

# Supplement to The Post.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 1880.

## A ROMANCE OF MID-OCEAN.

[CONCLUDED FROM FOURTH PAGE.]  
and after staring fixedly at the ball's-eye, I fell asleep.

This sleep lasted some hours. I awoke, not as I had first awakened from incontinuity, with tremors and bewilderment, but easily, with a delicious sense of warmth and rest and renewing vigor in my limbs.

I opened my eyes upon three persons standing near the bunk; one was Mary, the other the doctor, and the third a thin, elderly, sunburnt man, in a white waistcoat with gold buttons and a blue cloth loose coat.

The doctor felt my pulse, and, letting fall my hand, said to Mary:

"Now, Miss Robertson, Mr. Royle will do. If you will kindly tell the steward to give you another basin of broth, you will find our patient able to make a meal."

She kissed her hand to me behind the backs of the others, and went out with a beaming smile.

"This is Captain Craik, Mr. Royle," continued the doctor, motioning to the gentleman in the white waistcoat, commanding this vessel, the *Peri*.

I at once thanked him earnestly for his humanity, and the kindness he was showing me.

"Indeed," he replied, "I am very well pleased with my good fortune in rescuing so brave a pair of men as yourself and your boatswain, and happy to have been the instrument of saving the charming girl to whom you are betrothed from the horror of exposure in an open boat. I have had the whole of your story from Miss Robertson, and I can only say that you have acted very heroically and honorably."

I replied that I was very grateful to him for his kind words; but I assured him that I only deserved a portion of his praise. The man who truly merited admiration was the boatswain.

"You shall divide the honors," he said, smiling.

"The boatswain is already a hero. My crew seem disposed to worship him. If you have nothing better for him in your mind, you may hand him over to me. I know the value of such men nowadays, when so much is left to the crimp."

Saying this, he went to the door and called: and immediately my old companion, the boatswain, came in. I held out my hand and it was clutched by the honest fellow and held with passionate cordiality.

"Mr. Royle, sir," he exclaimed, in a faltering voice, "this is a happy moment for me! There was a time when I never thought I should have seen you alive again; and it went to my heart, and made me blubber like an old woman when I thought of your dying, after all the trouble you've seen, and just when, if I may be so bold as to say it, you might be hopin' to marry the brave, high-spirited gell as you saved from drowning, and who belongs to you by the will o' God Almighty. Captain Craik, sir—I speak by your favor, and ask pardon for the liberty—this gentleman and me has seen some queer starts together since we first shipped aboard the *Hesperus* in the West Hindie Docks, and," he cried, with vehemence, "I'd sooner have lost the use o' my right arm an' leg—yes, an' you may chuck my right eye in along with them—than Mr. Royle should have died just as he was goin' to live properly and set down on the bench o' matrimony an' happiness with a bold and handsome wife!"

This eloquent harangue he delivered with a moist eye, addressing us all these in turn. I thanked him heartily for what he had said, but limited my reply to this: for though I could have complimented him more waggly than he had praised me, I considered that it would be more becoming to hold over all mutual admiration and you-and-me glorification until we should be alone.

I observed that he wore a velvet waistcoat, and a shiny cloth cap with a brilliant peak, very richly furnished with braid; and as such articles of raiment could only emanate from the fore-castle, I concluded that they were gifts from the crew, and that Captain Craik had reason in thinking that the boatswain had become a hero.

The doctor shortly after this motioned him to go, whereupon he made a ship-shape salute by twinking an imaginary curl on his forehead, and went away.

I now asked what had become of the steward. Captain Craik answered that the man was all right, so far as his health went; that he wandered about the decks very harmlessly, smiling in the face of the men and seldom speaking.

"One peculiarity of the poor creature," said he, "is that he will not taste any kind of food but what is

served out to the crew. I have myself tried him with dishes from the saloon-table, but could not induce him to touch a mouthful. The first time I tried him in this way he fell from me as though I had offered to cut his throat, the perspiration poured from his forehead, and he eyed me with looks of the utmost horror and aversion. Can you account for this?"

