

Tracy Louis

# The Pillar of Light



Louis Tracy

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### CHAPTER I

### FLOTSAM

All night long the great bell of the lighthouse, slung to a stout beam projecting seaward beneath the outer platform, had tolled its warning through the fog. The monotonous ticking of the clockwork attachment that governed it, the sharp and livelier click of the occulting hood's machinery, were the only sounds which alternated with its deep boom. The tremendous clang sent a thrill through the giant column itself and pealed away into the murky void with a tremolo of profound diminutions.

Overhead, the magnificent lantern, its eight-ringed circle of flame burning at full pressure, illumined the drifting vapor with an intensity that seemed to be born of the sturdy granite pillar of which it was the fitting diadem. Hard and strong externally as the everlasting rock on which it stood, – replete within with burnished steel and polished brass, great cylinders and powerful pumps, – the lighthouse thrust its glowing torch beyond the reach of the most daring wave. Cold, dour, defiant it looked. Yet its superhuman eye sought to pierce the very heart of the fog, and the furnace-white glare, concentrated ten thousand-fold by the encircling hive of the dioptric lens, flung far into the gloom a silvery cloak of moon-like majesty.

At last an irresistible ally sprang to the assistance of the unconquerable light. About the close of the middle watch a gentle breeze from the Atlantic followed the tide and swept the shivering wraith landward to the northeast, whilst the first beams of a June sun completed the destruction of the routed specter.

So, once more, as on the dawn of the third day, the waters under the heaven were gathered into one place, and the dry land appeared, and behold, it was good.

On the horizon, the turquoise rim of the sea lay with the sheen of folded silk against the softer canopy of the sky. Towards the west a group of islands, to which drifting banks of mist clung in melting despair, were etched in shadows of dreamy purple. Over the nearer sea-floor the quickly dying vapor spread a hazy pall of opal tints. Across the face of the waters glistening bands of emerald green and serene blue quivered in fairy lights. The slanting rays of the sun threw broadcast a golden mirage and gilded all things with the dumb gladness of an English summer's day.

A man, pacing the narrow gallery beneath the lantern, halted for a moment to flood his soul afresh with a beauty made entrancing by the knowledge that a few brief minutes would resolve it into maturer and more familiar charms.

He was engaged, it is true, in the unromantic action of filling his pipe, – a simple thing, beloved alike of poets and navvies, – yet his eyes drank in the mute glory of the scene, and, captive to the spell of the hour, he murmured aloud:

"Floating on waves of music and of light,  
Behold the chariot of the Fairy Queen!  
Celestial coursers paw the unyielding air;  
Their filmy pennons at her word they furl,  
And stop obedient to the reins of light."

The small door beneath the glass fane was open. The worker within, busily cleaning an eight-inch burner, ceased for an instant and popped his head out.

"Did you hail me?" he inquired.

The matter-of-fact words awoke the dreamer. He turned with a pleasant smile.

"To be exact, Jim, I did hail somebody, but it was Aurora, Spirit of the Dawn, not a hard-bitten sailor-man like you."

"Oh, that's all right, cap'n. I thought I heard you singin' out for a light."

The other man bent his head to shield a match from a puff of wind, thus concealing from his companion the gleam of amusement in his eyes. His mate sniffed the fragrant odor of the tobacco longingly, but the Elder Brethren of the Trinity maintain strict discipline, and he vanished to his task without a thought of broken rules.

He left a piece of good advice behind him.

"If I was you, cap'n," he said, "I'd turn in. Jones is feelin' Al this mornin'. He comes on at eight. You ought to be dead beat after your double spell of the last two days. I'll keep breakfast back until three bells (9.30 A.M.), an' there's fresh eggs an' haddick."

"Just a couple of whiffs, Jim. Then I'll go below."

Both men wore the uniform of assistant-keepers, yet it needed not their manner of speech to reveal that one was a gentleman, born and bred, and the other a bluff, good-natured, horny-handed A.B., to whom new-laid eggs and recently cured fish appealed far more potently than Shelley and a summer dawn at sea.

He who had involuntarily quoted "Queen Mab" turned his gaze seaward again. Each moment the scene was becoming more brilliant yet nearer to earth. The far-off islands sent splashes of gray, brown and green through the purple. The rose flush on the horizon was assuming a yellower tinge and the blue of sky and water was deepening. Twenty miles away to the southwest the smoke of a steamer heralded the advent of an Atlantic liner, and the last shreds of white mist were curling forlornly above the waves.

The presence of the steamship, a tiny dull spot on the glowing picture, peopled the void with life and banished poetry with the thinly sheeted ghosts of the fog. In a little more than an hour she would be abreast of the Gulf Rock Light. The watcher believed – was almost certain, in fact – that she was the *Princess Royal*, homeward bound from New York to Southampton. From her saloon deck those enthusiasts who had risen early enough to catch a first glimpse of the English coast were already scanning the trimly rugged outlines of the Scilly Isles, and searching with their glasses for the Land's End and the Lizard.

In a few hours they would be in Southampton; that afternoon in London – London, the Mecca of the world, from which, two years ago, he fled with a loathing akin to terror. The big ship out there, panting and straining as if she were beginning, not ending, her ocean race of three thousand miles, was carrying eager hundreds to the pleasures and follies of the great city. Yet he, the man smoking and silently staring at the growing bank of smoke, – a young man, too; handsome, erect, with the clean, smooth profile of the aristocrat, – had turned his back on it all, and sought, and found, peace here in the gaunt pillar on a lonely rock.

Strange, how differently men are constituted. And women! Bah! A hard look came into his eyes. His mouth set in a stern contempt. For a little while his face bore a steely expression which would have amazed the man within the lantern, now singing lustily as he worked.

But as the harp of David caused the evil spirit to depart from Saul, so did the music of the morning chase away the lurking devil of memory which sprang upon the lighthouse-keeper with the sight of the vessel.

He smiled again, a trifle bitterly perhaps. Behind him the singer roared genially:

"Soon we'll be in London Town,  
Sing, my lads, yeo ho-o,  
And see the King in his golden crown,

Sing, my lads, yeo ho."

The man on the platform seemed to be aroused from a painful reverie by the jingle so curiously *à propos* to his thoughts. He tapped his pipe on the iron railing, and was about to enter the lantern – and so to the region of sleep beneath – when suddenly his glance, trained to an acuteness not dreamed of by folk ashore, rested on some object seemingly distant a mile or less, and drifting slowly nearer with the tide.

At this hour a two-knot current swept to the east around and over the treacherous reef whose sunken fangs were marked by the lighthouse. In calm weather, such as prevailed just then, it was difficult enough to effect a landing at the base of the rock, but this same smiling water-race became an awful, raging, tearing fury when the waves were lashed into a storm.

He pocketed his pipe and stood with hands clenched on the rail, gazing intently at a white-painted ship's life-boat, with a broken mast and a sail trailing over the stern. Its color, with the sun shining on it, no less than the vaporous eddies fading down to the surface of the sea, had prevented him from seeing it earlier. Perhaps he would not have noticed it at all were it not for the flashing wings of several sea-birds which accompanied the craft in aerial escort.

Even yet a landsman would have stared insolently in that direction and declared that there was naught else in sight save the steamer, whose tall masts and two black funnels were now distinctly visible. But the lighthouse keeper knew he was not mistaken. Here was a boat adrift, forlorn, deserted. Its contour told him that it was no local craft straying adventurously from island or mainland. Its unexpected presence, wafted thus strangely from ocean wilds, the broken spar and tumbled canvas, betokened an accident, perchance a tragedy.

"Jim!" he cried.

His mate, engaged in shrouding the gleaming lenses from the sun's rays, came at the call. He was lame – the result of a wound received in the Egyptian campaign: nevertheless, he was quick on his feet.

"What do you make of that?"

The sailor required no more than a gesture. He shaded his eyes with his right hand, a mere shipboard trick of concentrating vision and brain, for the rising sun was almost behind him.

"Ship's boat," he answered, laconically. "Collision, I expect. There's bin no blow to speak of for days. But they're gone. Knocked overboard when she was took aback by a squall. Unless them birds – "

He spoke in a species of verbal shorthand, but his meaning was clear enough, even to the sentence left unfinished. The craft was under no control. She would drift steadily into the Bay until the tide turned, wander in an aimless circle for half an hour thereafter, and then, when the ebb restored direction and force to the current, voyage forth again to the fabled realm of Lyonesse.

For a little while they stood together in silence. Jim suddenly quitted his companion and came back with a glass. He poised it with the precision of a Bisley marksman, and began to speak again, jerkily:

"Stove in forrard, above the water-line. Wouldn't live two minutes in a sea. Somethin' lyin' in the bows. Can't make it out. And there's a couple of cormorants perched on the gunwale. But she'll pass within two hundred yards on her present course, an' the tide'll hold long enough for that."

The other man looked around. From that elevated perch, one hundred and thirty feet above high-water mark, he could survey a vast area of sea. Excepting the approaching steamer – which would flit past a mile away to the south – and a few distant brown specks which betokened a shoal of Penzance fishing-smacks making the best of the tide eastward – there was not a sail in sight.

"I think we should try and get hold of her," he said.

Jim kept his eye glued to the telescope.

"'Tain't worth it, cap'n. The salvage'll only be a pound or two, not but what an extry suvrin comes in useful, an' we might tie her up to the buoy on the off chance until the relief comes or we signal a smack. But what's the good o' talkin'? We've got no boat, an' nobody'd be such a fool as to swim to her."

"That is what I had in mind."

Jim lowered the glass.

"That's the fust time I've ever heard you say a d – d silly thing, Stephen Brand."

There was no wavering judgment in his voice now. He was angry, and slightly alarmed.

"Why is it so emphatically silly, Jim?" was the smiling query.

"How d'ye know what's aboard of her? What's them fowl after? What's under that sail? What's that lyin' crumpled up forrard? Dead men, mebbe. If they are, she's convoyed by sharks."

"Sharks! This is not the Red Sea. I am not afraid of any odd prowler. Once – Anyhow, I am going to ask Jones."

"Jones won't hear of it."

"That is precisely what he will do, within the next minute. Now, don't be vexed, Jim. Stand by and sing out directions if needful when I am in the water. Have no fear. I am more than equal to Leander in a sea like this."

Jim, who trusted to the head-keeper's veto, – awed, too, by the reference to Leander, whom he hazily associated with Captain Webb, – made no rejoinder.

He focused the telescope again, gave a moment's scrutiny to the steamer, and then re-examined the boat. The stillness of the morning was solemn. Beyond the lazy splash of the sea against the Gulf Rock itself, and an occasional heavy surge as the swell revealed and instantly smothered some dark tooth of the reef, he heard no sound save the ring of Stephen Brand's boots on the iron stairs as he descended through the oil-room, the library and office, to the first bedroom, in the lower bunk of which lay Mr. Jones, keeper and chief, recovering from a sharp attack of sciatica.

During one fearful night in the March equinox, when the fierce heat of the lamp within and the icy blast of the gale without had temporarily deranged the occulting machinery, Jones experienced an anxious watch. Not for an instant could he forego attendance on the lamp. Owing to the sleet it was necessary to keep the light at full pressure. The surplus oil, driven up from the tanks by weights weighing half a ton, must flow copiously over the brass shaft of the burner, or the metal might yield to the fervent power of the column of flame.

The occulting hood, too, must be helped when the warning click came, or it would jam and fail to fall periodically, thus changing the character of the light, to the bewilderment and grave peril of any unhappy vessel striving against the exterior turmoil of wind and wave.

So Jones passed four hours with his head and shoulders in the temperature of a Turkish bath and the lower part of his body chilled to the bone.

