

OUR CABIN PASSENGER  
BY MARY C. YOUNG

The following story I had from the lips of the narrator:

Six years ago, said my friend Wheaton, I was ordered to take a voyage across the Atlantic for my health. My physician recommended me to go and return in a packet ship; for, he said, the longer I remained at sea the more benefit I would derive from my trip. I took Dr. Watt's advice, and went to Europe in one of the Black Ball packets.

After an absence of a year my health became restored, and I determined to return to New York. I was fortunate enough to reach Liverpool in time to take my passage in the same vessel in which, twelve months before, I had left my native land.

There were a great many people going by the Great Western, and the small deck of the steamer which was to convey them on board the great ship, where she lay in graceful majesty down the noble Mersy river, was crowded with every species of luggage it was possible to imagine as appertaining to the wildest varieties of the genus traveler. The majority, however, were of the laboring class, who were coming to the new world to better their prospects. I noticed about sixty second-cabin passengers who had to thank their friends in America for a little better accommodation than the steerage afforded, their passage having been pre-paid in New York, out of the hard earnings of fathers, husbands, brothers and sisters, who impatiently awaited their arrival, doubtless counting the weeks until they should see the loved ones they had left behind them in Old Erin.

I looked eagerly to see who were the cabin passengers, but I did not see any one until I entered the cabin of the steamer. Here I saw what appeared to be a family group, which consisted of a gentleman, lady and child. The lady was one of those fair English beauties that are generally so much admired. She had large, brilliant, dark-blue eyes; fine Grecian nose, ruby colored lips, and her hair, which fell in heavy ringlets around her face, was of that peculiar shade of brown which is so much admired. Her complexion was a blending of the lily and the rose. She was of medium height, and her figure well-proportioned. I could see she was exceedingly graceful in all her movements. She was dressed plainly, but neatly; and she had the unmistakable air of the well-bred gentlewoman about her. The child she held on her arms was about a year old and was a miniature likeness of herself. The gentleman standing in front of her, with a small traveling bag thrown over his shoulder, evidently was her husband. He was a tall, powerful built man. As he removed his hat a moment, I had a good view of his face, which I confess I did not like. I am rather a believer in physiognomy. That man, I felt sure the first five minutes that I saw him, had committed some crime. It appeared to me I had seen him the night before in the reading room of the Walton Hotel, Liverpool. I would have made a good detective, for I think my mental vision generally read the moral character of persons with whom I come in contact.

This man was to be my fellow passenger for some weeks, and I determined to study him. He was what some persons would have called a handsome man. He had a high, white forehead, such as we see in pictures of the Stuart family. His features were regular, but

there was an expression about his mouth which I did not admire. His moustache hid the entire upper lip, but what I could see of the under lip made me shudder. There was such a blending of scorn and contempt about his mouth, though it appeared to me that he tried to wear a continual smile, which I almost invariably found polished villains to assume as a mask to hide the workings of their scheming brains and bad hearts. His eyes were deep set, and of that cold steel-blue shade that men of cool, calculating temperaments generally have. He never, I afterward found, looked anyone straight in the face. This I did not like, for few persons who have not something to hide, or fear, have the habit of avoiding the gaze of their fellow men. I noticed he kept looking out of the window from where he stood, with his eyes fixed on the shore that we were leaving with a fixed, eager look. I perceived, when we reached the Great Western, and were safe in the cabin that was to be our home for the next three weeks, his eyes had a strange expression in them. It was just such a look, I thought, as a man who had escaped from the clutches of his pursuers might have had. I felt, whatever his crimes, his wife was not his accomplice, for her face was pure and good, though about her sweet mouth and beautiful eyes there lingered a pensive expression, as though she had known (what all sons and daughters of Adam and Eve must learn) suffering. We may laugh as much as we please at the human face being a measure of a printed page of our different characters, but nature seldom prevaricates. We may wear a mask to some of our fellow beings, but not to all men, for there will be some who penetrate our disguise.

I went upon deck to take a last look at the land we were leaving. There I found Captain Yates, with the pilot and doctor. After shaking hands, and receiving an introduction to the pilot and doctor, I lit my segar and commenced pacing the deck.

I stood gazing upon the distant shore with a wistful look, for I thought, perchance, I never should cross the ocean again, and see the old world, with its many relics of past ages. I thought of the time when only the Druid temples were in the place of our Christian churches, whose numerous spires were dimly visible, and then of the historical past, when the Romans ruled the barbarians of Britain, and of a later period, when Saxons and Normans became masters of that island, which in time became the cradle of civilization, and helped to people that great, young, growing nation to which I was returning.

After the steamer had left us I went down to dinner, and received an introduction to the family that excited so much of my curiosity. Their names were Mornington. I soon perceived, from Mr. Mornington's conversation, that he was a man who had traveled a great deal.

It must have been eight o'clock when Mr. Mornington joined me upon the quarter deck, where I was standing and looking over the ship's side, watching the effect of the phosphorous as it dashed against the ship, resembling bright shaded flames of a bright crimson and blue color, and which seemed to mingle with the dark, angry waters of the Sr. George's Channel, through which we were sailing. The stars studded the blue canopy above us, and blending with the silvery twilight, illumined all surrounding objects. Here and there ships with their watch-lights hanging from their bows, and their white masts

glistening in the evening light, dotted the surface of the water, and in the distance could be seen a large steamer.

