

**ROBERT
MICHAEL
BALLANTYNE**

THE STORY OF THE ROCK

Robert Michael Ballantyne

The Story of the Rock

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R. M. Ballantyne

The Story of the Rock

Chapter One.

Wreck of Winstanley's Lighthouse

“At mischief again, of course: always at it.”

Mrs Potter said this angrily, and with much emphasis, as she seized her son by the arm and dragged him out of a pool of dirty water, into which he had tumbled.

“Always at mischief of one sort or another, he is,” continued Mrs Potter, with increasing wrath, “morning, noon, and night—he is; tumblin’ about an’ smashin’ things for ever he does; he’ll break my heart at last—he will. There: take that!”

“That,” which poor little Tommy was desired to take, was a sounding box on the ear, accompanied by a violent shake of the arm which would have drawn that limb out of its socket if the child’s bones and muscles had not been very tightly strung together.

Mrs Potter was a woman of large body and small brain. In respect of reasoning power, she was little better than the wooden cuckoo which came out periodically from the interior of the clock that stood over her own fireplace and announced the hours. She entertained settled convictions on a few subjects, in regard to which she resembled a musical box. If you set her going on any of these, she would harp away until she had played the tune out, and then begin over again; but she never varied. Reasons, however good, or facts, however weighty, were utterly powerless to penetrate her skull: her “settled convictions” were not to be unsettled by any such means. Men might change their minds; philosophers might see fit to alter their opinions; weaklings of both sexes and all ages might trim their sails in accordance with the gales of advancing knowledge, but Mrs Potter—no: never! *her* colours were nailed to the mast. Like most people who unite a strong will with an empty head, she was “wiser in her own conceit than eleven men that can render a reason:” in brief, she was obstinate.

One of her settled convictions was that her little son Tommy was “as full of mischief as a hegg is full of meat.” Another of these convictions was that children of all ages are tough; that it does them good to pull them about in a violent manner, at the risk even of dislocating their joints. It mattered nothing to Mrs Potter that many of her female friends and acquaintances held a different opinion. Some of these friends suggested to her that the hearts of the poor little things were tender, as well as their muscles and bones and sinews; that children were delicate flowers, or rather buds, which required careful tending and gentle nursing. Mrs Potter’s reply was invariably, “Fiddlesticks!” she knew better. They were obstinate and self-willed little brats that required constant banging. She knew how to train ’em up, she did; and it was of no manner of use, it wasn’t, to talk to *her* upon that point.

She was right. It was of no use. As well might one have talked to the wooden cuckoo, already referred to, in Mrs Potter’s timepiece.

“Come, Martha,” said a tall, broad-shouldered, deep-voiced man at her elbow, “don’t wop the poor cheeld like that. What has he been doin’—”

Mrs Potter turned to her husband with a half angry, half ashamed glance.

“Just look at ’im, John,” she replied, pointing to the small culprit, who stood looking guilty and drenched with muddy water from hands to shoulders and toes to nose. “Look at ’im: see what mischief he’s always gittin’ into.”

John, whose dress bespoke him an artisan, and whose grave earnest face betokened him a kind husband and a loving father, said:—

“Tumblin’ into dirty water ain’t necessarily mischief. Come, lad, speak up for yourself. How did it happen—”

“I felled into the water when I was layin’ the foundations, faither,” replied the boy; pointing to a small pool, in the centre of which lay a pile of bricks.

“What sort o’ foundations d’ye mean, boy?”

“The light’ouse on the Eddystun,” replied the child, with sparkling eyes.

The man smiled, and looked at his son with interest.

“That’s a brave boy,” he said, quietly patting the child’s head. “Get ’ee into th’ouse, Tommy, an’ I’ll show ’ee the right way to lay the foundations o’ the Eddystun after supper. Come, Martha,” he added, as he walked beside his wife to their dwelling near Plymouth Docks, “don’t be so hard on the cheeld; it’s not mischief that ails him. It’s engineerin’ that he’s hankerin’ after. Depend upon it, that if he is spared to grow up he’ll be a credit to us.”

Mrs Potter, being “of the same opinion still,” felt inclined to say “Fiddlesticks!” but she was a good soul, although somewhat highly spiced in the temper, and respected her husband sufficiently to hold her tongue.