He thought nothing of it at the time. This was duty. But at intervals, throughout the rest of his life, the sciatic nerve would remind him of that lonely watch. This morning he was convalescent after a painful immobility of two days.

Watching the boat, Jim centered her in the telescopic field, and looked anxiously for a sharp arrow-shaped ripple on the surface of the sea. The breeze which had vanquished the fog now kissed the smiling water into dimples, and his keen sight was perplexed by the myriad wavelets.

Each minute the condition of affairs on board became more defined. Beneath some oars ranged along the starboard side he could see several tins, such as contain biscuits and compressed beef. The shapeless mass in the bows puzzled him. It was partly covered with broken planks from the damaged portion of the upper works, and it might be a jib-sail fallen there when the mast broke. The birds were busy and excited. He did not like that.

Nearly half an hour passed. The *Princess Royal*, a fine vessel of yacht-like proportions, sprinting for the afternoon train, was about eight miles away, sou'west by west. According to present indications



steamer and derelict would be abreast of the Gulf Rock Light simultaneously, but the big ship, of course, would give a wide berth to a rock-strewn shoal.

At last the lighthouse-keeper heard ascending footsteps. This was not Stephen Brand, but Jones. Jim, whose rare irritated moods found safety in stolid silence, neither spoke nor looked around when his chief joined him, binoculars in hand.

Jones, a man of whitewash, polish, and rigid adherence to framed rules, found the boat instantly, and recapitulated Jim's inventory, eliciting grunts of agreement as each item was ticked off.

A clang of metal beneath caught their ears – the opening of the stout doors, forty feet above high-water mark, from which a series of iron rungs, sunk in the granite wall, led to the rocky base.

"Brand's goin' to swim out. It's hardly worth while signalin' to the Land's End," commented Jones.

No answer. Jim leaned well over and saw their associate, stripped to his underclothing, with a leather belt supporting a sheath-knife slung across his shoulders, climbing down the ladder.

This taciturnity surprised Jones, for Jim was the cheeriest nurse who ever brought a sufferer a plate of soup.

"It's nothing for a good swimmer, is it?" was the anxious question.

"No. It's no distance to speak of."

"An' the sea's like a mill-pond?"

"Ay, it's smooth enough."

"Don't you think he ought to try it? Every fine mornin' he has a dip off the rock."

"Well, if it's all right for him an' you it's all right for me."

Jim had urged his plea to the man whom it chiefly concerned. He was far too sporting a character to obtain the interference of authority, and Jones, whose maritime experiences were confined to the hauling in or paying out of a lightship's cable, had not the slightest suspicion of lurking danger in the blue depths.

A light splash came to them, and, a few seconds later, Brand's head and shoulders swung into view. After a dozen vigorous breast strokes he rolled over on to his side, and waved his left hand to the two men high above him.

With a sweeping side stroke he made rapid progress. Jones, unencumbered by knowledge, blew through his lips.

"He's a wonderful chap, is Brand," he said, contentedly. "It licks me what a man like him wants messin' about in the service for. He's eddicated up to the top notch, an' he has money, too. His lodgin's cost the whole of his pay, the missus says, an' that kid of his has a hospital nuss, if you please."

Jones was grateful to his mates for their recent attentions. He was inclined to genial gossip, but Jim was watching the boat curving towards the lighthouse. The high spring tide was at the full. So he only growled:

"You can see with half an eye he has taken on this job for a change. I wish he was in that blessed boat."

Jones was quite certain now that his subordinate harbored some secret fear of danger.

"What's up?" he cried. "He'll board her in two ticks."

On no account would the sailor mention sharks. He might be mistaken, and Jones would guffaw at his "deep-sea" fancies. Anyhow, it was Brand's affair. A friend might advise; he would never tattle.

The head-keeper, vaguely excited, peered through his glass. Both boat and swimmer were in the annular field. Brand had resumed the breast stroke. The swing of the tide carried the broken bow towards him. He was not more than the boat's length distant when he dived suddenly and the cormorants flapped aloft. A black fin darted into sight, leaving a sharply divided trail in the smooth patch of water created by the turning of the derelict.

Jones was genuinely startled now.

"My God!" he cried, "what is it?"

"A shark!" yelled Jim. "I knew it. I warned him. Eh, but he's game is the cap'n."

"Why didn't you tell me?" roared Jones. Under reversed conditions he would have behaved exactly as Jim did.

But it was no time for words. The men peered at the sudden tragedy with an intensity which left them gasping for breath. More than two hundred yards away in reality, the magnifying glasses brought this horror so close that they could see – they almost thought they could hear – its tensely dramatic action. The rapidly moving black signal reached the small eddy caused by the man's disappearance. Instantly a great sinuous, shining body rose half out of the water, and a powerful tail struck the side of the boat a resounding whack.

Jim's first expletive died in his throat.

"He's done it!" Jones heard him say. "He's ripped him. Oh, bully! May the Lord grant there's only one."

For a single instant they saw the dark hair and face of the man above the surface. The shark whirled about and rushed. Brand sank, and again the giant man-eater writhed in agonized contortions and the sea showed masses of froth and dark blotches. The flutterings of the birds became irregular and alarmed. Their wheeling flights partly obscured events below. The gulls, screeching their fright, or it might be interest, kept close to the water, and the cormorants sailed in circles aloof.

Jones was pallid and streaming with perspiration. "I wouldn't have had it happen for fifty quid," he groaned.

"I wouldn't ha' missed it for a hundred," yelled Jim. "It's a fight to a finish, and the cap'n'll win. There ain't another sea-lawyer on the job, an' Brand knows how to handle this one."

Their mate's head reappeared and Jim relieved the tension by a mighty shout:

"He'll swim wild now, Brand. Keep out of his track."

Sure enough, the ugly monster began to thrash the water and career around on the surface in frantic convulsions. The second stab of the knife had reached a vital part. Brand, who perhaps had seen a Malay diver handling his life-long enemy, coolly struck out towards the stern of the boat. The shark, churning the sea into a white foam, whirled away in blind pursuit of the death which was rending him. The man, unharmed but somewhat breathless, clambered over the folds of the sail into the boat.

"Glory be!" quavered Jones, who was a Baptist.

Jim was about to chant his thanks in other terms when his attention was caught by Brand's curious actions.

In stepping across the after thwart he stopped as though something had stung him. His hesitation was momentary. Pressing his left hand to mouth and nose he passed rapidly forward, stooped, caught a limp body by the belt which every sailor wears, and, with a mighty effort, slung it into the sea, where it sank instantly. So the shark, like many a human congener of higher intellect, had only missed his opportunity by being too precipitate, whilst the cormorants and gulls, eyeing him ominously, did not know what they had lost.

Then the man returned to the sail and peered beneath. Neither of the onlookers could distinguish anything of special interest under the heavy canvas sheet. Whatever it was, Brand apparently resolved to leave it alone for the moment.

He shipped a pair of oars, and, with two vigorous sweeps, impelled the derelict away from the charnel-house atmosphere which evidently clung to it.

Then the shark engaged his attention. It was floating, belly upwards, its white under-skin glistening in the sunlight. Two long gashes were revealed, one transverse, the other lengthwise, proving how coolly and scientifically Brand had done his work. An occasional spasm revealed that life was not yet extinct, but the furtive attack of a dogfish, attracted by the scent of blood, which stirs alike the denizens of air, land and ocean, was unresisted.

The rower stood up again, drove a boat-hook into the cruel jaws, and lashed the stock to a thorn-pin with a piece of cordage. This accomplished to his satisfaction, he looked towards the Gulf Rock for the first time since he drew the knife from its sheath, gave a cheery hand-wave to the shouting pair on the balcony, and settled down to pull the recovered craft close to the rock.

Jim closed the telescope with a snap.

"He heaved the dead man overboard," he announced, "so there's a live one under the sail."

"Why do you think that?" said Jones, whose nerves were badly shaken.

"Well, you saw what happened to the other pore devil. Either him or the cap'n had to go. It 'ud be the same if there was a funeral wanted aft. Them there birds – But come along, boss. Let's give him a hand."

They hurried down to the iron-barred entrance. Jones shot outward a small crane fitted with a winch, in case it might be needed, whilst the sailor climbed to the narrow platform of rock into which the base-blocks of the lighthouse were sunk and bolted.

Affording but little superficial space at low water, there was now not an inch to spare. Here, at sea-level, the Atlantic swell, even in calm weather, rendered landing or boarding a boat a matter of activity. At this stage of the tide each wave lapped some portion of the granite stones and receded quickly down the slope of the weed-covered rock.

The gulls and cormorants, filling the air with raucous cries, were rustling in rapid flight in the wake of the boat, darting ever and anon at the water or making daring pecks at the floating carcass.

Soon Brand glanced over his shoulder to measure his distance. With the ease of a practised oarsman he turned his craft to bring her stern on to the landing-place.

"Lower a basket!" he cried to Jones, and, whilst the others wondered what the urgency in his voice betokened, there reached them the deep strong blast of a steam-whistle, blown four times in quick succession.

Each and all, they had forgotten the *Princess Royal*. She was close in, much nearer than mail steamers usually ventured.

At first they gazed at her with surprise, Brand even suspending his maneuvers for a moment. Then Jim, knowing that a steamship trumpets the same note to express all sorts of emotion, understood that the officers had witnessed a good deal, if not all, that had taken place, and were offering their congratulations.

"Blow away, my hearties!" crowed Jim, vainly apostrophizing the vessel. "You'll have somethin' to crack about when you go ashore tonight or I'm very much mistaken. Now, cap'n," he went on, "take the cover off. It's alive, I suppose. Is it a man, or a woman?"

## CHAPTER II

### A CHRISTENING

Brand was slow to answer. For one thing, he was exhausted. Refreshing as the long swim was after a night of lonely vigil, itself the culmination of two days of hard work, the fierce battle with the shark had shocked into active existence the reserve of latent energy which every healthy animal unconsciously hoards for life-and-death emergencies.

But there was another reason. He had scarce gained the comparative safety of the boat before he was, in the same instant, horrified and astounded to a degree hitherto beyond his experience. Not even the stiff pull of two hundred yards sufficed to restore his senses. So Jim's question fell on his ears with the meaningless sound of the steamer's siren.

"What is it, mate?" repeated his fellow-keeper, more insistently. "You ain't hurt anyways, are you?"

"It is a baby," said Brand, in a curiously vacant way.

"A baby!" shrieked Jones, stretched out over the crane above their heads.

"A what-a?" roared the sailor, whose crudely developed nervous system was not proof against the jar of incredulity induced by this statement. Had Brand said "a tiger," he could not have exhibited greater concern.

"Yes, a baby – and it is living. I heard it cry," murmured the other, sitting down rather suddenly.

Indeed, a faint wail, suggestive of a kitten, now came from beneath the tumbled canvas quite near to Jim. But the Royal Navy does not encourage neurosis. The lighthouse-keeper felt that a minor crisis had arrived. It must be dealt with promptly.

The evil odor which still adhered to the boat told him that Brand had exchanged one Inferno for another, when he clambered out of the reach of the blindly vengeful shark.

He looked up to Jones.

"Lower away," he said, promptly. "Swing the derrick until I grab the tackle, and then hoist me aboard."

This was done. Ungainly in his walk, owing to his wounded limb, Jim, clinging to a rope, had the easy activity of a squirrel.

"Now, lower a jug with some brandy. He's dead beat," he added.

Whilst Jones hastened for the spirit, the sailor stooped and threw back the sail.

Lying in the bottom of the boat, wrapped in a blanket which unavailing struggles had rumped into a roll beneath the arms, was an infant whose precise age it was impossible to estimate forthwith owing to the emaciated condition of its body.

