

Otis James

# **The Light Keepers: A Story of the United States Light- house Service**



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United States Light-house Service**

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# **James Otis**

## **The Light Keepers: A Story of the United States Light-house Service**

### **CHAPTER I**

#### **AN INVOLUNTARY VISITOR**

"If that 'ere ain't a boat, Cap'n Eph, I'll agree to eat this buff-skin, an' wash it down with a pint of Uncle Sam's best oil," and Mr. Samuel Peters, first assistant of Carys' Ledge light, flattened his nose against the glass of the lantern as he peered out over the surging waters which surrounded the light-house on every hand.

An odd-looking man was Mr. Peters (better known to his companions in the service as "Sammy"), because of the fact that a bullet from the works of Petersburg had ploughed a deep furrow across his left cheek, and carried away a goodly portion of one ear. Thus indelibly branded as a veteran of the Civil War, Mr. Peters had been glad to accept the position of first assistant keeper of Carys' Ledge light, under the command of his old comrade-in-arms, Captain Ephraim Downs.

"What good would it do you to eat the buff-skin, Sammy?" Captain Eph asked in a mild tone, and without looking up from his task of polishing the lenses. "It stands to reason that you'd have a fit of the dyspepsy after doin' it, an' then I'd be called upon to report that we'd lost a buff-skin, an' the best part of Number 12 from the medicine chest, for I'd feel it my duty to doctor you up to the best of my ability an' the printed instructions from the Board, even though you had been makin' a fool of yourself."

"But why don't you look out an' see what's drivin' in here?" Mr. Peters cried with just a shade of irritation in his voice. "What's the use of bein' so pig-headed?"

"Now, Sammy, you know I ain't overly fond of bein' called pig-headed, an yet you throw that word at me in season an' out of season," Captain Downs said placidly as he polished the lenses carefully with the buff-skin.

"Then take a squint to the east'ard, an' see what this 'ere muck of a beastly fog is bringin' us," Mr. Peters insisted, this time in such an imploring tone that the old keeper could do no less than comply with the almost tearful request.

A single glance over the heaving waters, which had a grayish hue in the early morning light, obscured as it was by the fog, and Captain Downs forgot for the moment the "rules and regulations" by which he governed the movements of himself and his companions.

"I do declare, Sammy, you're right!" he cried. "It does look like a boat, for a fact, an' the surprisin' part of it is that you hit so near the truth! It ain't often you can make out the difference betwixt a ship an' a seal."

Mr. Peters was so engrossed with that which he saw as not to give any heed to the ironical remark, for, under almost any other circumstances, he would have resented it deeply.

"She's headin' this way, an' seems to be comin' right along, though I can't make out anything in the shape of oars," the first assistant said half to himself, and Captain Eph added as he went to the head of the narrow stairway which led to the dwelling-rooms below:

"You ain't so young as you use' ter be, Sammy, an' can't depend on your eyesight overly much." Then, raising his voice, he cried, "Hello, Uncle Zenas! Bring up the glass will you?"

"I reckon that'll stir him up a bit," Mr. Peters said with a chuckle as of satisfaction. "Uncle Zenas claims there isn't anything in the rules an' regerlations that says he shall be interfered with while he's cookin'."

"He'll find I've got a few rules an' regerlations of my own, which can't be broken by any cook that ever beat an egg," Captain Eph said sharply, and then he stepped back by the side of Mr. Peters in order to get another glance at that object which had interfered with the early morning duties of the light-house force.

A moment later it was possible for the two in the lantern to hear a dull rumbling sound, something like imitation thunder, from below, and again Mr. Peters chuckled until it really seemed as if he was choking.

"You've stirred Uncle Zenas up all right, Cap'n Eph," the first assistant said, "an' I'm wonderin' whether you get them 'ere glasses without goin' after 'em yourself."

"He'll fetch 'em or I'll hang him out of this 'ere lantern till he comes somewhere nigh understandin' his duty aboard this light. I didn't fish off the Banks year in an' year out for the best part of my life, to be flouted by a whipper-snapper like Zenas Stubbs."

The rumbling sound from below increased in volume until, after considerable difficulty, the head and shoulders of a very fat man were literally forced through the aperture in the floor of the lantern, and the upper portion of the "whipper-snapper" was revealed to view.

Uncle Zenas had admitted, in moments of strictest confidence, that he weighed "nigh to three hundred pounds" and even Mr. Peters, who was prone to contradict any statement which might be made in his hearing, had no word against it. The cook *was* large, with a face so red it seemed as if the blood was about to burst through its veins, and, save in the present case, was blessed with a mildness of disposition in proportion to the size of his body.

"If I'm to fetch an' carry for this whole blessed crew, an' that at a time when the fish-cakes are like to be burned to a cinder, I'll send in a petition to the Board to have this 'ere stairway stretched till an ordinary man can get through without scrapin' the skin all off his shoulders," he said angrily, and Captain Eph replied, as he took the glasses from the huge hand which was extended toward him:

"Better ask for a derrick, Uncle Zenas, an' then we can run you up on the outside of the tower when we're needin' your delicate frame in the lantern."

Uncle Zenas raised his hands above his head as if despairing of finding words of sufficient intensity to do justice to the occasion, and then, noting the fact that Captain Eph and Mr. Peters were gazing seaward intently, he apparently forgot the peril of the fish-cakes as, after considerable difficulty, he pulled his entire body through the narrow opening which gave entrance to the lantern.

"What seems to be the matter?" he asked in a whisper, much as if believing Captain Eph might be disturbed in his efforts to bring the glasses to bear upon the tiny object which was being tossed wildly about by the waves so far away.

For reply, Mr. Peters motioned him to look toward the east, and after one glance he asked:

"What is it? Looks like a log, an' if grown men in Government employ have taken to spendin' the time when they should be eatin', in huntin' up drift stuff, it's time the inspector was notified that a full, able-bodied crew is needed at Carys' Ledge light."

"I say it's a boat," Mr. Peters replied, "an' if I'm right, it stands to reason that there may be somebody aboard of her. Now –"

"It *is* a boat!" Captain Eph cried with no slight show of excitement, "an' I'm allowin' that there's at least one man aboard."