“John;” she said, after a short silence, “you’re late to-night.”

“Yes,” answered John, with a sigh. “My work at the docks has come to an end, an’ Mr Winstanley has got all the men he requires for the repair of the light’ouse. I saw him just before he went off to the rock to-night, an’ I offered to engage, but he said he didn’t want me.”

“What?” exclaimed Mrs Potter, with sudden indignation: “didn’t want you—you who has served ’im, off an’ on, at that light’ouse for the last six year an’ more while it wor a buildin’! Ah, that’s gratitood, that is; that’s the way some folk shows wot their consciences is made of; treats you like a pair of old shoes, they does, an’ casts you off w’en you’re not wanted: hah!”

Mrs Potter entered her dwelling as she spoke, and banged the door violently by way of giving emphasis to her remark.

“Don’t be cross, old girl,” said John, patting her shoulder: “I hope *you* won’t cast me off like a pair of old shoes when you’re tired of me! But, after all, I have no reason to complain. You know I have laid by a good lump of money while I was at work on the Eddystone; besides, we can’t expect men to engage us when they don’t require us; and if I had got employed, it would not have bin for long, being only a matter of repairs. Mr Winstanley made a strange speech, by the way, as the boat was shoving off with his men. I was standin’ close by when a friend o’ his came up an’ said he thowt the light’ouse was in a bad way an’ couldn’t last long. Mr Winstanley, who is uncommon sure o’ the strength of his work, he replies, says he— ‘I only wish to be there in the greatest storm that ever blew under the face of heaven, to see what the effect will be.’ Them’s his very words, an’ it did seem to me an awful wish—all the more that the sky looked at the time very like as if dirty weather was brewin’ up somewhere.”

“I ’ope he may ’ave ’is wish,” said Mrs Potter firmly, “an’ that the waves may—”

“Martha!” said John, in a solemn voice, holding up his finger, “think what you’re sayin’.”

“Well, I don’t mean no ill; but, but—fetch the kettle, Tommy, d’ye hear? an’ let alone the cat’s tail, you mischievous little—”

“That’s a smart boy,” exclaimed John rising and catching the kettle from his son’s and, just as he was on the point of tumbling over a stool: “there, now let’s all have a jolly supper, and then, Tommy, I’ll show you how the real foundation of the Eddystun was laid.”

The building to which John Potter referred, and of which he gave a graphic account and made a careful drawing that night, for the benefit of his hopeful son, was the *first* lighthouse that was built on the wild and almost submerged reef of rocks lying about fourteen miles to the south-west of Plymouth harbour. The highest part of this reef, named the Eddystone, is only a few feet above water at high tide, and as it lies in deep water exposed to the full swell of the ocean, the raging of the sea over it in stormy weather is terrible beyond conception.

Lying as it does in the track of vessels coasting up and down the English Channel, it was, as we may easily believe, a source of terror, as well as of danger, to mariners, until a lighthouse was built upon it.

But a lighthouse was talked of long before any attempt was made to erect one. Important though this object was to the navies of the world, the supposed impossibility of the feat, and the danger apprehended in the mere attempt, deterred any one from undertaking the task until the year 1696, when a country gentleman of Essex, named Henry Winstanley, came forward, and, having obtained the necessary legal powers, began the great work of building on the wave-lashed rock.

Winstanley was an eccentric as well as a bold man. He undoubtedly possessed an ingenious mechanical mind, which displayed itself very much in practical joking. It is said of him that he made a machine, the spring of which was attached to an old slipper, which lay (apparently by chance) on the floor of his bedroom. If a visitor kicked this out of his way, a phantom instantly arose from the floor! He also constructed a chair which seized every one who sat down in it with its arms, and held them fast; and in his garden he had an arbour which went afloat in a neighbouring canal when any one entered it! As might have been expected, Winstanley's lighthouse was a curious affair, not well adapted to withstand the fury of the waves. It was highly ornamented, and resembled a Chinese pagoda much more than a lighthouse. Nevertheless it must be said to the credit of this bold man, that after facing and overcoming, during six years, difficulties and dangers which up to that time had not been heard of, he finished his lighthouse, proved hereby the possibility of that which had been previously deemed impossible, and gave to mankind a noble example of enterprise, daring, and perseverance.