With the rocking of the boat, the foul bilge-water washed around the child's limbs and back. Instinct alone had saved it from drowning. Perhaps, during the first hours of vigor after abandonment, the little one might have rolled over in infantile search for food and human tendance, but the rush of salt water into eyes and mouth must have driven the tiny sufferer to seek instantly the only position in which life was possible.

So far as the man could judge in a first hasty glance, the child's clothing was of excellent quality. Yet he gave slight heed to such considerations. Jim was the father of three lusty youngsters who were snugly in bed in Penzance, and the sight of this forlorn sea-waif made his eyes misty.

He reached down, unpinned the blanket, which was secured with a brooch, and lifted the infant out of its unpleasing environment. It was piteous to see the way in which the shrunken hands at once strove to clasp his wrists, though they were all too feeble to achieve more than a gentle clutch which relaxed almost as soon as the effort was made.

Jones, also a husband and father, bethought him when he reached the store-room. Hence, when the windlass lowered a basket, there was not only a supply of brandy within but also a bottle of fresh milk, which reached the Gulf Rock, by arrangement with a fisherman, whenever weather permitted.

Jim handed the jug to his exhausted companion.

"Here, cap'n," he said, cheerfully. "Take a couple of mouthfuls of this. It'll warm the cockles of your heart. An' the sooner you shin up the ladder and get them soaked rags off you the better. Can you manage? It's a near thing for the kid, if not too late now."

Brand needed no second bidding. He did not wish to collapse utterly, and the soft breeze, rendered chilly by his wet garments, had revived him somewhat.

The resourceful sailor did not attempt the foolish process of pouring even the smallest quantity of milk into the baby's mouth. He produced a handkerchief, steeped a twisted corner in the milk, and placed it between the parched, salt-blackened lips.

This rough expedient for a feeding-bottle served admirably. The child's eagerness to gulp in the life-giving fluid was only matched by the tender care of the sailor in his efforts to appease its ravenous hunger.

He was so intent on this urgent task that for a little while he paid no heed to Brand. Jones, forty feet overhead, took the keenest interest in the baby's nurture.

"Mind you don't let it suck the handkerchief into its little throat," he cried. "Not too much, Jim. It's on'y a young 'un. 'Half milk, half water, an' a lump of sugar,' my missus says. Pore little dear! However did it come to live, when that man must ha' bin dead for days? Now, Jim, slow an' sure is the motter. S'pose you shove it into the basket an' let me hoist it up here? A warm bath an' a blanket is the next best thing to milk an' water."

"All right, skipper. Just hold on a bit. She's doin' fine."

"Is it a he or a she?"

"I dunno. But I guess it's a gal by the duds."

The baby, in the sheer joy of living again, uttered a gurgling cry, a compound of milk, happiness and pain.

"There! I told you!" shouted Jones, angrily. "You think every kid is a hardy young savage like your own. You're overdoing' it, I say."

"Overdoing' wot?" demanded the sailor. "You don't know who you're talking' to. Why, when I was on the West Coast, I reared two week-old monkeys this way."

Soon these firm friends would have quarreled – so unbounded was their anxiety to rescue the fluttering existence of the tiny atom of humanity so miraculously snatched from the perils of the sea.

But Stephen Brand's dominant personality was rapidly recovering its normal state.

"Jim," he said, "Mr. Jones is right. The child must be made comfortable. Her skin is raw and her eyes sore with inflammation. The little food she has already obtained will suffice for a few minutes. Send her up."

The "Mr. Jones" was a gentle reminder of authority. No further protest was raised, save by the infant when supplies were temporarily withheld, and Jones was too pleased that his opinion should be supported by Brand to give another thought to his subordinate's outburst.

"Now, back up to the rock," said Brand. "I will dress and rejoin you quickly. The boat must be thoroughly examined and swabbed out: Jones will signal for help. Meanwhile, you might moor her tightly. When the tide falls she will be left high and dry."

The sailor's momentary annoyance fled. There was much to be done, and no time should be wasted in disputes concerning baby culture.

"Sure you won't slip?" he asked, as Stephen caught hold of the ladder.

"No, no. It was not fatigue but sickness which overcame me. The brandy has settled that."

Up he went, as though returning from his customary morning dip.

"By jingo, he's a plucked 'un," murmured Jim, admiringly. "He ought to be skipper of a battleship, instead of housemaid of a rock-light. Dash them sea-crows! I do hate 'em."

He seized an oar and lunged so hard and true at a cormorant which was investigating the shark's liver, that he knocked the bird a yard through the air. Discomfited, it retired, with a scream. Its companion darted to the vacant site and pecked industriously. The neighborhood of the rock was now alive with seagulls. In the water many varieties of finny shapes were darting to and fro in great excitement. Jim laughed.

"They'd keep me busy," he growled. "When all's said an' done, it's their nater, an' they can't help it."

Unconscious that he had stated the primordial thesis, he left the foragers alone. Hauling the sail out of the water, he discovered that the stern-board was missing, broken off probably when the mast fell. His trained scrutiny soon solved a puzzle suggested by the state of the cordage. Under ordinary conditions, the upper part of the mast would either have carried the sail clean away with it or be found acting as a sort of sea-anchor at a short distance from the boat.

But it had gone altogether, and the strands of the sail-rope were bitten, not torn, asunder. The shark had striven to pull the boat under by tugging at the wreckage.

Having made the canvas ship-shape, Jim settled the next pressing question by seizing an empty tin and sluicing the fore part. Then he passed a rope under the after thwart and reeved it through a ring-bolt in a rock placed there for mooring purposes in very calm weather like the present.

When the Trinity tender paid her monthly visit to the lighthouse she was moored to a buoy three cables' lengths away to the northwest. If there was the least suspicion of a sea over the reef it was indeed a ticklish task landing or embarking stores and men.

Close-hauled, the boat would fill forward as the tide dropped. This was matterless. By that time all her movable contents – she appeared to have plenty of tinned meat and biscuits aboard but no water – would be removed to the store-room.

The sailor was sorting the packages – wondering what queer story of the deep would be forthcoming when the recent history of the rescued child was ascertained – when Brand hailed him.

"Look out there, Jim. I am lowering an ax."

The weapon was duly delivered.

"What's the ax for, cap'n?" was the natural query.

"I want to chop out that shark's teeth. They will serve as mementoes for the girl if she grows up, which is likely, judging by the way she is yelling at Jones."

"Whats he a-doing' of?" came the sharp demand.

"Giving her a bath, and excellently well, too. He is evidently quite domesticated."

"If that means 'under Mrs. J.'s thumb,' you're right, cap'n. They tell me that when he's ashore –"

"Jim, the first time I met you you were wheeling a perambulator. Now, load the skip and I will haul in."

They worked in silence a few minutes. Brand descended, and a few well-placed cuts relieved the man-eater of the serrated rows used to such serious purpose in life that he had attained a length of nearly twelve feet. Set double in the lower jaw and single in the upper, they were of a size and shape ominously suggestive of the creature's voracity.

"It is a good thing," said Brand, calmly hewing at the huge jaws, "that nature did not build the *Carcharodon galeidæ* on the same lines as an alligator. If this big fellow's sharp embroidery were not situated so close to his stomach he would have made a meal of me, Jim, unless I carried a torpedo."

"He's a blue shark," commented the other, ignoring for the nonce what he termed "some of the cap'n's jaw-breakers."

"Yes. It is the only dangerous species found so far north."

"His teeth are like so many fixed bayonets. Of course, you would like to keep 'em, but he would look fine in the museum. Plenty of folk in Penzance, especially visitors, would pay a bob a head to see him."

Brand paused in his labor.

"Listen, Jim," he said, earnestly. "I want both you and Jones to oblige me by saying nothing about the shark. Please do not mention my connection with the affair in any way. The story will get into the newspapers as it is. The additional sensation of the fight would send reporters here by the score. I don't wish that to occur."

"Do you mean to say —

"Mr. Jones will report the picking up of the boat, and the finding of the baby, together with the necessary burial of a man unknown —

"What sort of a chap was he?" interrupted Jim.

"I — I don't know — a sailor — that is all I can tell you. He must have been dead several days."

"Then how in the world did that baby keep alive?"

"I have been thinking over that problem. I imagine that, in the first place, there was a survivor, who disappeared since the death of the poor devil out there — " he pointed to the sea. "This person, whether man or woman, looked after the child until madness came, caused by drinking salt water. The next step is suicide. The little one, left living, fell into the bilge created by the shipping of a sea, and adopted, by the mercy of Providence, a method of avoiding death from thirst which ought to be more widely appreciated than it is. She absorbed water through the pores of the skin, which rejected the salty elements and took in only those parts of the compound needed by the blood. You follow me?"

"Quite. It's a slap-up idea."

"It is not new. It occurred to a ship's captain who was compelled to navigate his passengers and crew a thousand miles in open boats across the Indian Ocean, as the result of a fire at sea. Well, the child was well nourished, in all likelihood, before the accident happened which set her adrift on the Atlantic. She may have lost twenty or thirty pounds in weight, but starvation is a slow affair, and her plumpness saved her life in that respect. Most certainly she would have died today, and even yet she is in great danger. Her pulse is very weak, and care must be taken not to stimulate the action of the heart too rapidly."

When Brand spoke in this way, Jim Spence was far too wary to ask personal questions. Sometimes, in the early days of their acquaintance, he had sought to pin his friend with clumsy logic to some admission as to his past life. The only result he achieved was to seal the other man's lips for days so far as reminiscences were concerned.

Not only Jones and Spence, but Thompson, the third assistant, who was taking his month ashore, together with the supernumeraries who helped to preserve the rotation of two months rock duty and one ashore, soon realized that Brand — whom they liked and looked up to — had locked the record of his earlier years and refused to open the diary for anyone.

Yet so helpful was he — so entertaining with his scraps of scientific knowledge and more ample general reading — that those whose turn on the rock was coincident with his relief hailed his reappearance with joy. During the preceding winter he actually entertained them with a free translation of the twenty-four books of the "Iliad," and great was the delight of Jim Spence when he was able to connect the exploits of some Greek or Trojan hero with the identity of one of her Majesty's ships.

In private, they discussed him often, and a common agreement was made that his wish to remain incognito should be respected. Their nickname, "the cap'n," was a tacit admission of his higher social rank. They feared lest inquisitiveness should drive him from their midst, and one supernumerary, who heard from the cook of the Trinity tender that Brand was the nephew of a baronet, was roughly bidden to "close his rat-trap, or he might catch something he couldn't eat."

So Jim now contented himself by remarking dolefully that had his advice been taken "the bloomin' kid would be well on her way back to the Scilly Isles."

"You must not say that," was the grave response. "These things are determined by a higher power than man's intelligence. Think how the seeming accident of a fallen sail saved the child from the cormorants and other birds – how a chance sea fell into the boat and kept her alive – how mere idle curiosity on my part impelled me to swim out and investigate matters."

"That's your way of putting' it," Jim was forced to say. "You knew quite well that there might be a shark in her wake, or you wouldn't have taken the knife. An' now you won't have a word said about it. At the bombardment of Alexandria, a messmate of mine got the V. C. for less."

"The real point is, Jim, that we have not yet discovered what ship this boat belongs to."

"No, an' what's more, we won't find out in a hurry. Her name's gone, fore and aft."

"Is there nothing left to help us?"

"Only this."

The sailor produced the brooch from his waistcoat pocket. It was of the safety-pin order, but made of gold and ornamented with small emeralds set as a four-leafed shamrock.

"Is the maker's name on the sail?"

"No. I fancy that this craft was rigged on board ship for harbor cruisin'."

Brand passed a hand wearily across his forehead.

"I wish I had not been so precipitate," he murmured. "That man had papers on him, in all likelihood."

