentioned. This was somewhat short canvas, but Mulford knew that it would render his craft more manageable in the event of a blow. Usually, at that season and in that region, the east trades prevailed with great steadiness, sometimes diverging a little south of east, as at present, and generally blowing fresh. But, for a short time previously to, and ever since the tornado, the wind had been unsettled, the old currents appearing to regain their ascendancy by fits, and then losing it, in squalls, contrary currents, and even by short calms.

The conference between Jack Tier and Rose was frank and confidential.

"We must depend mainly on you," said the latter, turning to look toward the spot where Mulford lay, buried in the deepest sleep that had ever gained power over him. "Harry is so fatigued! It would be shameful to awaken him a moment sooner than is necessary."

"Ay, ay; so it is always with young women, when they lets a young man gain their ears," answered Jack, without the least circumlocution; "so it is, and so it always will be, I'm afeard. Nevertheless, men is willians."



Rose was not affronted at this plain allusion to the power that Mulford had obtained over her feelings. It would seem that Jack had got to be so intimate in the cabins, that his sex was, in a measure, forgotten; and it is certain that his recent services were not. Without a question, but for his interference, the pretty Rose Budd would, at that moment, have been the prisoner of Spike, and most probably the victim of his design to compel her to marry him.

"All men are not Stephen Spikes," said Rose, earnestly, "and least of all is Harry Mulford to be reckoned as one of his sort. But, we must manage to take care of the schooner the whole night, and let Harry get his rest. He wished to be called at twelve, but we can easily let the hour go by, and not awaken him."

"The commanding officer ought not to be served so, Miss Rose. What he says is to be done."

"I know it, Jack, as to ordinary matters; but Harry left these orders that we might have our share of rest, and for no other reason at all. And what is to prevent our having it? We are four, and can divide ourselves into two watches; one watch can sleep while the other keeps a look-out."

"Ay, ay, and pretty watches they would be! There's Madam Budd, now; why, she's quite a navigator, and knows all about weerin' and haulin', and I dares to say could put the schooner about, to keep her off the reef, on a pinch; though which way the craft would come round, could best be told a'ter it has been done. It's as much as I'd undertake myself, Miss Rose, to take care of the schooner, should it come on to blow; and as for you, Madam Budd, and that squalling Irishwoman, you'd be no better than so many housewives ashore."

"We have strength, and we have courage, and we can pull, as you have seen. I know very well which way to put the helm now, and Biddy is as strong as you are yourself, and could help me all I wished. Then we could always call you, at need, and have your assistance. Nay, Harry himself can be called, if there should be a real necessity for it, and I do wish he may not be disturbed until there is that necessity."

It was with a good deal of reluctance that Jack allowed himself to be persuaded into this scheme. He insisted, for a long time, that an officer should be called at the hour mentioned by himself, and declared he had never known such an order neglected, "merchant-man, privateer, or man-of-war." Rose prevailed over his scruples, however, and there was a meeting of the three females to make the final arrangements. Mrs. Budd, a kind-hearted woman, at the worst, gave her assent most cheerfully,



though Rose was a little startled with the nature of the reasoning, with which it was accompanied.

"You are quite right, Rosy dear," said the aunt, "and the thing is very easily done. I've long wanted to keep one watch, at sea; just one watch; to complete my maritime education. Your poor uncle used to say, 'Give my wife but one night-watch, and you'd have as good a seaman in her as heart could wish.' I'm sure I've had night-watches enough with him and his ailings; but it seems that they were not the sort of watches he meant. Indeed, I did n't know till this evening there were so many watches in the world, at all. But this is just what I want, and just what I'm resolved to have. Tier shall command one watch and I'll command the other. Jack's shall be the 'dog-watch,' as they call it, and mine shall be the 'middle-watch,' and last till morning. You shall be in Jack's watch, Rose, and Biddy shall be in mine. You know a good deal that Jack don't know, and Biddy can do a good deal I'm rather too stout to do. I don't like pulling ropes, but as for ordering, I'll turn my back on no captain's widow out of York."