Our friend John Potter had, from the commencement, rendered able assistance in the dangerous work as a stone cutter, and he could not help feeling as if he had been deserted by an old friend that night when the boat went off to the rock without him.

It was in November 1703, when Winstanley expressed the wish that he might experience, in his lighthouse, the greatest storm that ever blew. On the 26th of that month his wish was granted! That night there arose one of the fiercest gales that ever strewed our shores with wrecks and corpses. The day before the storm, there were indications of its approach, so John Potter went down to the shore to look with some anxiety at the lighthouse. There it stood, as the sun went down, like a star on the horizon, glimmering above the waste of foaming water. When the dark pall and the driving sprays of that terrible night hid it from view, John turned his back on the sea and sought the shelter of his humble home.

It was a cheery home though a poor one, for Mrs Potter was a good housewife, despite her sharp temper; and the threatening aspect of the weather had subdued her somewhat.

"You wouldn't like to be a lighthouse-keeper on a night like this, John, would you?" asked Mrs Potter, as she busied herself with supper.

"May be not: but I would be content to take things as they are sent. Anyhow, I mean to apply for the situation, because I like the notion of the quiet life, and the wage will be good as well as sure, which will be a matter of comfort to you, old girl. You often complain, you know, of the uncertainty of my present employment."

"Ay, but I'd rather 'ave that uncertainty than see you run the risk of bein' drownded in a light'ouse," said Mrs Potter, glancing uneasily at the window, which rattled violently as the fury of the gale increased.

"Oh, faither," exclaimed Tommy, pausing with a potato halfway to his mouth, as he listened partly in delight and partly in dread to the turmoil without: "I wish I was a man that I might go with 'ee to live in the light'ouse. Wot fun it would be to hear the gale roarin' out *there*, an' to see the big waves *so close*, an' to feel the house shake, and—oh!"

The last syllable expressed partly his inability to say more, and partly his horror at seeing the fire blown almost into the room!

For some time past the smoke had poured down the chimney, but the last burst convinced John Potter that it was high time to extinguish the fire altogether.

This accomplished, he took down an old family Bible from a shelf, and had worship, for he was a man who feared and loved God. Earnestly did he pray, for he had a son in the coasting trade whom he knew to be out upon the raging sea that night, and he did not forget his friends upon the Eddystone Rock.

“Get thee to bed, lass,” he said when he had concluded. “I’ll sit up an’ read the word. My eyes could not close this night.”

Poor Mrs Potter meekly obeyed. How strangely the weather had changed her! Even her enemies—and she had many—would have said there was some good in her after all, if they had seen her with a tear trickling down her ruddy cheek as she thought of her sailor boy.

Day broke at last. The gale still raged with an excess of fury that was absolutely appalling. John Potter wrapped himself in a tarpaulin coat and sou’wester preparatory to going out.

“I’ll go with ’ee, John,” said his wife, touching him on the shoulder.

“You couldn’t face it, Martha,” said John. “I thowt ye had bin asleep.”

“No: I’ve bin thinkin’ of our dear boy. I can face it well enough.”

“Come, then: but wrap well up. Let Tommy come too: I see he’s gettin’ ready.”

Presently the three went out. The door almost burst off its hinges when it was opened, and it required John’s utmost strength to reclose it.

Numbers of people, chiefly men, were already hurrying to the beach. Clouds of foam and salt spray were whirled madly in the air, and, carried far inland, and slates and cans were dashing on the pavements. Men tried to say to each other that they had never seen such a storm, but the gale caught their voices; away, and seemed to mingle them all up in one prolonged roar. On gaining the beach they could see nothing at first but the heavings of the maddened sea, whose billows mingled their thunders with the wind. Sand, gravel, and spray almost blinded them, but as daylight increased they caught glimpses of the foam above the rock.

“God help us!” said John, solemnly, as he and his wife and child sought shelter under the lee of a wall: “*the light’ouse is gone!*”

It was too true. The Eddystone lighthouse had been swept completely away, with the unfortunate Winstanley and all his men: not a vestige, save a fragment of chain-cable, remained on the fatal rock to tell that such a building had ever been.