"You couldn't have stood it, mate. It was bad enough for me. It must ha' bin hell for you."

"Perhaps the baby's clothes are marked."

"That's a chance. She was well rigged out."

Brand cast the shark loose. The monster slid off into the green depths. A noiseless procession of dim forms rushed after the carcass. The birds, shrill with disappointment, darted off to scour the neighboring sea.

Beyond the damaged boat, bumping against the rock, and the huge jaws with their rows of wedge-shaped teeth, naught remained to testify to the drama of the hour save the helpless baby on which the head-keeper was waiting so sedulously.

Already the signal "Doctor wanted" was fluttering from the lighthouse flagstaff. It would be noted at the Land's End and telegraphed to Penzance. The morning would be well advanced before help could reach the Gulf Rock from ashore.

When Brand and Spence entered Jones's bedroom they found him hard at work washing the child's clothing.

"She's asleep," he said, jerking his head towards a bunk. "I gev' her a pint of mixture. She cried a bit when there was no more to be had, but a warm bath with some boric acid in it made her sleepy. An' there she is, snug as a cat."

The domesticated Jones was up to his elbows in a lather of soap.

"Have you noticed any laundry marks or initials on her clothing?" asked Brand.

"Yes. Here you are."

He fished out of the bubbles a little vest, on which were worked the letters E. T. in white silk.

"Ah! That is very important. We can establish her identity, especially if the laundry mark is there also."

"I'm feared there's nothing else," said Jones. "I've not looked very carefully, as it'll take me all my time to get everything dry afore the tug comes. As for ironin', it can't be done. But my missus'll see after her until somebody turns up to claim her."

"That may be never."

"Surely we will get some news of the ship which was lost!"



"Yes, that is little enough to expect. Yet it is more than probable that her parents are dead. A baby would be separated from her mother only by the mother's death. There is a very real chance that poor 'E. T.' will be left for years on the hands of those who take charge of her now. The only alternative is the workhouse."

"That's so, cap'n," put in Jim. "You always dig to the heart of a subject, even if it's a shark."

"In a word, Jones, you can hardly be asked to assume such a responsibility. Now it happens that I can afford to adopt the child, if she lives, and is not claimed by relatives. It is almost a duty imposed on me by events. When the doctor comes, therefore, I purpose asking him to see that she is handed over to Mrs. Sheppard, the nurse who looks after my own little girl. I will write to her. My turn ashore comes next week. Then I can devote some time to the necessary inquiries."

Jones made no protest. He knew that Brand's suggestion was a good one. And he promised silence with regard to the fight with the shark. Men in the lighthouse service are quick to grasp the motives which cause others to avoid publicity. They live sedate, lonely lives. The noise, the rush, the purposeless activities of existence ashore weary them. They have been known to petition the Trinity Brethren to send them back to isolated stations when promoted to localities where the pleasures and excitements of a town were available.

Having determined the immediate future of little "E. T.," whose shrunken features were now placid in sleep, they quietly separated. Brand flung himself wearily into a bunk to obtain a much-needed rest, and the others hurried to overtake the many duties awaiting them.

Weather reports and daily journals demanded instant attention. The oil expenditure, the breakage of glass chimneys, the consumption of stores, the meteorological records – all must be noted. An efficient lookout must be maintained, signals answered or hoisted, everything kept spotlessly clean, and meals cooked. Until noon each day a rock lighthouse is the scene of unremitting diligence, and the loss of nearly an hour and a half of Spence's watch, added to the presence of the baby and the constant care which one or other of the two men bestowed on her, made the remaining time doubly precious.

About nine o'clock, Brand was awakened from a heavy slumber by Jim's hearty voice:

"Breakfast ready, cap'n. Corfee, eggs an' haddick – fit for the Queen, God bless her! An' baby's had another pint of Jones's brew – Lord love her little eyes, though I haven't seen 'em yet. A minnit ago Jones sung down to me that the *Lancelot* has just cleared Carn du."

The concluding statement brought Brand to his feet. The doctor would be on the rock by the time breakfast was ended and the letter to Mrs. Sheppard written.

When the doctor did arrive he shook his head dubiously at first sight of the child.

"I don't know how she lived. She is a mere skeleton," he said.

Brand explained matters, and hinted at his theory.

"Oh, the ways of nature are wonderful," admitted the doctor. "Sometimes a man will die from an absurdly trivial thing, like the sting of a wasp or the cutting of a finger. At others, you can fling him headlong from the Alps and he will merely suffer a bruise or two. Of course, this infant has an exceptionally strong constitution or she would have died days ago. However, you have done right so far. I will see to her proper nourishment during the next few days. It is a most extraordinary case."

Jones had managed so well that the child's garments were dry and well aired. Wrapped in a clean blanket, she was lowered into the steamer's boat, but the doctor, preferring to jump, was soaked to the waist owing to a slip on the weed-covered rock.

The crew of the tugboat bailed out the derelict and towed her to Penzance.

That evening a fisherman brought a note from Mrs. Sheppard. Among other things, she wrote that the baby's clothes were beautifully made and of a very expensive type. She was feverish, the doctor said, but the condition of her eyes and lips would account for this, apart from the effects of prolonged exposure.

Brand read the letter to his mates when the trio were enjoying an evening pipe on the "promenade," the outer balcony under the lantern.

"S'pose her people don't show up," observed Jim, "what are you going' to call her?"

"Trevillion," said Brand.

The others gazed at him with surprise. The prompt announcement was unexpected.

"I have told you about the fabled land of Lyonesse lying there beneath the sea," he went on, pointing to the dark blue expanse on whose distant confines the Scilly Isles were silhouetted by the last glow of the vanished sun. "Well, the name of the only person who escaped from that minor deluge was Trevillion. It is suitable, and it accords with the initial of her probable surname."

"Oh, I see," piped Jones. His voice, always high-pitched, became squeaky when his brain was stirred.

"That's O.K. for the 'T,'" remarked Jim, "but what about the 'E'? Elizabeth is a nice name when you make it into Bessie."

"I think we should keep up the idea of the Arthurian legend. There are two that come to my mind, Elaine and Enid. Elaine died young, the victim of an unhappy love. Enid became the wife of a gallant knight, Gawain, who was

" – ever foremost in the chase,  
And victor at the tilt and tournament,  
They called him the great Prince and man of men.  
But Enid, whom her ladies loved to call  
Enid the Fair, a grateful people named  
Enid the Good."

"That settles it," cried Jim, brandishing his pipe towards Penzance. "I hope as how Miss Enid Trevillion is asleep an' doin' well, an' that she'll grow up to be both fair an' good. If she does, she'll be better'n most women."

Brand made no reply. He went within to attend to the lantern. In five minutes the great eyes of the Lizard, the Longships and the Seven Stones Lightship were solemnly staring at their fellow-warden of the Gulf Rock, whilst, in the far west, so clear was the night, the single flash of St. Agnes and the double flash of the Bishop illumined the sky.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SIGNAL

At the foot of a long flight of steps leading from the boat quay to the placid waters of Penzance harbor a stoutly built craft was moored. It had two occupants this bright January morning, and they were sufficiently diverse in appearance to attract the attention of the local squad of that great army of loungers which seems to thrive in tobacco-blessed content at all places where men go down to the sea in ships.

The pair consisted of a weather-beaten fisherman and a girl.

The man was scarred and blistered by wind and wave until he had attained much outward semblance to his craft. Nevertheless, man and boat looked reliable. They were sturdy and strong; antiquated, perhaps, and greatly in want of a new coat; but shaped on lines to resist the elements together for years to come. Ben Pollard and his pilchard-driver, *Daisy*, were Cornish celebrities of note. Not once, but many times, had they been made immortal – with the uncertain immortality of art – by painters of the Newlyn school.

The girl, an animated cameo, to which the shabby picturesqueness of Old Ben in his patched garments and old *Daisy* in her unkempt solidity supplied a fitting background, merited the tacit approval she received from the pipe-smokers.

Flaxen-haired, blue-eyed, with a face of a delicate, flower-like beauty which added to its mobile charm by the healthy glow of a skin brightened and deepened in tone by an abiding love of the open air, she suggested, by her attire, an artistic study of the color effects derivable from the daringly trustful little plant which gave the boat its name. She wore a coat and skirt of green cloth, lightly hemmed and cuffed with dark red braid. Her large white hat was trimmed with velvet of a tone to match the braid, and her neatly fitting brown boots and gloves were of the right shade. Beneath her coat there was a glimpse of a knitted jersey of soft white wool, this being a tribute to the season, though a winter in Lyonesse can usually shrug its comfortable shoulders at the deceitful vagaries of the Riviera.

That she was a young person of some maritime experience was visible to the connoisseurs above at a glance. She was busily engaged in packing the spacious lockers of the *Daisy* with certain stores of apples, oranges and vegetables – ranging from the lordly new potato (an aristocrat at that time of the year) to the plebeian cabbage – and her lithe, active figure moved with an ease born of confidence in the erratic principles of gravitation as codified and arranged by a rocking boat.

Pollard, too, was overhauling his gear, seeing that the mast was securely stepped and the tackle ran free. Whilst they worked they talked, and, of course, the critics listened.

"Do you think the weather will hold, Ben?" asked the girl over her shoulder, stooping to arrange some clusters of daffodils and narcissus so that they should not suffer by the lurch of some heavy package when the boat heeled over.

"The glass be a-fallin', sure, missy," said the old fellow cheerily, "but wi' the wind backin' round to the norrard it on'y means a drop o' wet."

"You think we will make the rock in good time?"

"We'm do our best, Miss Enid."

She sat up suddenly.

"Don't you dare tell me, Ben Pollard, that after all our preparations we may have to turn back or run for inglorious shelter into Lamorna."

Her mock indignation induced a massive grin. "A mahogany table breaking into mirth," was Enid's private description of Ben's face when he smiled.

"'Ee know the coast as well as most," he said. "Further go, stronger blow, 'ee know."

"And not so slow, eh, Ben? Really, you and the *Daisy* look more tubby every time I see you."

Thus disparaged, Pollard defended himself and his craft.

"Me an' *Daisy*'ll sail to Gulf Light quicker'n any other two tubs in Penzance, missy. Her be a long run at this time o' year, but you'm get there all right, I 'xpect. Wi' a norrard breeze we'm be safe enough. If the wind makes 'ee c'n zee et comin', 'ee know."

She laughed quietly. Any reflection on the spanking powers of his pilchard-driver would rouse Ben instantly.

"As if I didn't know all you could teach me," she cried, "and as if anyone in all Cornwall could teach me better."

The old fisherman was mollified. He looked along the quay.

"Time we'm cast off," he said. "Miss Constance be a plaguey long time fetchin' them wraps."

"Oh, Ben, how can you say that? She had to go all the way to the Cottage. Why, if she ran –"

"Here she be," he broke in, "an' she b'ain't runnin' neither. Her's got a young man in tow."

What announcement would straighten the back of any girl of nineteen like unto that? Enid Trevillion turned and stood upright.

"Why, it's Jack!" she cried, waving a delighted hand.

"So it be," admitted Pollard, after a surprised stare. "When I look landward my eyes b'ain't so good as they was."

He stated this fact regretfully. No elderly sea-dog will ever acknowledge to failing vision when he gazes at the level horizon he knows so well. This is no pretence of unwilling age: it is wholly true. The settled chaos of the shore bewilders him. The changeful sea cannot.

Meanwhile, the dawdlers lining the wharf, following Enid's signals with their eyes, devoted themselves to a covert staring at the young people hurrying along the quay.