"What can he be doin' out there to the east'ard?" Mr. Peters cried as he took the glasses from the keeper's hand, and began adjusting them to his own eyes.

"It's some fisherman, I reckon, what lost himself in the fog," Uncle Zenas said, as if he no longer had any interest in the matter, and Mr. Peters cried excitedly:

"That's no fisherman's boat, and it don't look as if it came from a pleasure craft. There! Yes! I can make out somebody in the stern sheets; but I don't see any oars, and how in the name of goodness has he kept her headin' for this 'ere light? What do you allow it is, Cap'n Eph?"

"Much the same as you've made out, Sammy, an' it puzzles me to say why she's abroad on a morning like this."

Just at that instant the odor of burning fish came up through the door in the floor, and Uncle Zenas made all possible haste to descend, as the keeper cried irritably:

"I'd like to know if you haven't studied the rules and regerlations enough to find out that there mustn't be any smoke here in the lantern? Why don't you stay down where you belong, instead of makin' more work for Sammy an' me?"

"I'd have been willin' to staid there, an' it was what I wanted to do," Uncle Zenas replied breathlessly, as he tried unsuccessfully to lower his huge body through the narrow aperture. "If the crew of this 'ere light hadn't been so desperately lazy that they couldn't come down after a little pair of glasses, we wouldn't be losin' the best mess of fish-cakes that was ever put together on Carys' Ledge."

"Get down, can't you, an' not do so much talkin'?" the angry keeper cried, pushing on the shoulders of the big cook until Uncle Zenas had literally scraped his way through, and then the door was closed so violently that several particles of dust arose, causing Captain Eph to mutter:

"It does seem as if the crew of this 'ere light had gone out of their heads this morning. What with smoke an' dust here in the lantern, I reckon we're smashin' the rules an' regerlations all to flinders. What do you make out, Sammy? What do you make out?"

"It's one of them motor boats, Cap'n Eph, an' she's no fisherman, that much I'll go bail."

"Well, get to work cleaning' up, an' let *me* find out what she is. It seems as if a full grown man with a pair of good glasses ought'er know all about her by this time."

"How do you expect me to wrestle with the rules an' regerlations, when for all we know that 'ere boat may be comin' in with a load of shipwrecked men?" Mr. Peters cried petulantly, as he gave the glasses into the keeper's hand, and then stood gazing over the water as if believing it was possible to see more plainly with the naked eye.

"It don't stand to reason that 'ere craft has got shipwrecked men aboard, else we would see 'em, Sammy, an' I'm certain she's light, but for a man in the stern-sheets. Here comes the fog agin, and whoever's steerin' stands a mighty slim chance of strikin' Carys' Ledge, if it so be he wants to make this 'ere bit of rock. I do hate to get so mixed up before breakfast! Why couldn't the idjut have waited until long towards noon, when we hadn't much of anything to do, before he hove in sight?"

"He'll heave out of sight mighty soon, for this 'ere smother is comin' back faster than it went," Mr. Peters said half to himself, "an' I reckon we know now all we ever shall about him."

"It must be he's makin' for the ledge, an' it stands to reason we ought'er lend him a hand. There, that's the last we'll see of the craft unless some mighty fine steerin' is done, an' since it's no use lookin' out in the fog, Sammy, you'd better get to work on the lamp, while I go down in case he's got brains enough to hold his course. Remember, that 'cordin' to the rules an' regerlations, the work of gettin' things ship-shape must be begun immediately the light is put out, and we've loafed too long already."

"I reckon it wouldn't hurt very much if we broke the regerlations a little bit, when perhaps there are lives to be saved," Mr. Peters muttered as the keeper, raising the trap-door carefully, descended the narrow, winding staircase, but the first assistant made no attempt to follow his superior officer, because of knowing full well, from past experience, that any such disobedience of orders would be followed by a reprimand not pleasant to receive.

Descending the first flight, the keeper came to the watch room, where was a table, a chair, a stove, and a small lamp for the comfort and convenience of those who were on duty during the night to make certain the lamp in the lantern (meaning the floor above), burned steadily; and here also was a square, upright piece of mechanism known as the driving clock, which operated the flashing light.

Down another flight, and the keeper was in a third circular room, where were two beds. Another flight brought him to his own apartment, and below that the kitchen, over which Uncle Zenas presided as cook and second assistant light keeper, where everything was wondrously neat and clean, and where

every inch of space was economized for the better keeping of the food, cooking utensils, and such articles as are ordinarily found in similar apartments on shore.

"Are the fish-cakes spiled?" Captain Eph asked as he opened the door leading outside the tower to a ladder of iron, which was fastened directly to the masonry of the building.

"Gone to a cinder," the cook replied in a tone of sorrow, "an' I allow they was the best I ever put together. What about the boat?"

"That's what I can't tell, Uncle Zenas. This 'ere fog has shut in worse than ever, an' the chances are we'll never see her agin."

"How did she happen to be out there? Some fisherman, eh?"

"No; me an' Sammy are both agreed that it's a motor boat, an' she looked to me like such a craft as would be carried by some big sailing vessel."

"But what is she doin' out there?"

"Now, look here, Uncle Zenas, I don't know anything more about her than you do. How can you expect I'm goin' to answer such a fool question as that? All I can say is that, 'cordin' to the last sight I had of her, it looked as if she was headin' for this 'ere ledge, an' all the rest is a puzzle."

"Where are you goin' now?" the cook asked as he set about preparing more fish-cakes.

"Down to the rocks. It's just possible I may be able to give the course to whosoever is coming, an' Heaven knows he'll need it."

Then, as if to put an end to the conversation, Captain Eph closed the door emphatically behind him, and descended the long, slender ladder which led to the ledge below.

Not an inviting looking place in which to spend the greater portion of one's life was Carys' Ledge; nothing but a mass of black, jagged rocks rising out of the ocean a dozen miles or more from the mainland, and in extent at low water, half a mile long, and considerably less than that distance in width.

Save for two rows of timbers securely bolted to the rocks, and extending from the base of the tower to the water's edge to form "ways," on which a boat could be drawn up or launched, and a small hut not unlike the dwelling of an Esquimau, made of cement, and large enough to shelter a dory, there was nothing to be seen on the ledge of jagged rocks, over which one could make his way only with considerable difficulty.