Chapter Two. Beginning of Rudyard's Lighthouse

The terrible gale which swept away the first lighthouse that was built on the Eddystone Rock, gave ample proof of the evils resulting from the want of such a building. Just after the structure fell, a vessel, named the "Winchelsea," homeward bound, approached the dreaded rock. Trusting, doubtless, to the light which had been destroyed so recently, she held on her course, struck, split in two, and went down with every soul on board.

The necessity for building another tower was thus made; as it were, urgently obvious; nevertheless, nearly four years elapsed before any one was found with sufficient courage and capacity to attempt the dangerous and difficult enterprise.

During this period, our friend John Potter, being a steady, able man, found plenty of work at the docks of Plymouth; but he often cast a wistful glance in the direction of "the Rock" and sighed to think of the tower that had perished, and the numerous wrecks that had occurred in consequence; for, not only had some vessels struck on the Rock itself, but others, keeping too far off its dreaded locality, were wrecked on the coast of France. John Potter's sigh, it must be confessed, was also prompted, in part, by the thought that his dreams of a retired and peaceful life as a light-keeper were now destined never to be realised.

Returning home one evening, somewhat wearied, he flung his huge frame into a stout arm chair by the fireside, and exclaimed, "Heigho!"

"Deary me, John, what ails you to-night?" asked the faithful Martha, who was, as of yore, busy with the supper.

"Nothin' partikler, Martha; only I've had a hard day of it, an' I'm glad to sit down. Was Isaac Dorkin here to-day?"

"No, 'e wasn't. I wonder you keep company with that man," replied Mrs Potter, testily; "he's for ever quarrelling with 'ee, John."

"No doubt he is, Martha; but we always make it up again; an' it don't do for a man to give up his comrades just because they have sharp words now and then. Why, old girl, you and I are always havin' a spurt o' that sort off and on; yet I don't ever talk of leavin' ye on that account."

To this Martha replied, "Fiddlesticks;" and said that she didn't believe in the friendship of people who were always fighting and making it up again; that for her part she would rather have no friends at all, she wouldn't; and that she had a settled conviction, she had, that Isaac Dorkin would come to a bad end at last.

"I hope not, Martha; but in the meantime he has bin the means of gettin' me some work to do that is quite to my liking."

"What may that be, John?" asked Mrs Potter in surprise.

"I'll tell you when we're at supper," said John with a smile; for he knew from experience that his better half was in a fitter state to swallow unpleasant news when engaged in swallowing her meals than at any other time.

"Where is Tommy?" he added, looking round at the quantity of chips which littered the floor.

"Where is 'e?" repeated Mrs Potter, in a tone of indignation. "Where would you expect 'im to be but after mischief? 'E's at the mod'l, of course; always at it; never at hanythingk else a'most."

"No!" exclaimed John, in affected surprise. "Wasn't he at school to-day?"

"O yes, of course 'e was at school."

"An' did he git his lessons for to-morrow after comin' 'ome?"

"I suppose 'e did."

"Ah then, he does something else *sometimes*, eh?"

Mrs Potter's reply was interrupted by Tommy himself emerging from a closet, which formed his workshop and in which he was at that time busy with a model of Winstanley's lighthouse, executed from the drawings and descriptions by his father, improved by his own brilliant fancy.

Four years make a marked difference on a boy in the early stage of life. He was now nearly ten, and well grown, both intellectually and physically, for his age.

"Well, Tommy, how d'ee git on wi' the light-'ouse?" asked his father.

"Pretty well, faither: but it seems to me that Mr Winstanley had too many stickin'-out poles, an' curlywurleys, an' things o' that sort about it."

"Listen to that now," said Mrs Potter, with a look of contempt, as they all sat down to supper: "what ever does the boy mean by curlywurleys?"

"You've seed Isaac Dorkin's nose, mother?"

"Of course I 'ave: what then?"

"Well, it goes in at the top and out at the middle and curls up at the end: that's curlywurley," said Tommy, with a grin, as he helped himself to a large potato.

"The boy is right, Martha," said John, laughing, "for a lighthouse should be as round an' as smooth as a ship's bow, with nothin' for wind or water to lay hold on. But now I'll tell 'ee of this noo situation."

Both mother and son looked inquiringly up, but did not speak, being too busy and hungry.