Constance Brand, being a young and pretty woman, secured their instant suffrages. Indeed, she would have won the favorable verdict of a more severe audience. Taller than Enid, she had the brown hair and hazel eyes of her father. To him, too, she owed the frank, self-reliant pose of head and clearly cut, refined features which conveyed to others that all-important first good impression. Blended with Stephen Brand's firm incisiveness, and softening the quiet strength of her marked resemblance to him, was an essential femininity which lifted her wholly apart from the ruck of handsome English girls who find delight in copying the manners and even the dress of their male friends.

Her costume was an exact replica of that of Enid. She walked well and rapidly, yet her alert carriage had a grace, a subtle elegance, more frequently seen in America than in England. Her lively face, flushed with exercise, and, it may be, with some little excitement, conveyed the same Transatlantic characteristic. One said at seeing her: "Here is a girl who has lived much abroad." It came as a surprise to learn that she had never crossed the Channel.

The man with her, Lieutenant John Percival Stanhope, R. N., was too familiar a figure in Penzance to evoke muttered comment from the gallery.

A masterful young gentleman he looked, and one accustomed to having his own way in the world, whether in love or war. True type of the British sailor, he had the physique of a strong man and the adventurously cheerful expression of a boy.

The skin of his face and hands, olive-tinted with exposure, his dark hair and the curved eyelashes, which drooped over his blue eyes, no less than the artistic proclivities suggested by his well-chiseled features and long, tapering fingers, proclaimed that Stanhope, notwithstanding his Saxon surname and bluff bearing, was a Celt. His mother, in fact, was a Tregarthen of Cornwall, daughter of a peer, and a leading figure in local society.

One may ask: "Why should a youth of good birth and social position be on such terms of easy familiarity with two girls, one of whom was the daughter of a lighthouse-keeper, and the other her sister by adoption?"

Indeed, a great many people did ask this pertinent question; among others, Lady Margaret Stanhope put it often and pointedly to her son, without any cogent answer being forthcoming.

If she were denied enlightenment, although her maternal anxiety was justifiable, the smokers on the pier, as representing the wider gossip of the town, may also be left unsatisfied.

"This is a nice thing," he cried, when he came within speaking distance of the girl in the boat. "I manage to bamboozle the admiral out of three days' leave and I rush to Penzance to be told that Constance and you are off to the Gulf Rock for the day. It is too bad of you, Enid."

Eyebrows were raised and silent winks exchanged among the human sparrows lining the rails.

"So Master Jack came to see Miss Trevillion, eh? What would her ladyship say if she heard that?"

"Why not come with us?" The audacity of her!

"By Jove," he agreed, "that would be jolly. Look here. Wait two minutes until I scribble a line to the mater –"

"Nothing of the sort, Jack," interposed the other girl quietly, taking from his arm the water-proof cloaks he was carrying for her. "You know Lady Margaret would be very angry, and with very good reason. Moreover, dad would be annoyed, too."

"The old girl is going out this afternoon," he protested.

"And she expects you to go with her. Now, Jack, don't let us quarrel before we have met for five minutes. We will see you tomorrow."

He helped her down the stone steps.

"Enid," he murmured, "Connie and you must promise to drive with me to Morvah in the morning. I will call for you at eleven sharp."

"What a pity you can't sail out to the rock with us today. Tomorvah is so distant."

The minx lifted her blue eyes to his with such ingenuous regret in them that Stanhope laughed, and pipes were shifted to permit the listeners above their heads to snigger approval of her quip.

"Dad will wig us enough as it is, Enid," said the other girl. "We are bringing him a peace-offering of fruits of the earth, Jack."

"Will you be able to land?"

"One never can tell. It all depends on the state of the sea near the rock. Anyhow, we can have a chat, and send up the vegetables by the derrick."

"We'm never get there thickey tide if we'm stop here much longer," interrupted Ben.

"Hello, old grampus! How are you? Mind you keep these young ladies off the stones."

"And mind you keep your tin-pot off the stones," growled Pollard. "They was a-sayin' larst night her were aground at Portsea."

"They said right, Father Ben. That is why I am here."

Enid glanced at him with ready anxiety. There was nothing of the flirt in her manner now.

"I hope you had no mishap," she said, and Constance mutely echoed the inquiry. Both girls knew well what a serious thing it was for a youngster to run his first boat ashore.

"Don't look so glum," he chuckled. "I am all right. Got a bit of kudos out of it really. We fouled the *Volcanic* and strained our steering gear. That is all."

It was not all. He did not mention that, during a torpedo attack on a foggy night, he ran up to three battleships undefended by nets and stenciled his initials within a white square on five different parts of their sleek hulls, thus signifying to an indignant admiral and three confounded captains (dictionary meaning of "confounded") that these leviathans had been ingloriously sunk at their moorings by torpedoes.

"It sounds unconvincing," said Constance. "You must supply details tomorrow. Enid, that horrid pun of yours ruins the word."

"Are we also to supply luncheon?" chimed in Enid.

"Perish the thought. I have lived on sandwiches and bottled beer for a week. There! Off you go."

He gave the boat a vigorous push and stood for a little while at the foot of the steps, ostensibly to light a cigar. He watched Constance shipping the rudder whilst Enid hoisted the sail and old Ben plied a pair of oars to carry the boat into the fair way of the channel.

They neared the harbor lighthouse. The brown sail filled and the *Daisy* got way on her. Then she sped round the end of the solid pier and vanished, whereupon Lieutenant Stanhope walked slowly to the Promenade, whence he could see the diminishing speck of canvas on the shining sea until it was hidden by Clement's Island.

At last, the devotees of twist and shag, resting their tired arms on the railing, were able to exchange comments.

"Brace o' fine gells, them," observed the acknowledged leader, a broken-down "captain" of a mine abandoned soon after his birth.

"Fine," agreed his nearest henchman. Then, catching the gloom of the captain's gaze after Stanhope's retreating figure, he added:

"But what does that young spark want, turning their pretty heads for them, I should like to know?"

"They didn't seem partic'lar stuck on 'im," ventured another.

"The ways of women is curious," pronounced the oracle. "I once knew a gell – "

But his personal reminiscences were not of value. More to the point was the garbled, but, in the main, accurate account he gave of the rescue of an unknown child by one of the keepers of the Gulf Rock lighthouse on a June morning eighteen years earlier.

Stephen Brand was the name of the man, and there was a bit of a mystery about him, too. They all knew that a light-keeper earned a matter of £70 to £80 a year – not enough to maintain a daughter and an adopted child in slap-up style, was it? A small villa they lived in, and a governess they had, and ponies to ride when they were big enough. The thing was ridiculous, wasn't it?

Everybody agreed that it was.

People said Brand was a swell. Well, that might or might not be true. The speaker did not think much of him. He was a quiet, unsociable chap, though Jones, a Trinity pensioner, who kept the "Pilchard and Seine" now, wouldn't hear a wrong word about him, and always called him "cap'n." A pretty sort of a captain! But then, they all knew what an old slow-coach Jones was. They did: Jones's pints were retailed on the premises for money down.

Then there was Spence, lame Jim, who lived at Marazion: he told a fine tale about a fight with a shark before Brand reached the boat in which was the blessed baby – that very girl, Enid, they had just seen. Was it true? How could he say? There was a lot about it at the time in the local papers, but just then his own mind was given to thoughts of enlisting, as a British expedition was marching across the desert to relieve Khartoum – and cause Gordon's death.

No: Brand and the two girls had not dwelt all the time in Penzance. The light-keepers went all over the kingdom, you know, but he had hit upon some sort of fog-signal fad – Brand was always a man of fads: he once told the speaker that all the Polwena Mine wanted was work – and the Gulf Rock was the best place for trying it. At his own request the Trinity people sent him back there two years ago. Some folk had queer tastes, hadn't they? And talking so much had made him dry.

Then the conversation languished, as the only obvious remark of any importance was not forthcoming.

Meanwhile, the *Daisy* sped buoyantly towards the southwest. Although she was broad in beam and staunch from thwart to keel it was no light undertaking to run fourteen miles out and home in such a craft.

But old Ben Pollard knew what he was about. Not until the granite pillar of the distant Gulf Rock opened up beyond Carn du was it necessary to turn the boat's head seawards. Even then, by steering close to the Runnelstone, they need not, during two-thirds of the time, be more than a mile

or so distant from one of the many creeks in which they could secure shelter in case of a sudden change in the weather.

Thenceforward there was nothing for it but a straight run of six miles to the rock, behind which lay the Scilly Isles, forty miles away, and well below the boat's horizon.

So, when the moment came for the final decision to be made, Pollard cast an anxious eye at a great bank of cloud mounting high in the north.

There was an ominous drop in the temperature, too. The rain he anticipated might turn to snow, and snow is own brother to fog at sea, though both are generally absent from the Cornish littoral in winter.

"Ben," cried Enid, breaking off a vivid if merciless description of a new disciple who had joined the artistic coterie at Newlyn, "what are you looking at?"

He scratched his head and gazed fixedly at the white battalions sweeping in aërial conquest over the land.

"She do look like snaw," he admitted.

"Well, what does that matter?"

Without waiting for orders Constance had eased the helm a trifle. The *Daisy* was now fairly headed for the rock. With this breeze she would be there in less than an hour.

"It be a bit risky," grumbled Ben.

"We will be alongside the lighthouse before there can be any serious downfall," said practical Constance.

"Surely we can make the land again no matter how thick the weather may be."

Ben allowed himself to be persuaded. In after life he would never admit that they were free agents at that moment.

"It had to be," he would say. "It wur in me mind to argy wi' she, but I just couldn't. An' how often do us zee snaw in Carnwall? Not once in a blue moon." And who would dispute him? No West-country man, certainly.

At a distance of five miles one small fishing craft is as like another as two Liliputians to the eye of Gulliver. In a word, it needs acquaintance and nearness to distinguish them.

As it happened, Stephen Brand did happen to note the *Daisy* and the course she was shaping. But, during the short interval when his telescope might have revealed to him the identity of her occupants, he was suddenly called by telephone from the oil-room to the kitchen. When next he ran aloft in a wild hurry to signal for assistance, he found, to his despair, that the Land's End was already blotted out in a swirling snowstorm, and the great plain of blue sea had shrunk to a leaden patch whose visible limits made the reef look large by comparison.

With the mechanical precision of habit he set the big bell in motion. Its heavy boom came fitfully through the pelting snow-flakes to the ears of the two girls and old Ben. The latter, master of the situation now, announced his intention to 'bout ship and make for Mount's Bay.

"'Ee doan' ketch me tryin' to sail close to Gulf Rock when 'ee can't zee a boat's length ahead," he said, emphatically. "I be sorry, ladies both, but 'ee knaw how the tide runs over the reef, an' 'tes easy to drive to the wrong side of the light. We'm try again tomorrow. On'y the flowers'll spile. All the rest –"

Crash! A loud explosion burst forth from the dense heights of the storm. The *Daisy*, sturdy as she was, seemed to shiver. The very air trembled with the din. Pollard had his hand on the sail to swing it to starboard when Constance put the tiller over to bring the boat's head up against the wind. For an instant he hesitated. Even he, versed in the ways of the sea, was startled. Both girls positively jumped, the sudden bang of the rocket was so unexpected.

"Mister Brand must ha' zeed us," pronounced Ben. "That's a warnin' to we to go back."

The words had scarce left his lips when another report smote the great silence, otherwise unbroken save by the quiet plash of the sea against the bows and the faint reverberations of the distant bell.

"That is too urgent to be intended for us," said Constance. "We were just half way when the snow commenced."

"I did not notice any vessel near the rock," cried Enid, tremulously. "Did you, Ben?"

Pollard's slow utterance was not quick enough. Before he could answer, a third rocket thundered its overpowering summons.

"That is the 'Help wanted' signal," cried Constance. "Ben, there is no question now of going back. We must keep our present course for twenty minutes at least, and then take to the oars. The bell will guide us."