Captain Eph descended to the water's edge by following the timbers of the boat-ways, taking due care as to where he stepped, for the footing was far from secure anywhere save on the extreme top of the ledge, and, making a trumpet with his hands, he shouted again and again, pausing now and then in a listening attitude.

"It don't stand to reason he could hold his course long enough to hit this 'ere ledge; but I reckon it's my duty as a Christian man an' a light keeper to do what I can toward lendin' a hand. If he don't come ashore here, the chances are mightily agin his strikin' land while the breath is left in his body, for this 'ere smother is enough to mix up anybody except an old shellback like me. Hello-o-o-o! Hello-o-o-o!"

Captain Eph actually started in surprise at hearing his hail answered, and it seemed to him as if it was a child's voice which had come from out the fog.

"I must be losin' my mind, to even imagine sich a thing!" he exclaimed petulantly, dashing the moisture from his eyes as if by so doing it might be possible to penetrate the dense veil of vapor which shut out from view even the tower of the light. "It's a crazy trick for a grown man to be whifflin' 'round here in this smother, without my thinkin' I heard a boy. Hello-o-o-o!"

"Hello!" came out from the fog, and the old keeper really looked around him in fear; but an instant later he had gathered his senses sufficiently to cry:

"Uncle Zenas! Uncle Zenas!"

The outer door of the tower must have been opened at the first word, for the light keeper heard his cook and second assistant ask petulantly:



"Now what's creepin' over you, Ephraim Downs? Do you allow that we can afford to lose another mess of fish-balls this mornin', or have you knocked off eatin' altogether?"

"Come down here, Uncle Zenas, an' bring the fish-balls with you, if you can't come without 'em. I've got the boat in hail, an' it's a child who answers me. We'll be needin' all hands, if he is to be brought ashore alive. Sing out for Sammy!"

Then Captain Eph cried out once more for the guidance of the stranger, and the reply was sufficient to convince him, if he had not already decided the matter in his mind, that the helmsman of the boat was very young.

"Are you on an island?"

"Wa'al, I wouldn't like to call it jest that," Captain Eph shouted, "unless you're willin' to say a pile of rocks makes an island. This 'ere is Carys' Ledge light. Now do you know where you are?"

"No better than I did before. Am I headin' right?"

"It sounds so; but this 'ere channel is mighty narrow, an' unless you come in jest so, the chances are that your boat will be knocked to pieces. Is she a motor craft?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then slow down till you can see the openin' in the rocks, an' once you're headin' right, slap the power to her. Hello, you Sammy!"

"Ay, ay!" came from somewhere near the tower.

"Bring down that coil of rope, an' I'm thinkin' this 'ere lad'll need it before he makes a landin'!"

At that moment the bow of the boat came into view amid the fog, and Captain Eph shouted:

"Port! Port a bit, an' keep her in the channel! Hurry your stumps, Sammy, for we're like to have a nasty mess here."

Mr. Peters did not arrive on the scene a second too soon, for at the very instant he gained the keeper's side the little craft was thrown by a heavy wave against the jagged rocks, and the splintering of wood told that much damage had been done.

"Look out for this 'ere rope, an' have your wits about you!" Captain Eph cried as, hurriedly taking the coil from Sammy's hands, he flung with wonderful accuracy of aim the flakes across the shattered boat which was being carried by the swell against the rocks the other side of the narrow channel.

Now it was possible for the keeper and his assistant to see that the sole occupant of the disabled craft was a small boy, apparently not more than ten or twelve years of age, whose face told eloquently of the mental and physical suffering he had endured.

The lad sprang forward to seize the rope; but at that instant the boat was flung against the rocks, throwing him headlong, and but for the first assistant keeper he must have been carried out of the little cove by the receding waves.

Mr. Peters, understanding that if the boy's life was to be saved prompt action was necessary, leaped into the boiling waters as he flung one arm over the rope Captain Eph was holding.

The impetus of his leap was sufficient to send him through the water faster than the partially destroyed boat was being carried, and, grasping the stem with one hand and the rope with the other, he shouted:

"Haul in, Cap'n, the best you know how, for I can't hold on here overly long!"

By this time Uncle Zenas had arrived at the scene, and, thanks to his assistance, the little craft with her crew of one was pulled so far in toward the rocks that the keeper and the cook had no difficulty in running her bow on the ways, after which, as Mr. Peters scrambled out of the water looking like a very large, half-drowned cat, the boy was taken from the boat by Captain Eph.

"There, there, don't try to talk," the keeper said in a fatherly tone. "Anybody with half an eye can see that you're clean done up, an' we'll have plenty of time for your story, seein's we ain't likely to be bothered with visitors till the inspector overhauls us."

It seemed as if all the lad's strength deserted him when there was no longer any question as to his safety, for before Captain Eph ceased, the muscles of the little body suddenly relaxed as if the wings of the death angel had touched them.

"I vow an' declare if the poor little tot hasn't gone an' fainted away like a woman," the old keeper said as he hurried toward the tower, leaving to Uncle Zenas and Mr. Peters the task of pulling the shattered boat up beyond reach of the tide. "I reckon he'd stuck it out as long as he had strength, an' then went all to pieces."

When the two assistants entered the kitchen Captain Eph, having undressed the lad, was rubbing him vigorously with warm towels, and Mr. Peters cried in astonishment:

"Hello! What's goin' on now? Ain't afraid he's been drowned, are you, Cap'n?"

"What with the fog an' the spray, I allow he has come pretty nigh that, an' this 'ere treatment won't do him any harm. Besides, I don't know what else to do, for there's nothin' in the rules an' regerlations to tell what ought'er be done when folks have fainted dead away. Anyhow, he seems to be pullin' 'round all right," the old man added as the lad opened his eyes slowly.

In a twinkling Uncle Zenas had a cup of hot coffee to the little fellow's mouth, and he was forced to drink, for the cook, in his eagerness to take some part in the rescue, was literally pouring it down his throat.

"Why don't you go an' fix up my bed so's we can put him in it, Sammy? What good do you suppose it does to stand 'round here first on one foot an' then on the other as if you was a brazen image?" Captain Eph demanded fiercely of his first assistant, and the latter ran up the spiral stairway, hurriedly, muttering something about the folly of treating a case such as the one in hand, before first studying the "rules and regerlations" to learn whether the Board had made any provisions for similar emergencies.