"Well, this is how it came about. I met Isaac Dorkin on my way to the docks this mornin', an' he says to me, says he, 'John, I met a gentleman who is makin' very partikler inquiries about the Eddystone Rock: his name he says is Rudyerd, and he wants to hire a lot o' first-rate men to begin a new—'"

"A noo light'ouse!" exclaimed Mrs Potter, with sudden energy, bringing her fist down on the table with such force that the dishes rattled again. "I know'd it: I did. I've 'ad a settled conviction that if ever they begun to put up another 'ouse on that there rock, you would 'ave your finger in it! And now it'll be the old story over again: out in all weathers, gettin' yer limbs bruised, if yer neck ain't broke; comin' 'ome like a drownded rat, no regular hours or meals! Oh John, John!"

Mrs Potter stopped at this point to recover breath and make up her mind whether to storm or weep. Heaving a deep sigh she did neither, but went on with her supper in sad silence.

"Don't take on like that, duckey," said John, stretching his long arm across the table and patting his wife's shoulder. "It won't be so bad as that comes to, and it will bring steady work, besides lots o' money."

"Go on with the story, faither," said Tommy, through a potato, while his eyes glittered with excitement.

"It ain't a story, lad. However, to make it short I may come to the pint at once. Isaac got engaged himself and mentioned my name to Mr Rudyerd, who took the trouble to ferret me out in the docks and—and in fact engaged me for the work, which is to begin next week."

"Capital!" exclaimed Tommy. "Oh, how I wish I was old enough to go too!"

"Time enough, lad: every dog shall have his day, as the proverb says."

Mrs Potter said nothing, but sighed, and sought comfort in another cup of tea.

Meanwhile John continued his talk in an easy, off hand sort of way, between bite.

"This Mr Rudyerd, you must know (pass the loaf, Tommy: thank 'ee), is a Cornish man—and fine, straightforward, go-ahead fellows them Cornish men are, though I'm not one myself. Ah, you needn't turn up your pretty nose, Mrs Potter; I would rather have bin born in Cornwall than any other county in England, if I'd had my choice. Howsever, that ain't possible now. Well, it seems that Mr Rudyerd is a remarkable sort of man. He came of poor an' dishonest parents, from whom he runned away in his young days, an' got employed by a Plymouth gentleman, who became a true father to him, and got him a good edication in readin', writin', an' mathematics. Ah, Tommy, my son, many a time have I had cause for to regret that nobody gave me a good edication!"

“Fiddlesticks!” exclaimed Mrs Potter, rousing up at this. “You’ve got edication enough for your station in life, and a deal more than most men in the same trade. You oughtn’t for to undervally yourself, John. I’d back you against all your acquaintance in the matter of edication, I would, so don’t talk any more nonsense like that.”

Mrs Potter concluded by emphatically stabbing a potato with her fork, and beginning to peel it.

John smiled sadly and shook his head, but he was too wise a man to oppose his wife on such a point.

“However, Tommy,” he continued, “I’ll not let *you* have the same regrets in after life, my son: God helping me, you shall have a good; edication. Well, as I was sayin’, John Rudyerd the runaway boy became Mister Rudyerd the silk-mercier on Ludgate Hill, London, and now he’s goin’ to build a noo light’ouse on the Eddystun.”

“He’d do better to mind his shop,” said Mrs Potter.

“He must be a strange man,” observed Tommy, “to be both a silk-mercier and an engineer.”

Tommy was right: Mr Rudyerd was indeed a strange man, for the lighthouse which he ultimately erected on the Eddystone Rock proved that, although not a professional engineer, and although he never attempted any other great work of the kind, he nevertheless possessed engineering talent of the highest order: a fact which must of course have been known to Captain Lovet, the gentleman who selected him for the arduous undertaking.

The corporation of the Trinity House, who managed the lighthouses on the English coast, had let the right to build on the Eddystone, for a period of 99 years, to this Captain Lovet, who appointed Mr Rudyerd to do the work.

It was a clear calm morning in July 1706 when the boat put off for the first time to “the Rock,” with the men and materials for commencing the lighthouse. Our friend John Potter sat at the helm. Opposite to him sat his testy friend, Isaac Dorkin, pulling the stroke oar. Mr Rudyerd and his two assistant engineers sat on either hand, conversing on the subject that filled the thoughts of all. It was a long hard pull, even on a calm day, but stout oars and strong arms soon carried them out to the rock. Being low water at the time, a good deal of it was visible, besides several jagged peaks of the black forbidding ridge of which the Eddystone forms a part.