"Yes, sir," I replied. "The steward was in the habit of serving out the ship's stores to the crew of the *Hesperus*. He rather sided with the captain, and tried to make the best of what was outrageously bad. When the men mutinied they threatened to hang him if he touched any portion of the culinary stores, and I dare say they would have executed their threat. He was rather a coward before he lost his reason, and the threat affected him violently. I myself never could induce him to taste any other food than the ship's rotten stores while the men remained on the vessel, and I dare say the memory of the threat still lives in his broken mind."

"Thanks for your explanation," said the doctor, "I shall sleep the better for it; for, upon my word, the man's unnatural dislike of good food—of *caviars*, man, and curried fowl and roast goose, for I tried him myself—has kept me awake bothering my head to understand."

"May I ask what vessel this is?" I said, addressing Captain Craik.

"The *Peri*, of Glasgow, homeward bound, from Jamaica," he answered.

"I know the ship now, sir. She belongs to the White Star Line."

"Quite right. We shall hope to put you ashore in seven days hence. It is curious that I should have known Mr. Robertson, your lady's father. I called upon him a few years since in Liverpool, on business, and had a long conversation with him. Little could I have dreamed that his end would be so sad, and that it would be reserved for me to rescue his daughter from an open boat in mid Atlantic!"

"Ah, sir," I exclaimed, "no one but I can ever know the terrible trials this poor girl has passed through. She has been twice shipwrecked within three weeks; she has experienced all the horrors of a mutiny; she has lost her father under circumstances which would have killed many girls with grief; she has been held in terror of her life, and yet never once has her noble courage flinched, her splendid spirit failed her."

"Yes," answered Captain Craik, "I have read her character in her story and in her way of relating it. You are to be congratulated on having won the love of a woman whose respect alone would do a man honor."

"He deserves what he has got," said the doctor, laughing. "Findings keepings."

"I did find her, and I mean to keep her," I exclaimed.

"Well, you have picked up a fortune," observed Captain Craik. "It is not every man who finds a shipwreck a good investment."

"I know nothing about her fortune," I answered. "She did indeed tell me that her father was a ship-owner; but I have asked no questions, and only know her as Mary Robertson, a sweet, brave girl, whom I love, and, please God, mean to marry, though she possessed nothing more in the world than the clothes I found her in."

"Come, come!" said the doctor. "You're not a sailor, doctor," remarked Captain Craik, dryly.

"But, my dear sir, you'll not tell me that a gold pound's not better than a silver sixpence?" cried the doctor. Did you ever sing this song?

"A lass wi' your witchcraft o' beauty's aarms,  
The slender but beauty you creep in your arms;  
Oh, gie me the lass that has a crop o' charms,  
Oh, gie me the lass with the weel-stockit farms,  
Then hey for a lass wi' a teacher, then hey for  
a lass wi' a teacher,  
They hey for a lass wi' a teacher, the nice yellow  
guineas for me."

Is not an heiress better than a poor wench?"

"I don't see how your simile of the pound and the sixpence applies," answered Captain Craik. "A good woman is a good woman all the world over, and a gift that every honest man will thank God for."

"Mark yonder pomp of costly fashion  
Round the wealthy titled bride,  
But when compared with real passion,  
Poor is all that gaily prides."

That's one o' Robbie's gao, doctor, and I commend your attention to the whole song as a wholesome purge."

As the conversation was rather too personal to be much to my liking, I was very glad when it was put an end to by Mary coming in with a basin of soup for me.

### Chapter XXXIII.

Thanks to my darling's devotion, to her unwearied attentions, to her foresight and care of me, I was strong enough to leave my cabin on the third

day following my restoration to consciousness.

During that time many inquiries were made after my health by the passengers, and Mary told me that the greatest curiosity prevailed fore and aft to see me. No misfortune had made a little ephemeral hero of me, and this, perhaps, was one stroke of compensation which I should have been very willing to dispense with.

The second officer of the ship, a man of about my height and build, had very kindly placed his wardrobe at my disposal, but all that I had chosen to borrow from him was some linen, which, indeed, I stood greatly in need of; but my clothes, though rather the worse for salt water, were, in my opinion quite good enough for me to wear until I should be able to buy a new outfit ashore.