“Mr. Mornington,” I said, abruptly, “do you not think this is a good beginning for our voyage?”

“Yes, sir. I think if this weather continues, we will make a quick passage.”

He remained upon the deck almost an hour, during which time he certainly proved himself an agreeable companion, but I could not overcome the feeling that I was talking to a man who merited transportation.

After Mr. Mornington had gone below, Captain Yates came upon deck. He asked me to take a smoke with him to which I assented, and when we had finished our segars, he said, “How do you like Mr. Mornington, my friend?”

“I really do not know, Captain. I feel strangely when in that man’s company,” and I described to him what I thought of our cabin passenger.

“Wheaton,” exclaimed Captain Yates, emphatically, “I hope your suspicions are unfounded, for I stood security to my owners for Mr. Mornington, his wife and child’s passage, and if that man is a scoundrel, I shall lose every cent of my money.”

“What made you do such a foolish thing, Captain?” I asked in astonishment.

“My friend, you are aware that sailors are fools, and land-sharks always fleece us out of what money we have. If this man is an adventurer, and cheats me, he will not be the first person who has imposed upon my credulity. I saw Mr. Mornington for the first time last night, when he called upon me at the Walton Hotel. He told me he wanted to come to America, and wished to go in my ship, but had not the money to pay me, for he had been unfortunate. He offered to pay me half the passage money, and asked me to go security for the rest. I hesitated, Wheaton, about the matter, until he showed me letters of introduction from some of the first people in Europe to some of the leading merchants in New York.”

“I fear those letters, Captain, are forgeries.”

“I think not, for the letter he had from Sir Richard Worth to a friend of mine in New York I could swear was genuine, for Sir Richard is an old friend of mine, and I am familiar with his handwriting. I shall write to him upon my arrival in New York, and ask about Mr. Mornington’s antecedents.”

“Well, Captain, we will see what this man is.”

“He is an author, I believe, by profession. I recollect he has a letter from Sir Bulwer Lytton to one of our publishing houses.”

I said no more to our good captain about our cabin passenger, for I felt the good man did not like to hear my suspicions. Captain Yates was like the majority of sailors, being a frank, brave, generous-hearted man, ready to help any one whom he thought in need of assistance. He was a rigid disciplinarian, though not a cruel man to those under his command.

We had a pleasant voyage, for the captain, Dr. Miller, Mr. and Mrs. Mornington formed a pleasant, sociable party. As our acquaintance advanced, I became more and more interested in Mrs. Mornington; with her husband, however, it was the reverse. I could not like him, and I think he knew what were my feelings toward him, for he tried by every way to conciliate me.

After a passage of twenty-three days, we arrived at our destination. I was glad to return home after my year's absence, and bade my fellow passengers good-bye somewhat hastily.

It was almost two years after my return from Europe, when I had occasion to visit Harrisburgh.

One evening, during my sojourn there, I called on my old friend Mr. Garland. While we were talking a gentleman entered the room, whom he introduced as Dr. Morris.

I started when I saw the man, for I felt sure it was the same person who had been my fellow voyager on board the Great Western two years previous. There was one thing that puzzled me; when I first knew him his hair was a light brown, and perfectly straight; now it was black and curly. His *sang froid* was admirable, for he conversed with me as he would with a perfect stranger, though I saw an anxious expression occasionally steal over his face.

We had been seated nearly two hours smoking and talking in my friend's sitting room, during which time I had kept a watch upon the movements of Dr. Morris. I noticed he occasionally brushed back the hair from his forehead, but did it in such a careful manner that my suspicions were aroused. I got up, apparently to light another segar, when I gave Dr. Morris' hair a pull, and, as I suspected, I held in my hand a wig.

Dr. Morris, *alias* Mornington, drew a short dirk, exclaiming:

“D— you Wheaton, I always thought you would cross my path!” If Mr. Garland had not wrenched the dagger out of his hand, I might have suffered for my assumption of the duties of a detective.

Mornington rushed from the room, looking more like a madman than an exposed villain, as he was.

After my friend's surprise had subsided, he asked where I had met Dr. Morris, *alias* Mornington, and I gave him the history with which the reader is already acquainted.

Mr. Garland then told me that he had practiced medicine in Harrisburgh for almost a year, and had become very popular.

"Did he have his wife and child with him?" I asked.

"No; he passed here as a bachelor, and I think is engaged to be married to a niece of Judge Henry."

"The scoundrel!" I exclaimed; "he has, or had, one of the best wives. Poor woman! I hope he has not killed her with his conduct."

The next morning, the good people of Harrisburgh were very much surprised when they learned that their favorite physician had decamped. Mr. Garland thought it was our duty to call upon Judge Henry, and unmask the man who had aspired to the hand of his niece. The judge received us very courteously. He was both surprised and shocked when he learned the errand on which we had come. He said:

"I had implicit confidence in Dr. Morris, or I should not have so readily consented to his marriage with my niece, who is also my adopted daughter and sole heiress."