"Oh, yes, Ben," agreed Enid. "Something has gone wrong on the rock itself. I am quite sure there was no ship near enough to be in trouble already."

"By gum, we'm zee what's the matter," growled Ben. "Steady it is, Miss Brand. Ef we'm in trouble I'd as soon ha' you two gells aboard as any two men in Penzance."

At another time the compliment would have earned him a torrent of sarcasm. Now it passed unheeded. The situation was bewildering, alarming. There were three keepers in the lighthouse. The signal foreboded illness, sudden and serious illness. Who could it be?

In such a crisis charity begins at home. Constance, with set face and shining eyes, Enid, flushed and on the verge of tears, feared lest their own beloved one should be the sufferer.

To each of them Stephen Brand was equally a kind and devoted father. He never allowed Enid to feel that she was dependent on his bounty. Only the other day, when she hinted at the adoption of an art career as a future means of earning a livelihood, he approved of the necessary study but laughed at the reason.

"With your pretty face and saucy ways, Enid," he said, "I shall have trouble enough to keep you in the nest without worrying as to the manner of your leaving it. Work at your drawing, by all means. Avoid color as the bane of true art. But where Connie and I live you shall live, until you choose to forsake us."

No wonder these girls thought there was no other man in the world like "dad." Their delightful home was idyllic in its happiness: their only sorrow that Brand should be away two months out of three on account of the pursuit in which he passed his hours of leisure during recent years.

Neither dared to look at the other. They could not trust themselves even to speak. There was relief in action, for thought was torture.

The docile *Daisy* steadily forged through the waves. The spasmodic clang of the bell came more clearly each minute. Pollard, kneeling in the bows, peered into the gloom of the swirling snow. He listened eagerly to the bell. With right hand or left he motioned to Constance to bring the boat's head nearer to the wind or permit the sail to fill out a little more.

Enid, ready to cast the canvas loose at the first hint of danger, consulted her watch frequently. At last she cried:

"Twenty minutes, Ben."

What a relief it was to hear her own voice. The tension was becoming unbearable.

"Right y' are, missy. No need to slack off yet. 'Tes clearin' a bit. We'm heave to alongside the rock in less'n no time."

The fisherman was right. His trained senses perceived a distinct diminution in the volume of snow. Soon they could see fifty, a hundred, two hundred yards ahead. On the starboard quarter they caught a confused rushing noise, like the subdued murmur of a millrace. The tide had covered the rock.

"Luff et is!" roared Ben, suddenly. "Steady now."



Out of the blurred vista a ghostly column rose in front. Smooth and sheer were its granite walls, with dark little casements showing black in the weird light. The boat rushed past the Trinity mooring-buoy. She held on until they heard the sea breaking.

"Lower away!" cried Ben, and the yard fell with a sharp rattle that showed how thoroughly Enid had laid to heart Pollard's tuition.

Constance brought the *Daisy* round in a wide curve, and Ben got out the oars to keep her from being dashed against the reef.

Enid's eyes were turned towards the gallery beneath the lantern.

"Lighthouse ahoy!" she screamed in a voice high-pitched with emotion.

There was no answering clang of the door leading from the room on a level with the balcony. Not often had the girls visited the rock, but they knew that this was the first sign they might expect of their arrival being noted if there were no watchers pacing the "promenade."

"Help us, Ben," cried Constance, and their united shouts might be heard a mile away in the prevailing stillness. A window half way up the tower was opened. A man's head and shoulders appeared.

It was Stephen Brand.

"Thank God!" murmured Constance.

Enid, on whose sensitive soul the storm, the signal, the hissing rush of the boat through the waves, had cast a spell of indefinite terror, bit her lip to restrain her tears.

Brand gave a glance of amazement at the three uplifted faces. But this was no time for surprise or question.

"I am coming down," he shouted. "Providence must have sent you at this moment."

He vanished.

"What can it be?" said Constance, outwardly calm now in the assurance that her father was safe.

"Must ha' bin a accident," said Ben. "That signal means 'Bring a doctor.' An' there ain't a blessed tug in harbor, nor won't be till the tide makes."

"That will mean delay," cried Enid.

"Five or six hours at least, missy."

The main door at the head of the iron ladder clamped to the stones swung back, and Brand leaned out. He had no greeting for them, nor words of astonishment.

"When will the tug reach here, Ben?" he asked.

The fisherman told him the opinion he had formed.

"Then you girls must come and help me. Jackson scalded his hands and arms in the kitchen, and Bates was hurrying to the store-room for oil and whitening when he slipped on the stairs and broke his leg. We must get them both ashore. Ben, you can take them?"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Now, Constance, you first. Hold tight and stand in the skip. Your boat cannot come near the rock."

He swung the derrick into place and began to work the windlass. Constance, cool as her father, whispered to the excited Enid:

"Let us divide the parcels and take half each."

"Oh, I should have forgotten all about them," said Enid, stooping to empty the lockers.

Constance, without flickering an eyelid, stepped into the strong basket with its iron hoops, and, having arranged some of the plethoric paper bags at her feet, told her father to "hoist away."

She arrived safely. Enid followed her, with equal *sang froid*, though a lift of forty odd feet whilst standing in a skip and clinging to a rope is not an every-day experience.

"Dang me," said Ben, as Enid, too, was swung into the lighthouse, "but they're two plucked 'uns."

The great bell tolled away, though the snow had changed to sleet, and the heights beyond the Land's End were dimly visible, so its warning note was no longer needed. The sky above was clearing. A luminous haze spreading over the waters heralded the return of the sun. But the wind was bitterly cold; the fisherman watching the open door, with one eye on the sea lest an adventurous wave should sweep the *Daisy* against the rock, murmured to himself:

"'Tis a good job the wind 's i' the norrard. This sort o' thing's a weather-breeder, or my name ain't Ben Pollard."

And that was how Enid came back to the Gulf Rock to enter upon the second great epoch of her life.

Once before had the reef taken her to its rough heart and fended her from peril. Would it shield her again – rescue her from the graver danger whose shadow even now loomed out of the deep. What was the bell saying in its wistful monotony?

Enid neither knew nor cared. Just then she had other things to think about.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE VOICE OF THE REEF

There comes a time in the life of every thinking man or woman when the argosy of existence, floating placidly on a smooth and lazy stream, gathers unto itself speed, rushes swiftly onward past familiar landmarks of custom and convention, boils furiously over resisting rocks, and ultimately, if not submerged in an unknown sea, finds itself again meandering through new plains of wider horizon.

Such a perilous passage can never be foreseen. The rapids may begin where the trees are highest and the meadows most luxuriant. No warning is given. The increased pace of events is pleasant and exhilarating. Even the last wild plunge over the cascade is neither resented nor feared. Some frail craft are shattered in transit, some wholly sunken, some emerge with riven sails and tarnished embellishments. A few not only survive the ordeal, but thereby fit themselves for more daring exploits, more soul-stirring adventures.

When the two girls stood with Stephen Brand in the narrow entrance to the lighthouse, the gravity of their bright young faces was due solely to the fact that their father had announced the serious accidents which had befallen his assistants. No secret monitor whispered that fate, in her bold and merciless dramatic action, had roughly removed two characters from the stage to clear it for more striking events.

Not once in twenty years has it happened that two out of the three keepers maintained on a rock station within signaling distance of the shore have become incapacitated for duty on the same day. The thing was so bewilderingly sudden, the arrival of Constance and Enid on the scene so timely and unexpected, that Brand, a philosopher of ready decision in most affairs of life, was at a loss what to do for the best now that help, of a sort undreamed of, was at hand.

The case of Jackson, who was scalded, was simple enough. The Board of Trade medicine chest supplied to each lighthouse is a facsimile of that carried by every sea-going steamship. It contained the ordinary remedies for such an injury, and there would be little difficulty or danger in lowering the sufferer to the boat.

But Bates's affair was different. He lay almost where he had fallen. Brand had only lifted him into the store-room from the foot of the stairs, placing a pillow beneath his head, and appealing both to him and to Jackson to endure their torture unmoved whilst he went to signal for assistance.

The problem that confronted him now was one of judgment. Was it better to await the coming of the doctor or endeavor to transfer Bates to the boat?

He consulted Ben Pollard again; the girls were already climbing the steep stairs to sympathize with and tend to the injured men.

"Do you think it will blow harder, Ben, when the tide turns?" he asked.

The old fellow seemed to regard the question as most interesting and novel. Indeed, to him, some such query and its consideration provided the chief problem of each day. Therefore he surveyed land, sea and sky most carefully before he replied:

"It may be a'most anything afore night, Misser Brand."

At another time Brand would have smiled. Today he was nervous, distraught, wrenched out of the worn rut of things.

"I fancy there is some chance of the doctor being unable to land when he reaches the rock. Do you agree with me?"

His voice rang sharply. Ben caught its note and dropped his weather-wise ambiguity.

"It'll blow harder, an' mebbe snaw agin," he said.

"I shall need some help here in that case, so I will retain the young ladies. Of course you can manage the boat easily enough without them?"

Pollard grinned reassuringly.

"We'm run straight in wi' thiccy wind," he said.

So they settled it that way, all so simply.

A man sets up two slim masts a thousand miles apart and flashes comprehensible messages across the void. The multitude gapes at first, but soon accepts the thing as reasonable. "Wireless telegraphy" is the term, as one says "by mail."

A whole drama was flowing over a curve of the earth at that moment but the Marconi station was invisible. There was no expert in telepathic sensation present to tell Brand and the fisherman that their commonplace words covered a magic code.

Jackson, white and mute, was lowered first. The brave fellow would not content himself with nursing his agony amidst the cushions aft. When Bates, given some slight strength by a stiff dose of brandy, was carried, with infinite care, down three flights of steep and narrow stairs, and slung to the crane in an iron cot to be lowered in his turn, Jackson stood up. Heedless of remonstrances, he helped to steady the cot and adjust it amidstships clear of the sail.

"Well done, Artie," said Brand's clear voice.

"Oh, brave!" murmured Enid.

"We will visit you every day at the hospital," sang out Constance.

Jackson smiled, yes, smiled, though his bandaged arms quivered and the seared nerves of his hands throbbed excruciatingly. Speak aloud he could not Yet he bent over his more helpless mate and whispered hoarsely:

"Cheer up, old man. Your case is worse'n mine. An' ye did it for me."

Pollard, with a soul gnarled as his body, yet had a glimpse of higher things when he muttered:

"D'ye think ye can hold her, mate, whiles I hoist the cloth?"

Jackson nodded. The request was a compliment, a recognition. He sat down and hooked the tiller between arm and ribs. Ben hauled with a will; the *Daisy*, as if she were glad to escape the cascades of green water swirling over the rock, sprang into instant animation. The watchers from the lighthouse saw Ben relieve the steersman and tenderly arrange the cushions behind his back. Then Brand closed the iron doors and the three were left in dim obscurity.

They climbed nearly a hundred feet of stairways and emerged on to the cornice balcony after Brand had stopped the clockwork which controlled the hammer of the bell.

What a difference up here! The sea, widened immeasurably, had changed its color. Now it was a sullen blue gray. The land was nearer and higher. The *Daisy* had shrunk to a splash of dull brown on the tremendous ocean prairie. How fierce and keen the wind! How disconsolate the murmur of the reef!

Brand, adjusting his binoculars, scrutinized the boat.

"All right aboard," he said. "I think we have adopted the wiser course. They will reach Penzance by half-past two."

His next glance was towards the Land's End signal station. A line of flags fluttered out to the right of the staff.

"Signal noted and forwarded," he read aloud. "That is all right; but the wind has changed."

Enid popped inside the lantern for shelter. It was bitterly cold.