At twelve o'clock then, on the third day I rose and leisurely dressed myself, and then sat waiting for Mary, whose arm to lean on I preferred to any one's else.

She came to the cabin presently, and when she had entered I folded her in my arms with so deep a feeling of happiness and love and gratitude in me that I had no word to speak to her.

It was when I released her that she said, "Since God has heard our prayers, dearest, and mercifully preserved us from death, shall we thank him, now that we are together, and say one prayer for my dear father, who, I finally believe, looks down upon us and has still the power to bless us."

I took her hand and we knelt together, and, first thanking her for reminding me of my bounden duty, I lifted up my heart to Almighty God, Father of all men, who had guarded us amidst our perils, who had brought us to the knowledge and love of Him and each other by the lesson of hard trials and sorrowful privation.

And I would ask you to believe that I do not relate such circumstances as these from any ostentatious wish to parade my piety, of which, God knows, I have not so large a store that I need be vain of showing it; but that I may in some poor fashion justify many good men in my own profession who, because they are scandalized by persons among us that are bad, are confounded with these by people ashore who imagine the typical sailor to be a vulgar, debauched fellow, with his mouth full of bad language and his head full of drink. I say earnestly that this is not so; that a large and generous soul animates many sailors; that they love God, pray to him, and in many ways—too rough, maybe, to commend them to fastidious piety, but not surely the less honest for the roughness—strive to act up to a just standard of goodness, and that even among the bad—bad, I mean, through the looseness of their morals and the insanity of their language—there is often found a hidden instinctive religion and veneration and fear of God not to be discovered in the classes ashore to which you may parallel them. Nor, indeed, do I understand how this can fail to be: for no familiarity with the deep can lessen its ever appealing grandeur to them as a symbol of Heavenly power and majesty; and the frequent fear of their lives in which sailors go—the fury of tempests, the darkness of stormy nights, the fragility of the ship in comparison with the mountainous waves which menace her, the horror of near and iron coasts—I say that such things which are daily presented them, must inevitably excite and sustain contemplations which very few events that happen on shore are calculated to arouse in the minds of the ignorant classes with whom such sailors as I am speaking of are on a level.

When I quitted the cabin, supported by Mary, I found myself in a very spacious saloon most handsomely furnished and decorated, and striking me the more by the contrast it offered to the plain and small interior of the *Hesperus*'s cabin.

The table was being prepared for lunch; smartly-dressed stewards and under-stewards trotted to and fro; there were flowers on the table, vases of gold-fish swinging from the deck, a rich, thick carpet under foot, comfortable and handsome sofas; a piano-forte stood against the mizen-mast, which was covered with a mahogany skin and gilded; two rows of lamps rent the length of the saloon; and what with the paintings on the cabin door, the curtains, the rich brass-work about the spacious skylights, the bright sunshine streaming in, the whole scene and kindling a brilliance in the polished wood-work, the crystal on the table, the looking-glasses at the top and of the saloon—I fairly paused with amazement, scarcely conceiving it possible that this airy, airy, shiny, sumptuous drawing-room, was actually the interior of a ship, and

that we were on the sea, steaming at the rate of so many miles an hour toward England.

There were a couple of well-dressed women sewing or doing some kind of needle-work and conversing on one of the sofas, and on another sofa a gentleman sat reading. These, with the stewards, were all the people in the saloon.

The gentleman and the ladies looked at us when we approached, and all three of them rose.

The ladies came and shook hands with Mary, who introduced me to them; but I forget their names.

They began to praise me; the gentleman struck in, and asked permission to shake me by the hand. They had heard my story—it was a beautiful romance; in short, they overpowered me with civilities, and made me so nervous that I had scarcely the heart to go on deck.

Of course it was all very kindly meant; but, then, what were my exploits? Nothing to make money out of nor nothing to justify my appearance on the boards of a London theatre, nothing to furnish a column of wild writing to a newspaper, nothing to merit even the honor of a flattering request from a photographic company. I very exactly knew what I had done, and was keenly alive to the absurdity of any heroizing process.

However, I had sense enough to guess that what blushing honors were thrust upon me would be very short-lived. Who does not think that at some time or other in his life that there is such a thing as oblivion?

