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"His sole attention was fixed straight ahead on the 'Sally Keen,' who was making a desperate effort to hold her own."

The Story of a Petticoat Captain, a Mutiny, a Bet, and a Good Race.

THE
Mutiny of the "Laughing Mary," By W. H. DURHAM.



HE "Laughing Mary" shifted her helm and stood well out to sea. Probably the "Mary" was one of the best known, and certainly the most disreputable-looking coaster out of Port Haven. She was a little thirty-ton, fore and aft schooner with rough, weather-beaten sides, dirty, patched sails, and a lean to the windward which gave her a decided rakish, nondescript appearance.

The crew of the "Mary" consisted of one man, and that was old Lige Bingham himself, while the captain existed in the portly proportions of Lige's wife, Symantha. The two old people were well known all along the coast for their peculiar personalities, Symantha being a born commander, and Lige, the commanded.

The little schooner ploughed and plunged sluggishly along, the skipper, Symantha, stood near the taffrail grasping the well worn tiller firmly as she watched with critical eyes the movements of the crew, who was seated upon an upturned herring tub, busily engaged in sewing a pretentious patch upon his "shore" trousers.

Lige was a man of few words, while Symantha was a woman of many. For forty years Symantha had been giving the orders, and for forty years Lige had obeyed without question. For forty years Lige had rebelled inwardly and chafed sorely under his petticoat government, but to-day the whole forty years of subjection had been climaxed when old Ben Rogers, skipper of the "Sally Keen," had laughed tantalizingly as he passed, and deliberately insulted him by offering the "Mary" a tow line into Nantucket, and had added to the insult by suggesting that they make it a race to Nantucket light for a new set of sails.

Captain Ben well knew Symantha's strict aversion to straining her well worn stays unnecessarily. Lige would have gladly risked every stitch of canvas on the "Mary" to take a little of the conceit out of Captain Ben, and show him that the "Mary" still possessed a clean pair of heels, if she had half a chance to use them, but the old man was obliged to shake his head regretfully and go on patching his trousers, however, still keeping the corner of his eye upon the "Sally Keen" who was now a good lead ahead on the port side.

"I'll be keel-hauled!" muttered Lige to himself, as he expectorated a copious quid of tobacco juice over the rail. "I'd jist like ter show ther

"Sally Keen" ther way into Nantucket, an' I would, too, if I was at that er helm," and he glanced longingly at that post of honor now held by his wife.

"Lige!" ejaculated Symantha suddenly, "Thar hain't no use o' yer a putterin' on them pants now, cause yer don't get no chance ter use 'em afore sundown termorrer night. Go an' take a pull on that er jib forward."

Lige groaned inwardly at the thought of doing anything that would in any way decrease the speed of the schooner, but orders were given to be obeyed, not questioned, so from mere force of habit he laid aside his sewing and hastened forward slowly. Straight ahead, over the port bow he could see the "Sally Keen" working under full sail, while the "Mary" was hobbling nimbly along under mainsail and jib.

Lige glanced at the outer jib, furled and useless, and then up at the topsail, tied close to the masthead, and he longed to spread them both and lay the "Mary" over a few points and take the laugh out of the "Sally Keen," for Lige well knew the sailing capabilities of the "Laughing Mary." He remembered the days when he was forty years younger—when he stood at the helm and the "Mary" showed them all the way. The old salt's racing blood had been only dormant, and now that it was aroused he longed

greatly to give the "Mary" the chance to redeem herself and wipe away the forty years of accumulated slurs and jibes against her sailing qualities.

Lige went back and sat down on the herring tub and picked up his old trousers and was about to resume his task, when Symantha, who had been at the helm since daybreak, called again.

"Lige, yer jist come an' take this helum an' keep her off a couple o' pints, while I go down an' get a bite o' somethin' ter eat. Keep her easy now an' don't strain that er jib."

Lige made no reply but laid aside his work and ambled aft and took the tiller, while Symantha disappeared down the narrow companionway into the little cabin below. Meanwhile, the "Laughing Mary" now under Lige's guidance, suddenly rounded up a trifle into the wind and was following close in the wake of the "Sally Keen."

An idea had crept into Lige's head—an idea of rebellion and mutiny and a new set of sails for the "Laughing Mary." Ideas came to Lige very seldom, but when they did come, they were fixed.

He could hear Symantha bustling about and the clatter of tinware came up from below. The wind was fresh and favorable. Why shouldn't the "Mary" sail into Nantucket port ten hours ahead of time—tomorrow morn-