"Better follow her example, Connie," said Brand, to his daughter. "I will draw the curtains. We can see just as well and be comfortable."

Indeed, the protection of the stout plate glass, so thick and tough that sea-birds on a stormy night dashed themselves to painless death against it, was very welcome. Moreover, though neither of the girls would admit it, there was a sense of security here which was strangely absent when they looked into the abyss beneath the stone gallery. Constance balancing a telescope, Enid peering through the field-glasses, followed the progress of the *Daisy* in silence, but Brand's eyes wandered uneasily from the barometer, which had fallen rapidly during the past hour, to the cyclonic nimbus spreading its

dark mass beyond the Seven Stones Lightship. The sun had vanished, seemingly for the day, and the indicator attached to the base of the wind vane overhead pointed now sou'west by west. It would not require much further variation to bring about a strong blow from the true southwest, a quarter responsible for most of the fierce gales that sweep the English Channel.

Nevertheless, this quick darting about of the fickle breeze did not usually betoken lasting bad weather. At the worst, the girls might be compelled to pass the night on the rock. He knew that the tug with the two relief men would make a valiant effort to reach the lighthouse at the earliest possible moment. When the men joined him the girls could embark. As it was, the affair was spiced with adventure. Were it not for the mishap to the assistant-keepers the young people would have enjoyed themselves thoroughly. The new airt of the wind, too, would send the *Daisy* speedily back to port. This, in itself, justified the course he had taken. On the whole, a doubtful situation was greatly relieved. His face brightened. With a grave humor not altogether artificial, he cried:

"Now, Constance, I did not take you aboard as a visitor. Between us we ought to muster a good appetite. Come with me to the store-room. I will get you anything you want and leave you in charge of the kitchen."

"And poor me!" chimed in Enid.

"Oh, you, miss, are appointed upper house-maid. And mind you, no followers."

"Mercy! I nearly lost my situation before I got it."

"How?"

"We met Jack Stanhope and asked him to come with us."

"You asked him, you mean," said Constance.

"And you met him, I meant," said Enid.

"I don't care a pin how you treated Stanhope, so long as you didn't bring him," said Brand, "though, indeed, he would have been useful as it turned out."

When lunch was ready they summoned him by the electric bells he had put up throughout the building. It gave them great joy to discover in the living room a code of signals which covered a variety of messages. They rang him downstairs by the correct call for "Meal served."

It was a hasty repast, as Brand could not remain long away from the glass-covered observatory, but they all enjoyed it immensely. He left them, as he said, "to gobble up the remains," but soon he shouted down the stairs to tell them that the *Daisy* had rounded Carn du. He could not tell them, not knowing it, that at that precise moment old Ben Pollard was frantically signaling to Lieutenant Stanhope to change the course of the small steam yacht he had commandeered as soon as the murmur ran through the town that the Gulf Rock was flying the "Help wanted" signal.

The officials did not know that Brand was compelled by the snowstorm to use rockets. All the information they possessed was the message from Land's End and its time of dispatch.

Jack Stanhope's easy-going face became very strenuous, indeed, when he heard the news.

The hour stated was precisely the time the *Daisy* was due at the rock if she made a good trip. Without allowing for any possible contingency save disaster to the two girls and their escort, he rushed to the mooring-place of the 10-ton steam-yacht *Lapwing*, impounded a couple of lounging sailors, fired up, stoked, and steered the craft himself, and was off across the Bay in a quarter of the time that the owner of the *Lapwing* could have achieved the same result.

His amazement was complete when he encountered the redoubtable *Daisy* bowling home before a seven-knot breeze. He instantly came round and ranged up to speaking distance. When he learnt what had occurred he readily agreed to return to Penzance in order to pick up the relief lighthouse-keepers, and thus save time in transferring them to the rock.

In a word, as Enid Trevillion was safe, he was delighted at the prospect of bringing her back that evening, when the real skipper of the *Lapwing* would probably have charge of his own boat. There was no hurry at all now.

If they left the harbor at three o'clock, there would still be plenty of light to reach the Gulf Rock. Ben Pollard, glancing over his shoulder as the *Daisy* raced towards Penzance side by side with the *Lapwing*, was not so sure of this. But the arrangement he had suggested was the best possible one, and he was only an old fisherman who knew the coast, whereas Master Stanhope pinned his faith to the Nautical Almanac and the Rules.

The people most concerned knew nothing of these proceedings.

When Constance and Enid had solemnly decided on the menu for dinner, when they had inspected the kitchen and commended the cleanliness of the cook, Jackson, when they had washed the dishes and discovered the whereabouts of the "tea-things," they suddenly determined that it was much nicer aloft in the sky parlor than in these dim little rooms.

"I don't see why they don't have decent windows," said Enid. "Of course it blows hard here in a gale, but just look at that tiny ventilator, no bigger than a ship's port-hole, with a double storm-shutter to secure it if you please, for all the world as if the sea rose so high!"

Constance took thought for a while.

"I suppose the sea never *does* reach this height," she said.

Enid, in order to look out, had to thrust her head and shoulders through an aperture two feet square and three feet in depth. They were in the living-room at that moment – full seventy feet above the spring tide high-water mark. Sixty feet higher, the cornice of the gallery was given its graceful outer slope to shoot the climbing wave-crests of an Atlantic gale away from the lantern. The girls could not realize this stupendous fact. Brand had never told them. He wished them to sleep peacefully on stormy nights when he was away from home. They laughed now at the fanciful notion that the sea could ever so much as toss its spray at the window of the living-room.

They passed into the narrow stairway. Their voices and footsteps sounded hollow. It was to the floor beneath that Bates had fallen.

"I don't think I like living in a lighthouse," cried Enid. "It gives one the creeps."

"Surely, there are neither ghosts nor ghouls here," said Constance. "It is modern, scientific, utilitarian in every atom of its solid granite."

But Enid was silent as they climbed the steep stairs. Once she stopped and peeped into her father's bedroom.

"That is where they brought me when I first came to the rock," she whispered. "It used to be Mr. Jones's room. I remember dad saying so."

Constance, on whose shoulders the reassuring cloak of science hung somewhat loosely, placed her arm around her sister's waist in a sudden access of tenderness.

"You have improved in appearance since then, Enid," she said.

"What a wizened little chip I must have looked. I wonder who I am."

"I know who you soon will be if you don't take care."

Enid blushed prettily. She glanced at herself in a small mirror on the wall. Trust a woman to find a mirror in any apartment.

"I suppose Jack will ask me to marry him," she mused.

"And what will you reply?"

The girl's lips parted. Her eyes shone for an instant. Then she buried her face against her sister's bosom.

"O, Connie," she wailed, "I shall hate to leave you and dad. Why hasn't Jack got a brother as nice as himself."

Whereupon Constance laughed loud and long.

The relief was grateful to both. Enid's idea of a happy solution of the domestic difficulty appealed to their easily stirred sense of humor.

"Never mind, dear," gasped Constance at last. "You shall marry your Jack and invite all the nice men to dinner. Good gracious! I will have the pick of the navy. Perhaps the Admiral may be a widower."

With flushed faces they reached the region of light. Brand was writing at a small desk in the service-room.

"Something seems to have amused you," he said. "I have heard weird peals ascending from the depths."

"Connie is going to splice the admiral," explained Enid.

"What admiral?"

"Any old admiral."

"Indeed, I will not take an old admiral," protested the elder.

"Then you had better take him when he is a lieutenant," said Brand.

This offered too good an opening to be resisted.

"Enid has already secured the lieutenant," she murmured, with a swift glance at the other.

Brand looked up quizzically.

"Dear me," he cried, "if my congratulations are not belated –"

Enid was blushing again. She threw her arms about his neck.

"Don't believe her, dad," she said. "She's jealous!"

Constance saw a book lying on the table: "Regulations for the Lighthouse Service." She opened it. Brand stroked Enid's hair gently, and resumed the writing of his daily journal.

"The Elder Brethren!" whispered Constance. "Do they wear long white beards?"

"And carry wands?" added the recovered Enid.

"And dress in velvet cloaks and buckled shoes?"

"And –"

"And say 'Boo' to naughty little girls who won't let me complete my diary," shouted Brand. "Be off, both of you. Keep a lookout for the next ten minutes. If you see any signals from the mainland, or catch sight of the *Lancelot*, call me."

They climbed to the trimming stage of the lantern, which was level with the external gallery. Obedient to instructions, they searched the Land's End and the wide reach of Mount's Bay beyond Carn du. Save a scudding sail or two beating in from the Lizard and a couple of big steamers hurrying from the East – one a Transatlantic Transport liner from London – there was nothing visible. In the far distance the sea looked smooth enough, though they needed no explanation of the reality when they saw the irregular white patches glistening against the hull of a Penzance fishing-smack.

"O, Connie, the reef!" said Enid, suddenly, in a low voice.

They glanced at the turbid retreat of the tide over the submerged rocks. The sea was heavier, the noise louder, now that they listened to it, than when they arrived in the *Daisy*, little more than an hour earlier. Some giant force seemed to be wrestling there, raging against its bonds, striving feverishly to tear, rend, utterly destroy its invisible fetters. Sometimes, after an unusually impetuous surge, a dark shape, trailing witch-tresses of weed, showed for an instant in the pit of the cauldron. Then a mad whirl of water would pounce on it with a fearsome spring and the fang of rock would be smothered ten feet deep.

For some reason they did not talk. They were fascinated by the power, the grandeur, the untamed energy of the spectacle. The voice of the reef held them spellbound. They listened mutely.

Beneath, Brand wrote, with scholarly ease:

"Therefore I decided that it would best serve the interests of the Board if I sent Bates and Jackson to Penzance in the boat in which my daughter –" he paused an instant and added an "s" to the word – "fortunately happened to visit me. As I would be alone on the rock, and the two girls might be helpful until the relief came, I retained them."

He glanced at the weather-glass in front of him and made a note:

"Barometer falling. Temperature higher."

In another book he entered the exact records. A column headed "Wind direction and force," caused him to look up at the wind vane. He whistled softly.

"S. W.," he wrote, and after a second's thought inserted the figure 6. The sailor's scale, ye landsman, differs from yours. What you term a gale at sea he joyfully hails as a fresh breeze. No. 6 is a point above this limit, when a well-conditioned clipper ship can carry single reefs and top-gallant sails, in chase full and by. No. 12 is a hurricane. "Bare poles," says the scale.

Slowly mounting the iron ladder, he stood beside the silent watchers. The Bay was nearly deserted. No sturdy tug-boat was pouring smoke from her funnel and staggering towards the rock. Northwest and west the darkness was spreading and lowering.

He did not trouble to examine the reef. Its signs and tokens were too familiar to him. Its definite bellow or muttered threat was part of the prevailing influence of the hour or day. He had heard its voice too often to find an omen in it now.

"This time I must congratulate both of you," he said quietly.

"On what?" they cried in unison, shrill with unacknowledged excitement.

"Ladies seldom, if ever, pass a night on a rock lighthouse. You will have that rare privilege."

Enid clapped her hands.

"I am delighted," she exclaimed.

"Will there be a storm, father?" asked Constance.

"I think so. At any rate, only a miracle will enable the tug to reach us before tomorrow, and miracles are not frequent occurrences at sea."

"I know of one," was Enid's comment, with great seriousness for her. He read her thought.

"I was younger then," he smiled. "Now I am fifty, and the world has aged."



## CHAPTER V

### THE HURRICANE

They descended into the service-room.

"Let me see," said Enid; "it will be nineteen years on the 22d of next June, since you found me floating serenely towards the Gulf Rock in a deserted boat?"

"Yes, if you insist on accuracy as to the date. I might cavil at your serenity."