As we took our leave, he thanked us for our kindness in calling upon him, and informing him of the real character of the impostor who had so deceived him.

Upon my return to New York, I went to the office of the Black Ball line of Packets, and inquired if the Great Western was in port. I was informed that Captain Yates had sailed two days before my return. I then asked for his address, which I obtained, and called upon his wife, whom I found to be a very intelligent, lady-like woman. I told her of my meeting with Frank Mornington in Harrisburgh, and of my desire to learn something of his wife.

"Mr. Wheaton, I have often heard my husband speak of you, and of your opinion of his cabin passenger," said Mrs. Yates.

"Ah! I fear, my dear Madam, Captain Yates never received a cent of the money for which that rascal got him to go security."

"No, sir, he never did; but that was a small loss compared with what poor Mrs. Mornington suffered at his hands."

"I always thought he would ill-treat his wife. Pray, let me hear the particulars, Mrs. Yates, for I took an interest in Mrs. Mornington."

“It is a sad story. It appears that Frank Mornington, whose real name is Wilmot, returned from the Continent, some six years ago, in company with a party of young noblemen. He was introduced by them into society, and was at first only tolerated; but, by his tact, he soon made a number of friends. His second season in London was a success, for he wrote a witty, political work, which attracted a great deal of notice. A number of *literati* invited him to their clubs, and, after a while, to their homes. You are aware, sir, how careful Englishmen are of admitting a stranger into their domestic circle. Their caution and coolness impress a stranger, upon first acquaintance, I think, rather unfavorably; and many travelers leave England with but a limited idea of the people’s character from this very face. It is only when you *know* them, or when they are perfectly satisfied *who* you are, that you find them congenial companions.”

“I think your remarks are correct, Mrs. Yates,” I replied.

“It appears strange to me that this man, who we know as Mr. Mornington, should become a lion amongst the very aristocracy of Britain. He must have possessed a greater amount of tact than the majority of adventurers, Mr. Wheaton.”

“He was evidently a man, Mrs. Yates, who made human nature his study, and soon discovering the weak points of those persons with whom he met, by a little skill in attacking those weak points, accomplished what he desired.”

“I suppose you are right, sir. He was introduced to Emily De Haven at a party. She was then only twenty, and enjoying her first season in London. Her uncle, who was guardian for herself and sister, invited Mr. Mornington to pay them a visit at his country seat in Salisbury. He improved his time during this visit, for he not only won the heart of Emily De Haven, but made himself a favorite with the family. Six months afterwards he married Miss De Haven, and took a house in London, where he lived as if possessing untold wealth, which was far from being the case, for his only resources were his betting-book, the dice, and the small fortune his wife brought him. He lived in this manner for several years, until his creditors became impatient, and he was obliged to fly to avoid being imprisoned for debt. My husband heard that the officers, with a warrant for his arrest, only arrived a few hours after the Great Western left Liverpool.”

“Ah!” I exclaimed, “that accounts for the eager look with which he watched the shore we were leaving the day we sailed. Well, Mrs. Yates, what more have you to tell me about your husband’s cabin passenger?”

“The rest is soon told, Mr. Wheaton. When my husband returned from Liverpool, Mr. De Haven called upon him and informed him of the real character of Mr. Mornington; and that he discovered his real name was Wilmot, and that he was the son of an Irish gardener. He had attracted the attention of the gentleman who employed his father—Sir William Lacy—who had also educated him, and afterwards sent him to travel with his son as companion. He left Mr. Lacy at Baden, and it is supposed won considerable money at the gaming-table, and then commenced acting the role of an adventurer. I

forgot to mention that, before he left Ireland with Mr. Lacy, he married a beautiful young girl, daughter of a farmer in the neighborhood.”

“Good Heavens—Mrs. Yates! The lady I knew was not really his wife?”

“No, sir, for his first one is still living! Mr. De Haven begged my husband to find his niece and tell her the truth, and bring her and her daughter back to England. Poor lady! At first she refused to believe that the man she had married was such a villain; but when my husband showed her a copy of Mrs. Wilmot’s marriage certificate, which her uncle had forwarded, she fainted. I made her come and stay with me until the ship was ready to sail. For I feared she would become insane if she was alone, for any one could see that she suffered terribly.”

“When did she return to England, Mrs. Yates?”

“Six months ago. Poor lady! I fear she will not live long, for when she left New York she was in very delicate health. She did not complain, but I could see that she got paler and thinner every day.”

I thanked Mrs. Yates for the information she had given me, and took my leave.

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Three months afterwards, while I was in court, my attention was attracted by a case of forgery, and looking at the prisoner, I discovered it was Captain Yates’ cabin passenger—Frank Wilmot, *alias* Dr. Morris.

He was found guilty and sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment at hard labor.

Emily De Haven, I heard, died a year after her return to England. Her child was adopted by her broken-hearted uncle, who bitterly reproached himself for neglecting to examine more closely the antecedents of the man who so cruelly wronged his child.

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