So we went on deck. I overheard one of the ladies talk some nonsense about her never having read or heard of anything more deliciously romantic and exciting than the young sailor rescuing a pretty girl from a wreck and falling in love with her.

"Did you hear that, Mary?" I whispered.

"Yes," she answered.

"Was it romantic?"

"I think so."

"And exciting?"

"Dreadfully."

"And did they live happily ever after?"

"We shall see."

"Darling, it is romantic and it is exciting to us, and to my one else. Yes, very romantic, now that I come to think of it; but all has come about so gradually that I have never thought of the romance that runs through our story. What time did we have to think of? Mutinies out of Wapping are no polite garnishes to love-story, and romance must be pretty stoutly bolted and not to be blown to smithereens by a hurricane."

There were a number of passengers on deck—men, women and children; and when I ran my eye along the ship (the *Hesperus* would have made a neat long boat for her) and observed her dimensions, I thought that a city might have gone to sea in her without any inconvenience arising from overcrowding. In a word, she was a magnificent Clyde-built iron boat of some four thousand tons burden, and propelled by eight-hundred horse-power engines; her decks white as a yacht's, a shining awning forward and aft, a short yellow funnel, towering masts and broad yards, and embodying every conceivable "latest improvement" in compasses, capstans, boat-lowering gear, blocks, gauges, logs, windlases, and the rest of it. She was steaming over a smooth sea, and under a glorious blue sky at the rate of thirteen knots, or nearly fifteen miles an hour. Cool draughts of air circled under the awning, and fanned my hollow cheeks and invigorated and refreshed me like cordials.

The captain was on deck when we arrived, and the moment he came forward and shook my hand, offering me many kindly congratulations on my recovery, and with his own hands placed chairs for me and Mary near the mizen-mast. Then the chief officer approached, and most, indeed, I think all, of the passengers; and I believe that, had I been as cynical as old Diogenes, I should have been melted into a hearty faith in human nature by the sympathy shown me by these kind people.

They illustrated their goodness best, perhaps, by withdrawing, after a generous salutation, and resuming their various employments or distractions, so as to put me at my ease. The doctor and the chief officer stayed a little while talking to us; and then presently the bell rung, and all the passengers went below, the captain having previously suggested that I should remain on deck, so as to get the benefit of the air, and that he would send a steward to wait upon me. Mary would not leave my side, and the officer in charge taking his station

on the bridge before the funnel, we, to my great satisfaction, had the deck almost to ourselves.

"You predicted, Mary," I said, "that our lives would be spared. Your dream has come true."

"Yes; I knew my father would not deceive me. Would to God he had been spared!"

"Yet God has been very good to us, Mary. What a change is this from the deck of the *Hesperus*—the seas beating over us, the ship labouring as though at any moment she must go to pieces—ourselves fagged to death, and each of us in our hearts for hours and hours beholding death face to face. I feel as though I had no right to be alive after so much hard work. It is a violation of natural laws, and an impertinent triumphing of vitality over the whole forces of nature."

"But you are alive, dear, and that is all I care about."

I pressed her hand, and after looking around me, asked her if she knew whether this vessel went direct to Glasgow.

"Yes."

"Have you any friends there?"

"None; but I have friends here. The captain has asked me to stay with his wife until I hear from home."

"To whom shall you write?"

"To my aunt in Leamington. She will come to Glasgow and take me home. And you—"

"I?"

I looked at her and smiled.

"Why, your question puts a matter into my head that I must think over."

"You are not strong enough to think. If you begin to think, I shall grow angry."

"But I must think, Mary."

"Why?"

"I must think how I am to get to London, and what I am to do when I get there."

"When we were on the *Hesperus*," she said, "you did all the thinking for me, didn't you? And now that we are on the *Peri*, I mean to do all the thinking for you. But I need not say that. I have thought my thoughts out. I have done with them."

"Look here, Mary, I am going to be candid."

"Here comes one of the stewards to interrupt you."

A very civil fellow came with a tray, which he placed on the skylight, and stood by to wait on us. I did not need to stop and addressing Mary, I said:

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