Rose had her own misgivings on the subject of her aunt's issuing orders on such a subject to any one, but she made the best of necessity, and completed the arrangements without further discussion. Her great anxiety was to secure a good night's rest for Harry, already feeling a woman's care in the comfort and ease of the man she loved. And Rose did love Harry Mulford warmly and sincerely. If the very decided preference with which she regarded him before they sailed, had not absolutely amounted to passion, it had come so very near it as to render that access of feeling certain, under the influence of the association and events which succeeded. We have not thought it necessary to relate a tithe of the interviews and intercourse that had taken place between the handsome mate and the pretty Rose Budd, during the month they had now been shipmates, having left the reader to imagine the natural course of things, under such circumstances. Nevertheless, the plighted troth had not been actually given until Harry joined her on the islet, at a moment when she fancied herself abandoned to a fate almost as serious as death. Rose had seen Mulford quit the brig, had watched the mode and manner of his escape, and in almost breathless amazement, and felt how dear to her he had become, by the glow of delight which warmed her heart, when assured that he could not, would not, forsake her, even though he remained at the risk of life. She was now, true to the instinct of her sex, mostly occupied in making such a return for an attachment so devoted as became her tenderness and the habits of her mind.

As Mrs. Budd chose what she was pleased to term the 'middle-watch,' giving to Jack Tier and Rose her 'dog-watch,' the two last were first on duty. It is scarcely



necessary to say, the captain's widow got the names of the watches all wrong, as she got the names of everything else about a vessel; but the plan was to divide the night equally between these quasi mariners, giving the first half to those who were first on the look-out, and the remainder to their successors. It soon became so calm, that Jack left the helm, and came and sat by Rose, on the trunk, where they conversed confidentially for a long time. Although the reader will, hereafter, be enabled to form some plausible conjectures on the subject of this dialogue, we shall give him no part of it here. All that need now be said, is to add, that Jack did most of the talking, that his past life was the principal theme, and that the terrible Stephen Spike, he from whom they were now so desirous of escaping, was largely mixed up with the adventures recounted. Jack found in his companion a deeply interested listener, although this was by no means the first time they had gone over together the same story and discussed the same events. The conversation lasted until Tier, who watched the glass, seeing that its sands had run out for the last time, announced the hour of midnight. This was the moment when Mulford should have been called, but when Mrs. Budd and Biddy Noon were actually awakened in his stead.

"Now, dear aunty," said Rose, as she parted from the new watch to go and catch a little sleep herself, "remember you are not to awaken Harry first, but to call Tier and myself. It would have done your heart good to have seen how sweetly he has been sleeping all this time. I do not think he has stirred once since his head was laid on that bunch of sails, and there he is, at this moment, sleeping like an infant!"

"Yes," returned the relict, "it is always so with your true maritime people. I have been sleeping a great deal more soundly, the whole of the dog-watch, than I ever slept at home, in my own excellent bed. But it's your watch below, Rosy, and contrary to rule for you to stay on the deck, after you've been relieved. I've heard this a thousand times."

Rose was not sorry to lie down; and her head was scarcely on its pillow, in the cabin, before she was fast asleep. As for Jack, he found a place among Mulford's sails, and was quickly in the same state.

To own the truth, Mrs. Budd was not quite as much at ease, in her new station, for the first half hour, as she had fancied to herself might prove to be the case. It was a flat calm, it is true; but the widow felt oppressed with responsibility and the novelty of her situation. Time and again had she said, and even imagined, she should be delighted to fill the very station she then occupied, or to be in charge of a deck, in a "middle watch." In this instance, however, as in so many others, reality did not equal anticipation. She



wished to be doing everything, but did not know how to do anything. As for Biddy, she was even worse off than her mistress. A month's experience, or for that matter a twelvemonth's, could not unravel to her the mysteries of even a schooner's rigging. Mrs. Budd had placed her "at the wheel," as she called it, though the vessel had no wheel, being steered by a tiller on deck, in the 'long-shore fashion. In stationing Biddy, the widow told her that she was to play "tricks at the wheel," leaving it to the astounded Irish woman's imagination to discover what those tricks were. Failing in ascertaining what might be the nature of her "tricks at the wheel," Biddy was content to do nothing, and nothing, under the circumstances, was perhaps the very best thing she could have done.