But calm though it was, the party could plainly see that the work before them would be both difficult and dangerous. A slight swell from the open sea caused a long smooth glassy wave to roll solemnly forward every minute or two, and launch itself in thunder on the weather side, sending its spray right over the rock at times, so that a landing on that side would have been impossible. On the lee side, however, the boat found a sort of temporary harbour. Here they landed, but not altogether without mishap. Isaac Dorkin, who had made himself conspicuous, during the row out, for caustic remarks, and a tendency to contradict, slipped his foot on a piece of seaweed and fell into the water, to the great glee of most of his comrades.

“Ah, then, sarves you right,” cried Teddy Maroon, a little Irishman, one of the joiners.

The others laughed, and so did John Potter; but he also stretched out a helping hand and pulled Dorkin out of the sea.

This little incident tended to increase the spirits of the party as they commenced preliminary operations.

The form of the little mass of rock on which they had to build was very unfavourable. Not only was it small—so small that the largest circle which it was possible to draw on it was only twenty-five feet six inches in diameter, but its surface sloped so much as to afford a very insecure foundation for any sort of building, even if the situation had been an unexposed one.

The former builder, Winstanley, had overcome this difficulty by fastening a circle of strong iron posts into the solid rock, but the weight of his building, coupled with the force of the sea, had snapped these, and thus left the structure literally to slide off its foundation. The ends of these iron posts, and a bit of chain firmly imbedded in a cleft of the rock, were all that the new party of builders

found remaining of the old lighthouse. Rudyerd determined to guard against a similar catastrophe, by cutting the rock into a succession of flat steps or terraces, so that the weight of his structure should rest perpendicularly on its foundation.

Stormy weather interrupted and delayed him, but he returned with his men again and again to the work, and succeeded in advancing it very considerably during the first year—that is to say, during the few weeks of the summer of that year, in which winds and waves permitted the work to go on.

Many adventures, both ludicrous and thrilling, had these enterprising men while they toiled, by snatches as it were, sometimes almost under water, and always under difficulties; but we are constrained to pass these by, in silence, in order to devote our space to the more important and stirring incidents in the history of this the second lighthouse on the Eddystone,—one of which incidents bade fair to check the progress of the building for an indefinite period of time, and well-nigh brought the career of our hero, John Potter, and his mates to an abrupt close.

Chapter Three.

A Violent Interruption

The incident referred to in our last chapter occurred on the afternoon of a calm summer day. Early that morning, shortly after daybreak, Mr Rudyerd, with his engineers and workmen, put off in the boat to resume operations on the rock after a lapse of nearly a week, during which period rough weather had stopped the work. They landed without difficulty, the calm being so complete that there was only a little sea caused by the heavy swell on the south-west side of the Eddystone Rock, the leese side being as quiet as a pond.

“It’s not often we have weather like this sir,” observed John Potter to Mr Rudyerd, as the heavily-laden boat approached the landing place.

“True, John; a few weeks like this would enable us almost to complete the courses,” replied the engineer. “Easy, lads, easy! If you run her up so fast you’ll stave in the planks. Stand by with the fender, Teddy!”

“Ay, ay, sir!” cried the man, springing up and seizing a stuffed canvas ball, which he swung over the gunwale just in time to prevent the boat’s side from grazing the rock. “There now: jump out wi’ the painter; man alive!” said Teddy, addressing himself to Isaac Dorkin, who was naturally slow in his movements, “you’ll go souse between the boat an’ the rock av ye don’t be smarter nor that.”

Dorkin made some grumbling reply as he stepped upon the rock, and fastened the painter to a ring-bolt. His comrades sprang after him, and while some began to heave the tools from the boat, others busied themselves round the base of the column, which had by that time risen to a considerable height. It looked massive enough to bid defiance to wind and waves, however fierce their fury. Some such thought must have passed through Mr Rudyerd’s mind just then, for a satisfied smile lighted up his usually grave features as he directed the men to arrange the tackle of the crane, by which the stones were to be removed from the boat to their place on the building. They were all quickly at work; for they knew from experience how suddenly their operations might be cut short by a gale.

