

465 JOS. It is useless – Sir Joseph’s attentions nauseate me. I know that he is a truly great and good man, for he told me so himself, but to me he seems tedious, fretful, and dictatorial. Yet his must be a mind of no common order, or he would not dare to teach my dear father to dance a hornpipe on the cabin table. (*Sees RALPH.*) Ralph Rackstraw! (*Overcome by emotion.*)

470 RALPH. Aye, lady – no other than poor Ralph Rackstraw!

JOS. (*aside*). How my heart beats! (*Aloud.*) And why poor, Ralph?

475 RALPH. I am poor in the essence of happiness, lady – rich only in never-ending unrest. In me there meet a combination of antithetical elements which are at eternal war with one another. Driven hither by objective influences – thither by subjective emotions – wafted one moment into blazing day, by mocking hope – plunged the next into the Cimmerian darkness of tangible despair, I am but a living ganglion of irreconcilable antagonisms. I hope I make myself clear, lady?

480 JOS. Perfectly. (*Aside.*) His simple eloquence goes to my heart. Oh, if I dared – but no, the thought is madness! (*Aloud.*) Dismiss these foolish fancies, they torture you but needlessly. Come, make one effort.

RALPH (*aside*). I will – one. (*Aloud.*) Josephine!

JOS. (*indignantly*). Sir!

485 RALPH. Aye, even though Jove’s armoury were launched at the head of the audacious mortal whose lips, unhallowed by relationship, dared to breathe that precious word, yet would I breathe it once, and then perchance be silent evermore. Josephine, in one brief breath I will concentrate the hopes, the doubts, the anxious fears of six weary months. Josephine, I am a British sailor, and I love you!

490 JOS. Sir, this audacity! (*Aside.*) Oh, my heart, my beating heart! (*Aloud.*) This unwarrantable presumption on the part of a common sailor! (*Aside.*) Common! oh, the irony of the word! (*Crossing, aloud.*) Oh, sir, you forget the disparity in our ranks.

495 RALPH. I forget nothing, haughty lady. I love you desperately, my life is in your hand – I lay it at your feet! Give me hope, and what I lack in education and polite accomplishments, that I will endeavour to acquire. Drive me to despair, and in death alone I shall look for consolation. I am proud and cannot stoop to implore. I have spoken and I wait your word.

JOS. You shall not wait long. Your proffered love I haughtily reject. Go, sir, and learn to cast your eyes on some village maiden in your own poor rank – they should be lowered before your captain’s daughter!

DUET – JOSEPHINE *and* RALPH.

500 JOS. Refrain, audacious tar,
Your suit from pressing.
Remember what you are,
And whom addressing!
(*Aside.*) I’d laugh my rank to scorn
505 In union holy,
Were he more highly born
Or I more lowly!

RALPH. Proud lady, have your way,
Unfeeling beauty!
510 You speak and I obey,
It is my duty!
I am the lowliest tar
That sails the water,
And you, proud maiden, are
515 My captain’s daughter!
(*Aside.*) My heart with anguish torn
Bows down before her,
She laughs my love to scorn,
Yet I adore her!