

"THE GIRL IN THE SECOND CABIN"

By E. J. RATH

Author of "The Nervous Wreck," etc.

Spencer Trumbull, in order to be near his girl in the Adirondacks instead of taking a health trip, hires his old college and war-days chum, Billy Trask, to make the sea trip in his place and promises him \$1,000 and expenses if he takes his place under the eye and care of Keeler, a male nurse, who is a stranger to both, and thus fulfill the orders of Trumbull's father's physician. Trask gets aboard the Gulf Stream in a wheel chair, and no sooner is pushed on deck by Keeler than he beholds a girl at the rail—the "goddess," he dubs her. She is Miss Kent, a society girl with a mania for nursing, who takes at once to the interested invalid, despite her dragon of an aunt, Miss Grimm.

of the storm Trask caught the faint echo of a voice shouting commands. "Do you know," he said, "I am rather glad Captain Blodgett is the boss of this ship. I don't like him; but he impresses me, in a way."

"I was thinking the same thing only a minute ago," she answered quietly. "If there is anything to be done Captain Blodgett will do it."

They were nearer to the derelict now, grimly drifting upon it broadside. News of the new peril seemed to have spread through the ship by a sort of telepathy. Scores of pale-faced passengers were crowded at the portholes watching the half-crippled ship and the wholly disabled narrow distance between them.

Suddenly the girl clutched Trask's hand tightly and cried: "There is somebody aboard it!" He looked, but could see nothing.

"Up on one of the masts!" she said, pointing. "I saw something move."

Now he made out a huddled mass clinging near the top of the only whole spar that was left in the vessel, which had been a three-masted and apparently a square-rigger. As they watched it there was a movement. Dozens of watchers caught the signal.

There was a murmur of awed voices in the saloon. The peril of the Gulf Stream herself was forgotten in the new discovery. "Will we try to save them?" she whispered.

"God knows," answered Trask. "We may have all we can do to save ourselves."

"It would be a horrible thing to leave them." Scarcely 200 yards separated the vessels, for the Gulf Stream, with her high freeboard, was drifting far more rapidly than the half-submerged hulk in her lee.

"Let's go farther forward," said Trask. "You can see better." He gripped her arm tightly, and together they staggered toward the bow, pausing now and then to cling to some support when the ship careened perilously under the onslaught of the wind.

There was a booming noise from somewhere on the deck, projectile, followed by a long sinuous line, shot out from the Gulf Stream. It described a high arc, poised for a minute above the derelict and then plunged downward toward the sea. Had it reached?

One of the figures clinging to the mast detached itself from the group and began a slow and painful descent of the shrouds, his body flattened against them by the pressure of the wind. For seconds at a time he was hidden from sight behind sheets of water and spray, but at each reappearance he was never the wave-swept deck.

He reached it and clung desperately to the rail for a minute, apparently trying to regain his strength. Then he began to work his

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way slowly at, pausing several times as the sea tried to snatch him from his precarious footing.

Aboard the Gulf Stream there was an agony of waiting. He stooped and groped for something on the deck. An instant later he began to retrace his steps. Falteringly, he made his way back to the shrouds by which he had descended. He began to climb. Another figure separated itself from the group and crawled down to meet him.

The line had reached! The Gulf Stream was still bearing down upon the hulk that menaced her; it seemed that only a miracle could save her from collision. What was Captain Blodgett trying to do?

Suddenly the steady throb of her remaining screw ceased. Trask and the girl exchanged anxious glances. This meant the end, perhaps. Then the ship shivered as the engines started again. Imperceptibly at first, then with ominous slowness, the Gulf Stream began to edge crabwise out of the course which was bringing her down upon the wreck. Blodgett was giving her full speed, astern but it was a puny and crippled effort.

The men on the derelict hauled on the line as the vessels steadily neared each other. A heavy hawser attached to it went over the side and into the sea.

There was amazement and consternation among the watching passengers. It seemed that the master of the Gulf Stream was deliberately trying to lash his vessel to the very peril that threatened her! Yet the ship backed steadily, crawling farther and farther out of the line of her former drift.

They had the end of the hawser aboard the wreck now, and several men scrambled recklessly down to the deck and seized it. Although the ships were close, it was almost impossible to see what they did with it. For the seas buried them from sight for more than half of the anxious minutes.

And now came the final moment which would tell whether the steamer was to live or die. If the remaining screw failed her collision was certain, for she was not yet out of the deadly path along which the hurricane drove her.

"Pray for that engine!" Trask called into the girl's ear, "it's our only chance!"

Her lips were moving silently but her steady eyes never ceased to watch the struggle.

There was a shout, followed by a cheer, and weeping and hysterical laughter. The Gulf Stream was clear!

Not all the power of the hurricane could drive her upon the hulk now. They were abreast, drifting in parallel paths, and although not more than 100 feet separated, the bow of the steamer from the stern of the dismantled wreck, they would never be nearer. Then the distances began to widen. The engine stopped again, then was driven full speed forward, and the steamer edged her way into the lee of her companion in peril.

"We're leaving them!" cried Sidney, her face white with pity. But Captain Blodgett was not leaving them. The gun on the forward deck boomed again and another line cleared the short space of water between the vessels. It was seized and hauled upon, and presently another hawser went out through the bow chock of the Gulf Stream.

Minutes passed, and a new motion was apparent in the ship. With her single screw thrashing the sea at top speed, the bow began to head slowly into the gale. Something more than the power of her engine was moving her now. It was the pull of the two hawsers that linked her to the drifting hulk. A third time the gun sent a line, and still another hawser began to pay out. Captain Blodgett was making sure.

There was a furious pitching as the steamer's head slowly, yet with certainty, swung to face the terrific seas. Now directly over the point of her bow lay the dark form of the derelict, almost hidden again by the flying froth. Three great hawsers, drawn taut by the drift, went out from the Gulf Stream and disappeared into the sea. There was the jangle of the bell and the throbbing of the engines ceased.

Captain Blodgett's ship was riding to a sea anchor!

"But—aboard the other ship—what becomes of them?" asked the girl, as the Gulf Stream steadied down as a rhythmic plunging, her prow pointed into the teeth of the hurricane.

(To Be Continued.)

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