Thanks to the ministrations of Captain Eph and Uncle Zenas, the half-drowned and wholly numbed lad was partially restored to a normal condition; but when he tried to speak the old keeper said sharply:

"There's no need of any tongue-waggin' yet a while. You're goin' inter my bed, an' stay there till you begin to feel somethin' like yourself, though I don't reckon it would do any harm if you told us how long you'd been alone in the boat."

"Last night, and yesterday, and all the night before that," the lad said with a sigh, and then, as his eyes filled with tears, Captain Eph gathered him in his arms, saying to Uncle Zenas as he began to ascend the staircase:

"I reckon it won't do any harm if you warm the blankets of my bed. This poor little shaver's teeth are chatterin' yet; but after he's heated up a bit, an' gets the sleep that's due him, he'll be a different lookin' lad."

Mr. Peters had had much the same thought, for he now appeared in the doorway with an armful of bed-clothes, and once more a "mess" of fish-cakes was burned to a cinder as Uncle Zenas gave all his attention to making the little stranger comfortable.

Ten minutes later the keeper and his first assistant descended to the kitchen once more, and Captain Eph said in a whisper as he looked around to see what the possibilities for breakfast might be:

"I vow an' declare if that poor little shaver's eyes didn't shut before we'd got him well tucked up in bed. I don't understand how he stood the rough usage, for he ain't much more'n a baby, an' if my suspicions are right, he's been through what would pull down a tolerable strong man."

"What do you make of it?" Uncle Zenas asked while he hovered helplessly around the stove, as if entirely at a loss to know what he could serve for breakfast after spoiling so many prime fish-cakes.

"There's no need of our strainin' our brains over it, 'cause it won't be a great while before he'll be able to tell the whole story," Captain Eph replied as he poured for himself a cup of coffee.

"But what are you goin' to do with him?" Mr. Peters asked as he followed the example of his superior officer.

"Do with him?" Captain Eph repeated as if in surprise. "What else can we do but keep him here till the inspector comes, unless it so be, which ain't likely, that a craft of some kind fetches up off the ledge?"

"What does rule 56 of the regerlations say?" Mr. Peters asked in a low tone, as if afraid the involuntary visitor might overhear the words. "Ain't it set down there that light keepers' dwellings shall not be used as pilot stations, nor as boardin' or lodgin' houses?"

"Yes, I reckon that's part of what it says; but tacked on to that 'ere rule is the words 'except by special authority,' an' I'm countin' on gettin' that for our little shaver, if it so be somebody don't come after him before then."

"But 'cordin' to the way I look at it, we're goin' clean agin the regerlations when we make a boardin' or a lodgin' house out 'er this 'ere tower before gettin' the special authority," Mr. Peters said with the air of one who has studied the subject thoroughly, and Captain Eph turned upon his first assistant suddenly, still holding the cup of coffee in his hand:

"I'm the keeper of this 'ere light, ain't I?"

"You are for a fact," Mr. Peters replied meekly.

"Well, that bein' the case, Sammy, after I've entered in the watch book an account of his comin' here, an' set down the fact that I count on keepin' the lad till somebody comes to claim him, I reckon it's nobody's business but mine an' the United States Government's. He's here, an' here he stays, unless the inspector says he must be turned adrift, in which case I'll go with him."

Having thus settled the matter so far as he and the Government were concerned, Captain Eph began to drink his coffee in as leisurely a manner as if the lantern had already been cared for according to the "rules an' regerlations."

## CHAPTER II

### SIDNEY HARLOW

For the first time since Ephraim Downs had been appointed keeper of Carys' Ledge light, was the work in the lantern left undone until after the crew had eaten breakfast, and also for the first time had the second assistant failed of having an appetizing meal served in a proper manner.

It was, as Mr. Peters afterward said, as if the "rules an' regerlations had been trampled in the mire," owing to the arrival of one small boy.

No sooner, however, had the poor apology for a breakfast been eaten than Captain Eph suddenly awakened to a full realization of the situation, and then he stormed at his assistants as if they were wholly at fault because the regular routine had been broken in upon.

"It strikes me, Sammy," the keeper began when he had eaten the last morsel of johnny-cake, and washed it down with the last mouthful of coffee, "that instead of loafin' around this 'ere kitchen, you'd better be in the lantern, else the inspector may get it into his head that the good of the service demands that a new assistant keeper be appointed for Carys' Ledge."

Mr. Peters looked in speechless astonishment, first at Captain Eph, and then at Uncle Zenas, after which he held up both hands as if in token of his bewilderment, and went slowly toward the stairway.

"An' I'd also like to know why this 'ere kitchen looks as if it was ridin' out to a fair?" Captain Eph continued sharply. "There's got to be a change 'round here mighty soon, or I'll court-martial this whole idle crew."

Uncle Zenas' face flushed a deeper red, if indeed that could be possible, as he said slowly:

"I've studied the rules an' regerlations ever since I was so misfortunate as to be appointed second assistant keeper of this 'ere light, an' so far I haven't found anything laid down agin answerin' the keeper back when he tries to ride over a man. I allow you're in command of the lantern, Captain Eph; but I've got some rights all to myself here in the kitchen, an' there's goin' to be trouble if them as belong up-stairs interfere while I'm 'tendin' to my reg'lar duties."

Then Uncle Zenas began to bustle around, as if every moment was precious and he seemingly filled the little kitchen so full, as he moved his ponderous body from one side to another, that there was really no room for any other person in the little apartment.

Captain Eph did not venture to make any reply; but at the first opportunity followed Mr. Peters up the stairway, tip-toeing through the apartment where the lad lay asleep, and making no halt until gaining that floor known as the lantern deck.

During five minutes or more the keeper and his assistant worked industriously at those tasks which should have been performed earlier in the day, and then Mr. Peters asked:

"How long do you allow that little chap will sleep, Cap'n Eph?" and the keeper replied:

"It wouldn't surprise me a bit if he run his nap way over till to-morrow mornin'. You see it ain't likely he got much sleep while he was alone in the boat."

"An' it stands to reason that he didn't have a great deal to eat, for I couldn't see anything on the craft that looked like provisions."