Little was required to be done for the first four hours of Mrs. Budd's watch. All that time, Rose slept in her berth, and Mulford and Jack Tier on their sail, while Biddy had played the wheel a "trick," indeed, by lying down on deck, and sleeping, too, as soundly as if she were in the county Down itself. But there was to be an end of this tranquillity. Suddenly the wind began to blow. At first, the breeze came in fitful puffs, which were neither very strong nor very lasting. This induced Mrs. Budd to awaken Biddy. Luckily, a schooner without a topsail could not very well be taken aback, especially as the head-sheets worked on travellers, and Mrs. Budd and her assistant contrived to manage the tiller very well for the first hour that these varying puffs of wind lasted. It is true, the tiller was lashed, and it is also true, the schooner ran in all directions, having actually headed to all the cardinal points of the compass, under her present management. At length, Mrs. Budd became alarmed. A puff of wind came so strong, as to cause the vessel to lie over so far as to bring the water into the lee scuppers. She called Jack Tier herself, therefore, and sent Biddy down to awaken Rose. In a minute, both these auxiliaries appeared on deck. The wind just then lulled, and Rose, supposing her aunt was frightened at trifles, insisted on it that Harry should be permitted to sleep on. He had turned over once, in the course of the night, but not once had he raised his head from his pillow.

As soon as reinforced, Mrs. Budd began to bustle about, and to give commands, such as they were, in order to prove that she was unterrified. Jack Tier gaped at her elbow, and by way of something to do, he laid his hand on the painter of the *Swash*'s boat, which boat was towing astern, and remarked that "some know-nothing had belayed it with three half-hitches." This was enough for the relict. She had often heard the saying that "three half-hitches lost the king's long-boat," and she busied herself, at once, in repairing so imminent an evil. It was far easier for the good woman to talk than



to act; she became what is called “all fingers and thumbs,” and in loosening the third half-hitch, she cast off the two others. At that instant, a puff of wind struck the schooner again, and the end of the painter got away from the widow, who had a last glimpse at the boat, as the vessel darted ahead, leaving its little tender to vanish in the gloom of the night.

Jack was excessively provoked at this accident, for he had foreseen the possibility of having recourse to that boat yet, in order to escape from Spike. By abandoning the schooner, and pulling on to the reef, it might have been possible to get out of their pursuer’s hands, when all other means should fail them. As he was at the tiller, he put his helm up, and ran off, until far enough to leeward to be to the westward of the boat, when he might tack, fetch and recover it. Nevertheless, it now blew much harder than he liked, for the schooner seemed to be unusually tender. Had he had the force to do it, he would have brailed the foresail. He desired Rose to call Mulford, but she hesitated about complying.

“Call him—call the mate, I say,” cried out Jack, in a voice that proved how much he was in earnest. “These puffs come heavy, I can tell you, and they come often, too. Call him—call him, at once, Miss Rose, for it is time to tack if we wish to recover the boat. Tell him, too, to brail the foresail, while we are in stays—that’s right; another call will start him up.”

The other call was given, aided by a gentle shake from Rose’s hand. Harry was on his feet in a moment. A passing instant was necessary to clear his faculties, and to recover the tenor of his thoughts. During that instant, the mate heard Jack Tier’s shrill cry of “Hard a-lee—get in that foresail—bear a-hand—in with it, I say!”

The wind came rushing and roaring, and the flaps of the canvas were violent and heavy.

“In with the foresail, I say,” shouted Jack Tier. “She files round like a top, and will be off the wind on the other tack presently. Bear a-hand!—bear a-hand! It looks black as night to windward.”

Mulford then regained all his powers. He sprang to the fore-sheet, calling on the others for aid. The violent surges produced by the wind prevented his grasping the sheet as soon as he could wish, and the vessel whirled round on her heel, like a steed that is frightened. At that critical and dangerous instant, when the schooner was nearly without motion through the water, a squall struck the flattened sails, and bowed her down as the willow bends to the gale. Mrs. Budd and Biddy screamed as usual, and Jack shouted until his voice seemed cracked, to “let go the head-sheets.” Mulford did



make one leap forward, to execute this necessary office, when the inclining plane of the deck told him it was too late. The wind fairly howled for a minute, and over went the schooner, the remains of her cargo shifting as she capsized, in a way to bring her very nearly bottom upward.

1. We suppress the names used by Mrs. Budd, out of delicacy to the individuals mentioned, who are still living.