In order that the reader may fully understand the details of the event which occurred that afternoon, it is necessary that he should know the nature of the structure, and the height to which, at that time, it had proceeded; and while we are on the subject, we may as well state a few facts connected with the foundation and superstructure, which cannot fail to interest all who take pleasure in contemplating man’s efforts to overcome almost insuperable difficulties.

As we have said, the sloping foundation of the building was cut into a series of terraces or steps. There were seven of these. The first operation was the cutting of thirty-six holes in the solid rock, into which iron hold-fasts were securely fixed. The cutting of these holes or sockets was ingeniously managed. First, three small holes were drilled into the rock; and then these were broken into one large hole, which was afterwards smoothed, enlarged, and *undercut*, so as to be of dovetail form; the size of each being 7 and a half inches broad and 2 and a half inches wide at the top, and an inch broader at the bottom. They were about sixteen inches deep. Thirty-six massive malleable iron hold-fasts were then inserted, and wedged into the places thus prepared for them, besides being filled up with lead, so that no force of any kind could draw them out. The next proceeding was to place beams of solid oak timber, lengthwise, on the first *step*, thus bringing it level with the second step. Timbers of the same kind were then placed above and across these, bringing the level up to the third step. The next “course” of timbers was again laid, lengthwise, bringing the level to the fourth step, and so on to the seventh, above which two completely circular timber courses were laid, thus making a perfectly flat and solid foundation on which the remainder of the column might rest. The building, therefore, had no tendency to slide, even although it had not been held in its place by the thirty-six hold-fasts

before mentioned. In addition to this, the various courses of timber were fastened to the rock and to each other by means of numerous iron cramps and bolts, and wooden trenails.

It was well known to Mr Rudyerd, however, that it was not possible to fit his timbers so perfectly to the rock and to each other as to exclude water altogether; and that if the water should manage to find entrance, it would exert a tremendous lifting power, which, coupled with the weight of the falling billows, would be apt to sweep his foundation away. He resolved, therefore, to counteract this by means of *weight*; and, in order to do this, he next piled five courses of Cornish moor-stone above the timber courses. The stones were huge blocks, which, when laid and fastened in one solid stratum, weighed 120 tons. They were not laid in cement; but each block was fastened to its fellow by joints and similar to the first. The whole of this fabric was built round a strong central mast or pole, which rose from the rock. The two timber courses above described terminated the “solid” part of the lighthouse. It rose to the height of about fourteen feet from the rock, at the centre of the building.

At this point in the structure; namely, at the top of the “solid,” the door was begun on the east side; and a central “well-hole” was left, where the stair leading to the rooms above was ultimately built. The door itself was reached by a strong iron stair of open work, outside, through which the sea could easily wash.

After the solid was completed, other five courses of moor-stone were laid, which weighed about eighty-six tons. It was in these that the door-way and well-hole were made. Two more courses of wood followed, covering the door-head; and on these, four more courses of stone, weighing sixty-seven tons; then several courses of timber, with a floor of oak plank, three inches thick, over all, forming the floor of the first apartment, which was the store-room. This first floor was thirty-three feet above the rock.

The upper part of the column, containing its four rooms, was by no means so strong as the lower part, being composed chiefly of the timber uprights in which the building was encased from top to bottom. These uprights, numbering seventy-one, were massive beams; about a foot broad and nine inches thick at the bottom, and diminishing towards the top. Their seams were caulked like those of a ship, and they gave to the lighthouse when finished the appearance of an elegant fluted column. The top of the column, on which rested the lantern, rose, when finished, to about sixty-three feet above the highest part of the rock.

We have thought proper to give these details in this place, but at the time of which we write, none of the outside timbers had been set up, and the edifice had only reached that point immediately above the “solid,” where the doorway and the “well-hole” began. Here a large crane had been fixed, and two of the men were up there working the windlass, by which the heavy blocks of moor-stone were raised to their places.

The signal had been given to hoist one of these, when Isaac Dorkin, who stood beside the stone, suddenly uttered a loud cry, and shouted, “hold on! Ease off up there! Hold o-o-on! D’ye hear?”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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