"I reckon there's no question but that he went hungry, Sammy."

"In which case he's needin' food as much as sleep," Mr. Peters said thoughtfully, "an' I'm askin' if it ain't our duty to rouse him up after a while, so's to shove somethin' inter his stomach."

"Well I declare, Sammy!" Captain Eph cried emphatically. "I never once took heed to anythin' of that kind, an' yet it's only common sense. I'll run down an' see what Uncle Zenas can fix up that'll hit his case."

"You look after the boy, an' I'll 'tend to things in the lantern," Mr. Peters said as he wiped here and there with the buff-skin over imaginary specks of dust on the lens.

"That 'ere Sammy breaks out in spots of good, sound sense every once in a while," Uncle Zenas said when the keeper repeated to him the conversation which had been held in the lantern. "It stands to reason the little shaver needs somethin' in his stomach, an' I'll fix up a mess right away. Perhaps we might pour a little broth down his throat without disturbin' him very much."

"All right; see what you can do, an' I'll take a squint at his boat. It ain't certain but that she can be patched up, an' he may need her powerful bad before the inspector comes this way."

Having said this, Captain Eph, forgetting that, according to the "regerlations," he should remain in the lantern until everything there had been put to rights, descended the outside ladder leading to the rocks below, and made his way to where the lad's boat had been left.

Here he found nothing contrary to the opinion he and his first assistant had already formed – that she had been built as a tender to a large vessel. A gasoline motor of 3 horse-power, with the appearance of having been well cared for, was aft where the helmsman could attend to it while holding the boat on her course, and lashed on either side inboard were oars and spare fittings. Everything about the craft told that she had lately been looked after by sailormen, and, having ascertained this much, Captain Eph set about learning how seriously she had been damaged by the rocks.

Both bows two or three feet abaft the stem were stove in; but the injuries were not so serious that they could not be repaired by ordinary workmen, and Captain Eph said to himself as he pulled the boat around on the ways:

"I reckon Sammy an' I can put her in shape, pervidin' the weather holds good; but if we get much of a gale she's bound to go, for it won't do to take the Government boat out of the house in order to run her in, even if she is worth four or five times as much as ours."

The keeper brought down from the tiny boat-house of cement, a rope, which was attached to a small windlass or winch, and, making one end fast to the bow of the disabled craft, hauled her up the incline until she was in some slight degree sheltered by the little building. Then he carefully covered the motor with a spare sail belonging to his own boat.

All this had required no small amount of time, and when he again entered the kitchen, Mr. Peters, his labors in the lantern having been performed, was moving in an aimless manner around the apartment, evidently under the impression that he was assisting Uncle Zenas in preparing a thin soup to be given the involuntary visitor.

"Well?" the keeper asked as he entered, and Mr. Peters replied:

"Uncle Zenas an' I believe he ought'er have some of this stuff inside of him as soon as we can get it there. He'll sleep better with a full stomach."

"What is it you've made?"

"I've thinned down one of them 'ere cans of soup you was so extravagant as to buy when Sammy went ashore last," Uncle Zenas replied, "an' it smells good enough to eat."

Captain Eph tasted the savory mixture critically and then said thoughtfully:

"I reckon you're right about his needin' it, though it does seem too bad to waken the little shaver while he's bottlin' up so much sleep. But have your own way. How are you goin' to do the job?"

"You lift him up, an' I'll pour it down," Uncle Zenas replied in a tone which showed that he had already settled the details in his own mind. "The sooner we do it the better, 'cordin' to my way of thinkin', so s'pose you lead the way."

There was an expression of deepest anxiety on Captain Eph's face as he ascended the iron stairs, and on arriving at the floor above he stood for a moment gazing at the childish face which could be seen amid the mountain of bed-clothing, for in his desire to do all that might be possible for the little fellow, Mr. Peters had piled upon the bed every blanket and comfortable to be found in the tower.

"Better get right at it," Uncle Zenas said in a whisper, as he halted by the bedside with the bowl of soup in his hands.

Captain Eph raised the boy so gently that his slumber was not disturbed; but when Uncle Zenas attempted to pour the warm liquid down his throat, he opened his eyes, crying in distress:

"What is it? What do you men want? Where am I?"

"You're safe and sound in Carys' Ledge light, Sonny, an' we've come up to give you somethin' to eat," Captain Eph replied, as he pressed the lad closely to him. "You've been havin' a hard time, an' are needin' what we've brought. Drink it down like a little man, an' then you may go to sleep agin."

Just for an instant the little fellow looked around wildly, and then, as if reassured by the friendly pressure of Captain Eph's arms, began to swallow the soup, slowly at first, as if from a sense of duty, and then eagerly as hunger asserted itself.

"My! but that was good!" he exclaimed as Captain Eph laid him back upon the pillow, and Uncle Zenas asked eagerly:

"Do you want some more? There's plenty in the kitchen, an' it'll do you good."

"If I *could* have a little more. It's *so* good, and I didn't know I was hungry till I got a taste of it," the little fellow said, rising to a sitting posture, and as Uncle Zenas hurried down the stairway Captain Eph whispered solicitously:

"Why not lay down agin, Sonny? You're mighty sleepy, an' it'll do you good to get another nap."

"If you don't care, I'd rather keep awake till I've had more of the soup. How nice it is to be here where it's warm and dry!"

"Bless your dear heart, you shall do as you want to in this 'ere light!" Captain Eph cried. "Only don't forget that you've been havin' a hard time, an' need sleep as much as food."

"There isn't much chance I'll forget anything of that kind while you're all so good to me. When do you suppose my father will come to take me away?"

"Who is your father, Sonny?" Mr. Peters asked.

"Captain Harlow, of the schooner *West Wind*— she's a five-master, and a beauty. This is her first voyage, and I'm going all the way to Porto Rico in her," the lad cried, and then suddenly remembering how long it had been since he was on board the *West Wind*, he cried, turning toward Captain Eph, "Do you suppose he can find me, now that I've come ashore, sir?"

"If he don't it won't be any very great job to let him know where you are, Sonny," the keeper replied emphatically. "It'll go hard if we can't hail a fisherman, or a pilot boat, an' send a letter ashore to the post-office, so you needn't worry about that part of it. But tell me how you happened to be adrift in that motor boat."