"And I was 'estimated' as a year old then? Isn't it a weird thing that a year-old baby should be sent adrift on the Atlantic in an open boat and never a word of inquiry made subsequently as to her fate? I fear I could not have been of much account in those days."

"My dear child, I have always told you that the boat had been in collision during the fog which had prevailed for several days previously. Those who were caring for you were probably knocked overboard and drowned."

"But alone! Utterly alone! That is the strangeness of it. I must be an American. Americans start out to hustle for themselves early in life, don't they?"

"Certainly, in that respect you might claim the record."

Brand had not told her all the facts of that memorable June morning. Why should he? They were not pleasant memories to him. Why cumber her also with them? For the rest, he had drawn up and read to her, long ago, a carefully compiled account of her rescue and the steps taken to discover her identity.

"I entered on an active and useful career with no such halo of glory," broke in Constance. "I am just plain English, born in Brighton, of parents not poor but respectable. Mother died a year after my birth, didn't she, dad?"

"You were thirteen months old when we lost her," he answered, bending over the clock-work attachment of the fog bell to wipe off an invisible speck of dust. Since his first term of service on the rock the light had changed from an occulting to a fixed one.

"She is buried there, isn't she," the girl went on. "How strange that, amidst our many journeyings, we have never visited Brighton."

"If I were able to take you to her grave-side, I would not do it," said Brand. "I do not encourage morbid sentiments, even of that perfectly natural kind. Your mother, to you, Constance, is like Enid's to her, a dear but visionary legend. In a degree, it is always so between loved ones lost and those who are left. Truth, honor, work, these are the highest ideals for the individual. They satisfy increasingly. Happy as I am in your companionship, you must not be vexed when I tell you that the most truly joyful moment of my life was conferred when my little friend here first responded accurately to external influences."

He laid his hand on an object resting on a table by itself. It looked like an aneroid barometer, but the others knew it was the marine auriscope to which he had devoted so many patient hours.

"Is it in working order now?" asked Constance instantly, and Enid came nearer. Together they examined the small dial. It was equipped with an arrow-headed pointer, and marked with the divisions of the compass but without the distinguishing letters.

These three understood each other exactly. By inadvertence, the conversation had touched on a topic concerning which Brand was always either vague or silent. Both girls were quick-witted enough to know that Constance's mother was never willingly alluded to either by the lighthouse-keeper or by the elderly Mrs. Sheppard who looked after them in infancy, and was now the housekeeper of Laburnum Cottage.

Constance was annoyed. How could she have been so thoughtless as to cause her father a moment's suffering by bringing up painful reminiscences. But he helped her, being master of himself.

He adjusted a switch in the instrument.

"I had no difficulty in constructing a diaphragm which would intercept all sounds," he said. "The struggle came when I wanted an agent which would distinguish and register a particular set of sounds, no matter what additional din might be prevalent at the same time. My hopes were wrecked so often that I began to despair, until I chanced one day to read how the high-tension induction coil could be tuned to disregard electrical influences other than those issued at the same pitch. My anxiety, until I had procured and experimented with a properly constructed coil, was very trying, I assure you."

"I remember wondering what on earth it was," volunteered Enid. "It sounded like a mathematical snake."

"And I am sorry to say that even yet I am profoundly ignorant as to its true inwardness," smiled Constance.

"Yet you girls delight in poets who bid you hearken to the music of the spheres. I suppose you will admit that the ear of, say, Ben Pollard, is not tuned to such a celestial harmony. However, I will explain my auriscope in a sentence. It only listens to and indicates the direction of foghorns, sirens, and ship's bells. A shrill steam whistle excites it, but the breaking of seas aboard ship, the loud flapping of a propeller, the noise of the engines, of a gale, or all these in combination, leave it unmoved."

"I remember once, when we were going from Falmouth to Porthalla in a fog, how dreadfully difficult it was to discover the whereabouts of another steamer we passed *en route*," said his daughter.

"Well, with this little chap on the bridge, the pointer would have told the captain unerringly. I don't suppose it will be thick whilst you are here, or you would see it pick up the distant blasts of a steamer long before we can hear them, and follow her course right round the arc of her passage. It is most interesting to watch its activity when there are several ships using their sirens. I have never had an opportunity of testing it on more than three vessels at once, but as soon as I could deduce a regular sequence in the seemingly erratic movements of the indicator, I marked the approach and passing of each with the utmost ease."

"Would that stop collisions at sea?"

"Nothing will do that, because some ship's officers refuse at times to exercise due care. But with my instrument on board two ships, and a time chart attached to the drums, there would be no need for a Board of Trade inquiry to determine whether or not the proper warning was given. To the vast majority of navigators it will prove an absolute blessing."

"You clever old thing!" cried Enid. "I suppose you will make heaps of money out of it."

"The inventor is the last man to make money out of his inventions, as a rule," said Brand. "I suppose I differ from the ordinary poor fellow inasmuch as I am not dependent for a livelihood on the success of my discovery."

"There's not the least little bit of chance of there being a fog tonight?" queried Enid, so earnestly that a wave of merriment rippled through the room.

"Not the least. In any event, you two girls will be in bed and sound asleep at ten o'clock."

"Perish the thought!" cried Constance. "Bed at ten, during our first and only night on a lighthouse!"

"You will see," said her father. "You cannot imagine how the clock dawdles in this circumscribed area. Work alone conquers it. Otherwise, men would quit the service after a month's experience."

"Ship ahoy!" screamed Enid. "Here comes the *Lapwing* round Carn du. Mr. Lawton must have lent her to bring the relief. How kind of him."

"The *Lapwing* cannot approach the rock," said Brand. "I will signal 'Landing impossible today.' It will save them a useless journey."

He selected the requisite flags from a locker, the phrase he needed being coded. Soon the strong breeze was trying to tear the bunting from the cordage, and though they could not hear the three

whistles with which the little yacht acknowledged the signal, they could easily see the jets of steam through their glasses.

Constance happened to overlook the table on which stood the auriscope.

"This thing has actually recorded those whistles," she cried in wonder.

"What sort of whistle has the *Lapwing*?" asked Brand.

"A loud and deep one, worthy of a leviathan. It was a fad of Mr. Lawton's. They say his siren consumes more steam than his engines."

Her father laughed.

"Anyhow, he is sticking to his course," he announced. "I may as well take in the decorations."

Undauntedly, but much flurried by a sea ever increasing in strength as the force of the ebb tide encountered the resistance of the wind, the *Lapwing* held on. With wind and sea against her she would have made slow work of it. As it was, there was help forthcoming for both journeys unless the wind went back to the north again as rapidly as it had veered to the southwest.

She would not be abreast the rock for nearly an hour, so Brand left the girls in charge of the lookout whilst he visited the oil-room. A wild night, such as he anticipated, demanded full pressure at the lamp. If the air became super-saturated, breakage of the glass chimneys might take place, and he must have a good stock on hand. Water and coal, too, were needed; the double accident to Bates and Jackson had thrown into arrears all the ordinary duties of the afternoon watch.

Naturally, the pair in the lantern found the progress of the yacht exasperatingly slow.

"A nice *Lapwing*," said Enid, scornfully. "I will tell Mr. Lawton he ought to rechristen her the *Bantam*. All her power is in her crow."

When Brand joined them matters became livelier. More accustomed than they to the use of a telescope, he made discoveries.

"The two supernumeraries are there," he announced, "but I cannot see Lawton. Indeed, so far as I can make out, she is commanded by Stanhope, dressed in Ben Pollard's oil-skins."

"He has left Lady Margaret!" cried Constance.

"He never went home!" essayed Enid.

"Poor chap! He was going to take us for a drive tomorrow," said Constance.

"To Morvah," explained Enid, with a syllabic emphasis meant for one pair of ears.

"It is very nice of him to struggle on and have a look at us," said Brand. "He can come close enough to see us, but that is all. Our small megaphone will be useless."

Indeed, the *Lapwing* dared not approach nearer than the Trinity mooring buoy. By that time the three, protected from the biting wind by oilskin coats, were standing on the gallery. The reef was bellowing up at them with a continuous roar. A couple of acres of its surface consisted of nothing more tangible than white foam and driving spray.

Stanhope, resigning the wheel to a sailor, braced himself firmly against the little vessel's foremast and began to strike a series of extraordinary attitudes with his arms and head.

"Why is he behaving in that idiotic manner?" screamed Enid.

"*Capital* idea – semaphore – clever fellow, Jack," shouted Brand.

Abashed, Enid held her peace.

The lighthouse-keeper, signalling in turn that he was receiving the message, spelled out the following:

"Is all well?"

"Yes," he answered.

"Bates and Jackson reached hospital. Bates compound fracture. If weather moderates will be with you next tide."

"All right," waved Brand.

The distant figure started again:

"L-o-v-e t-o E-n-i-d."

Enid indulged in an extraordinary arm flourish.

"A-n-d C-o-n-s-t-a-n-c-e."

"That spoils it," she screamed. "It ought to be only kind regards to you, Connie. I believe you are a serpent, a –"

"Do stop your chatter," shouted Brand, and he continued the message:

"Weather looks very bad. Little hope for tonight. *Lancelot* due at six. Will see personally that no chance is lost. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," was the response.

The *Lapwing* fell away astern from the vicinity of the buoy.

"Why is he doing that?" asked Constance, close to her father's ear.

"He is too good a sailor to risk turning her in that broken water. A little farther out there is greater depth and more regular seas."

They watched the yacht in silence. At last her head swung round towards the coast. When broadside on, a wave hit her, and the spray leaped over her masts.

"That gave them a wetting," cried Brand, and his calm tone stilled their ready fear. Indeed, there was greater danger than he wanted them to know. But the *Lapwing* reappeared, shaking herself, and still turning.

"Good little boat!" said Brand. The crisis had passed. She was headed, at full speed, for the Bay. And not too soon. 'Ere she reached the comparative shelter of Clement's Island she was swept three times by green water.

Inside the lantern, their faces ruddy with the exposure, their eyes dancing with excitement, the girls were voluble with delight. Could anything be more thrilling than their experiences that day!

"That semaphore dodge is too precious to be lost," cried Enid. "Connie, you and I must learn the alphabet. You shall teach us this very evening, dad. Fancy me signaling you the whole length of the Promenade: 'Just look at Mrs. Wilson's bonnet,' or 'Here come the Taylor-Smiths. Scoot!' Oh, it's fine."

She whirled her arms in stiff-jointed rigidity and mimicked Stanhope's fantastic posing.

"Why should you scoot when you meet the Taylor-Smiths?" asked Brand.

"Because Mrs. T. – S. hauls us off to tea and gives us a gallon of gossip with every cup."

"I thought your sex regarded gossip as the cream?"

"Sex, indeed! Old Smith is worse than his wife. He doesn't say much, but he winks. One of his winks, at the end of a story, turns an episode into a three-volume novel."

"It seems to me I must teach you the code in my own self-defence," he replied. "And now for tea. Let us have it served here."

They voted this an admirable notion. The girls enlivened the meal by relating to him the doings and sayings of current interest ashore during the past two months. By a queer coincidence, which he did not mention, his relief was again due within a week, just as on the occasion of Enid's first appearance on the rock. The fact struck him as singular. In all probability he would not return to duty. He had completed twenty-one years of active service. Now he would retire, and when the commercial arrangements for the auriscope were completed, he would take his daughters on a long-promised Continental tour, unless, indeed, matters progressed between Stanhope and Enid to the point of an early marriage.

He had foreseen that Stanhope would probably ask Enid to be his wife. He knew the youngster well, and liked him. For the opposition that Lady Margaret might offer he cared not a jot. He smiled inwardly – as the convenient phrase has it – when he reviewed the certain outcome of any dispute between himself and her ladyship. He would surprise her.

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