"We went out to look at what seemed to be a lot of wreckage; it was so calm that the *West Wind* hardly moved through the water, and father said I might go with Mr. Sawyer, because I know how to run the motor and steer. Then, before we'd got to the wreckage, the fog shut in, and we couldn't see the schooner. I believe I could have gone straight to her at first, but after Mr. Sawyer fell over-board, I turned the boat around so many times trying to pick him up, that I couldn't tell where the *West Wind* might be."

"Who was Mr. Sawyer?" Captain Eph asked.

"The second mate; he was a good friend of mine, and I wouldn't have been allowed to go out to look at the wreckage if he hadn't coaxed father."

"How did a sailorman contrive to tumble over-board?" Mr. Peters asked curiously, as if it seemed to him impossible such an accident could occur.

"We ran down a spar, and he was leaning over the bow trying to make out if it was a buoy that had gone adrift, or a portion of the wreckage we had sighted, when a heavy sea came. It seemed to me as if the timber struck Mr. Sawyer on the head, for over he went like a log, and although I put the boat back and forth until it grew too dark to see, I couldn't find him."

"Wasn't you frightened, Sonny?" Mr. Peters asked, and the lad replied with a sigh:

"I was feeling too sorry for that, sir, and I thought certain the schooner would pick me up, even if the fog was thick; but I did get frightened when the night shut in, and the wind began to blow so

that the spray from the tops of the waves came aboard, soaking me with water. My name is Sidney, if you please, sir."

"Then what did you do?" Captain Eph asked in a whisper.

"I just sat there and cried, sir, till I remembered what father has often told me, that when a boy, or a man, for that matter, loses his courage, he is a great deal worse off than if he kept up his spirits. I had often run the motor while the *West Wind* was in port, and I tried to make out how much gasolene there was in the tank, for I knew steerage-way was needed, else I couldn't keep her head up into the wind. It was a terribly long while before day came again, and then the fog covered everything so that I couldn't see very far in either direction. Of course father hunted for me; but I knew he didn't have much chance of finding me in that kind of weather."

"Wasn't you hungry?" Mr. Peters asked.

"Perhaps so, sir; but I was too much frightened and sorry to know it until I got a taste of the soup."

"What did you do all the long day and second night?" and Captain Eph put his arms around the lad as he asked the question.

"I sang a little, sir, and cried a good deal; but the most of the time I prayed, and once when I fell asleep without knowing it, I thought I saw my mother, who went to Heaven when I was only a little shaver."

At this point in the story Uncle Zenas appeared with a fresh supply of soup, and after Sidney had drank it eagerly, Captain Eph said as he forced the boy to lie down again:

"You're a brave little lad, Sidney, an' I have no doubt but that you really saw your mother, for surely God would have let her go to her baby boy when he was in such trouble. Now you must sleep again, an' while you're growin' stronger we'll cook up a letter to send your father, tellin' him where you are, for I reckon he's feelin' mighty bad about this time."

Then, motioning for his assistants to follow, Captain Eph led the way to the watch-room, and Uncle Zenas, who brought up the rear, closed each door behind him lest the sound of their voices should prevent Sidney from sleeping.

When the three men were in the apartment directly under the lantern they stood in silence, gazing at each other, while one might have counted twenty, and then Captain Eph said in a low tone:

"Wa'al, you've heard about all the story he can tell, an' now what do you think?"

"I reckon it's the truth all right," Mr. Peters replied in what he intended should be a jovial tone, and on the instant the keeper was aroused to anger.

"I hope there ain't any one here so mean an' bad-minded as to question any statement that little shaver has made! The truth! Of course it is, every word, an' –"

"Now, look here, Cap'n Eph, there ain't any call for you to get up so high on your ear," Mr. Peters interrupted. "I wasn't allowin' it could be anything but the truth, an' only spoke that way because there didn't seem to be much else to say. We've got him here, an' are bound to take care of him, no matter what the rules an' regerlations say about boardin' or lodgin' houses."

"Right you are," Uncle Zenas added, "an' I for one don't see as there is any need of talk. We've got stuff enough to eat, an' jest so long as his appetite sticks by him I'll give him a chance to find out what kind of a cook I am, though it stands to reason I can't come anywhere near mixin' up what he's been in the habit of gettin' on board one of them big schooners."

"Now see here, Uncle Zenas," Captain Eph said sharply. "I've sat under the droppin' of your cookin' quite a spell, an' so has Sammy. We've never had any fault to find, an' as long as there's breath left in my body I'll maintain that you can hold your own with the cook of any craft that sails."

"Then what did we come up here to talk about?" Uncle Zenas asked as if in perplexity.

"About that boy of our'n, for I reckon he belongs to us till his father comes after him. I ain't wishin' harm to any man; but it wouldn't make me feel very bad if nobody ever showed up to claim the little shaver, 'cause it makes this 'ere tower seem a good deal like home to have a baby in it."

"Are you tryin' to fix up some plan so's it sha'n't be known he's here?" Mr. Peters asked as if in astonishment, and Captain Eph roared angrily:

"See here, Sammy, there are times when you try a patient man like me, as nobody has been tried since the days of Job. Of course I ain't tryin' to keep any baby away from his own true an' lawful father, an' I called you up here so's we could decide how to get word to the capt'n of the *West Wind* that his boy is here as safe an' snug as a bug in a rug."

"You seemed to allow a spell ago that we might hail a fisherman, an' send a letter ashore," Mr. Peters said in perplexity.

"It don't seem jest the thing to wait a great while for some craft to come within hail, for it stands to reason the poor man is jest about crazy thinkin' the lad's knockin' around in that boat, starvin' to death," and the keeper rubbed his chin vigorously, as if by so doing it might be possible to more readily solve the problem which was before them.

"It wouldn't be any fool of a trip from here to the mainland, at this season of the year, in a dory," Uncle Zenas suggested, and Mr. Peters cried as if he saw a way out of the difficulty.

"The first thing, whatever we agree on, is to write the letter, an' after that's been done we'll have time enough to figger how it's to be sent. I reckon it'll get there all right if you put on it the name of the captain an' the schooner, to be found at Porto Rico, eh?"

"That's what's puzzlin' me a good bit," Captain Eph replied. "I ain't sure but that there may be more than one post-office in Porto Rico. I never was on the island, so don't know much about it."

"Why not send your letter to the light?" Uncle Zenas asked. "No matter what kind of an island it is, there's bound to be a light on it."

"An' who's to tell me where or what it is?" the keeper cried petulantly. "The place may only be buoyed out, or have nothin' more'n a beacon on it."

"Wa'al, you've got the report of the Board in your room, an' all the facts are certain to be put down in that, since we've adopted the place so to speak," Mr. Peters suggested, and Captain Eph's face brightened at once, as he cried:

"There are times, Sammy, when you do really seem to have quite a lot of sense! Now any idjut ought'er thought of doin' that same thing; but I've been so mixed up since daybreak that my brain seems to be off somewhere on a strike. Wait a bit while I fetch the book."

"Sneak inter the room quiet-like, or you may wake the lad," Uncle Zenas said warningly, and Captain Eph, who was already half-way through the door in the floor, stopped to say in a tone of reproof:

"Any one would think, to hear you two old shell-backs talk, that I never knew anything about babies, an' yet I've handled more of 'em than you ever saw."

Then the keeper disappeared from view, and a full five minutes elapsed before he reappeared, to explain his long absence by saying:

"I couldn't help stoppin' to look at the little rascal as he lays there asleep. I declare he is handsome as a picter, an' twice as sweet."

"Did you get the report?" Mr. Peters asked impatiently.

"Of course I did. What else do you reckon I went after? Now we'll soon know if there's a light on that island of Porto Rico."

Captain Eph had not pored over the pages of the report many minutes, before he looked up at his mates in dismay, as he said:

"What do you think, boys? There's no less than fourteen lights on the blessed place, an' it must be quite an island. Now we're up a tree for sure!"

"If I was the keeper of this 'ere light I'd make an official report to the inspector, of how the lad came to the ledge, an' ask the Government to hunt up the father," Uncle Zenas said quietly. "I ain't so certain that it's the Government's business to go 'round huntin' for stray fathers; but it seems to me,



seem's how he landed on this 'ere ledge, an' is stayin' here, the least them as are at Washington could do would be to take one end of the job, if we're willin' to handle the other."

"You've hit the nail right on the head, Uncle Zenas!" and Captain Eph gravely shook his second assistant by the hand. "I'll make a report, an' from this on, till we decide upon somethin' better, all hands are to be on the lookout for a craft that can be hailed."

"If you're goin' to settle down to a spell of writin', an' I'm allowin' it won't be any small job to put the thing together ship-shape, I'll see what can be done toward patchin' up the boy's boat," Mr. Peters said as if making a suggestion. "If we get any good weather, an' the motor is in fair shape, it mightn't be very much of a trip to run across."

"Get at it, Sammy, get at it. Seems to me I'm the only one in this 'ere crew that don't rightly know what to do," and once more Captain Eph crept softly to his own room in search of writing materials.

Half an hour later the keeper and his assistants were busily engaged on their respective tasks. Captain Eph sat in the watch-room laboring over his report; Uncle Zenas was cooking as if his very life depended upon getting the largest amount of provisions prepared for eating in the shortest possible space of time, and on the rocks Mr. Peters was measuring and figuring on the shattered boat, confident that he could soon put her in a seaworthy condition, provided he should be able to find the proper material.

The cook was spearing doughnuts out of a kettle of hot fat with a long-handled fork, bringing into play all his professional knowledge to the end that each one should be of the proper color and degree of crispness, when he was startled so badly that he actually squeaked, by hearing a light footstep on the floor directly behind him.

"I'll be roasted if I didn't think you was a ghost!" he cried as, turning quickly, he saw Sidney standing near the foot of the staircase. "Why didn't you stay in bed, lad, since that's where you belong for the next four an' twenty hours?"

"I guess I've slept long enough, for I wakened without being called, and those doughnuts smelled so good I had to come after one. What a nice kitchen this is!"

"It's a bit small for so big a cook," Uncle Zenas said with a laugh as he held the pan half-filled with delicately browned cakes toward the boy. "Help yourself to whatever you want so long as you're on Carys' Ledge, for everything here that don't belong to the Government is the same as yours."

"You have all been awfully kind to me, and if father could only know where I am, it would be very nice to stay here a while, for I was never in a light-house before."

"Where do you live when you're at home?" Uncle Zenas asked, as he speared more doughnuts from the kettle of fat.

"I haven't got any home now. I did board with a very nice family in Malden; but they moved out west, and father said I might stay on the schooner until spring, when I'm to go somewhere to school. Is there another room under this?" and Sidney tapped with his foot on a trap-door directly in the center of the floor.

"Wa'al, I don't reckon you can call it a room, seein's it's our cellar," and Uncle Zenas raised the door that the lad might look beneath.

In the middle was what appeared to be a well, while around the sides of the aperture were stores of all kinds, stacked up neatly with a view to economy of space.

"Yes, that's our well," Uncle Zenas said in reply to Sidney's question. "Least-ways it's a hole in the masonry which is filled every once in a while by the water-boat from the harbor, which comes out here for that purpose. Yonder is the oil, and our lamp eats lots of it. This 'ere is what is known as a first order light, an' we use somewhere over eight hundred gallons of oil in a year. The Light-House Board sends all our supplies, for it stands to reason we can't run out to the shop whenever we're needin' anythin' extra."

"But of course the Board can't tell just how much you will eat, and I should think you might come short once in a while," Sidney said thoughtfully as he gazed into the odd cellar, noting the variety of stores therein.

"No, the Board don't know how much we might eat; but it takes it upon itself to say how much we *shall* eat, an' here's the list of what must last one man a full year," Uncle Zenas said grimly as he opened a large black book, the title of which was *Instructions to Light Keepers*.

Then Sidney read aloud the following table of annual allowance for each keeper and assistant in the service:

"Beef ... 200 pounds. Potatoes, 4 bushels. Pork, 100 pounds. Onions, 1 bushel. Flour, 1 barrel. Sugar, 50 pounds. Rice, 25 pounds. Coffee, 24 pounds. Beans, 10 pecks. Vinegar, 4 gallons."

"But suppose you eat more than that?" Sidney asked laughingly, as he came to an end of the list, and Uncle Zenas replied with a wink, which was very comical because his cheeks were so fat:

"Here comes Cap'n Eph; you'll have to ask him about that, for he's the head boss on this 'ere ledge."

## CHAPTER III

### PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

When Captain Ephraim entered the kitchen he held in his hand a sheet of paper on which were several lines of written words, and before Sidney could ask him any questions relative to the rations, as had been suggested by Uncle Zenas, the keeper cried in a tone of triumph:

"Here's what I'm reckonin' will fill the bill all right, an' if Captain Harlow don't get it in short order, the blame will be on the inspector. See what you think of it, Uncle Zenas."

Then Captain Eph read the following, pausing now and then to look over the top of his glasses that he might get some idea of how the statement impressed the cook:

"To the Inspector of Light-Houses, "District No. 1.

"Honored Sir:

"Me and my assistants believe it is our duty, though not so laid down in the rules and regulations, to make a special report because this morning a small boy came on to the ledge in a motor boat that got smashed up pretty considerable on the rocks while making a landing, said boy claiming to be the son of Captain Harlow of the five-masted schooner *West Wind* bound for Porto Rico, and he wishing to let his father hear that he ain't drowned. Not knowing how to send word to the said father that the boy is on this ledge safe and sound, with us feeding him out of our rations so that the Government won't come short of provisions, I hereby, being of sound mind and disposition, make report to you that the said father ought to be hunted up by your honorable and respected Board, so that he may be able to know that his son ain't yet drowned.

"Your respectfully obedient servant to command,

"Ephraim Downs, Keeper of Carys' Ledge Light, and subscribed to by his assistants, Zenas Stubbs and Sammy Peters.

"P.S. The said boy arove so unexpectedly jest about daylight, that I have further to report that the lantern of Carys' Ledge Light didn't get cleaned till nigh on to nine o'clock on this same morning.

"Ephraim Downs, Keeper of Carys' Ledge Light."

"That's great, Cap'n Eph, jest great!" Uncle Zenas cried as the keeper ceased reading and looked at him scrutinizingly. "There's no mistake but what you've got a big head on you, for it would have taken me more'n a week to get up a report like that, an' then I shouldn't have thought of half the things you've said."

"I reckon it's up to the Board to find the *West Wind* now, eh?" and Captain Eph tried unsuccessfully to hide the expression of pride which had come to his face with the words of praise from the cook.

"Of course it is, Cap'n Eph, an' I allow Sonny's father ought'er be here mighty soon. Perhaps it would be a good idee if I did a bit more cookin', for I'd be ashamed to have him find us without enough for dinner in case you invited him to stop."

"There's no need of doin' very much cookin' before the letter has been sent away," Sidney cried with a laugh, for now that the report was written, it seemed to him much as if all his troubles had vanished.

"I reckon the lad is right, Uncle Zenas," the keeper said gravely, "though it won't do any harm to have a little somethin' extra on hand, in case he should get here before we expect him. I'll run out an' see what Sammy thinks of the report, an' then we'll put our heads together for the purpose of

seein' how we can rig our little shaver up agin it comes a cold spell, which we've a right to expect as soon as this fog burns off."

"May I go with you, Captain?" Sidney asked eagerly.

"Of course you can, lad, though I'm allowin' that the best place for you is in bed. Well I declare! Makin' this 'ere report has kind'er turned me forgetful, an' I didn't realize that we counted on your sleepin' till this time to-morrow. When did you come down-stairs?"

"Only a few moments ago. My eyes opened so wide that I couldn't close them again, and it seemed better to have a look around, rather than stay in bed like a baby."

"Perhaps you're right, Sonny; but 'cordin' to the way I looked at it, you was needin' a deal of sleep. Come along, an' take care you don't slip on the ladder."

Captain Eph led the way out through the door in the side of the tower, moving slowly, and looking back over his shoulder at every step, until Sidney cried cheerily:

"Don't get worried about me, Captain, I've been on the *West Wind* long enough to get up and down a ladder like this without falling."

When the two arrived at that depression in the rocks on which the odd-looking boat-house had been built, they found Mr. Peters so deeply engrossed in his task that not until the keeper spoke was he aware of their approach, and then he said in a tone of triumph:

"I'll have that 'ere boat in shape before the end of the month! Only two strakes of the hull have been stove badly, an' we've got jest what's needed for new ones. The others want bracin', an' then they'll be as good as ever."

"Never mind about the boat now, Sammy. I want you to hear what I'm goin' to send to the inspector, so if there's anythin' you think needs changin', it may be done. Of course we can't mail it until some craft fetches to off the ledge; but there's no knowin' how soon that may happen, an' we can't afford to miss the first chance."

"Got the report done as soon as this, Cap'n Eph?" Mr. Peters asked in surprise.

"Of course I have, Sammy, else why would I be wantin' you to read it?"

"Does the boy know what's in it?"

"He was in the kitchen when I read it to Uncle Zenas."

"Well, go ahead. I reckon there ain't any such terrible great rush on this 'ere boat, an' besides, as first assistant of the light, it's my business to know what kind of a tale the keeper is sendin' to the inspector," and Mr. Peters seated himself on the sharp edge of a rock in token that he was prepared to listen; but Captain Eph said gravely before beginning to read:

"We had better have this thing understood at the start, Sammy. When you allowed that it was your business to hear whatever the keeper sent to the inspector, it was all wrong, because if I want to make a report privately, it ain't any concern of my assistants; but in this 'ere case I have made you an' Uncle Zenas a part of the doc'ment, so to speak, an' that's why I'm explainin' matters."

"I allow there's a good chance for an argument there, Cap'n Eph; but seem's how we're kind'er pressed for time, we'll let the matter drop a spell, an' take it up when there's nothin' else on hand, I mean about your havin' the right to make a report without my knowin' what's in it. Go ahead with the readin' an' then I'll explain how I count on fixin' up Sonny's boat."

Sidney, having already heard the statement of facts, had no desire to listen to a second reading; but took advantage of the opportunity to ascertain the extent of the damage done to the boat in which he had spent so many hours of suffering.

The motor was covered by the canvas which the keeper had thrown over it, and after this was removed, the mechanism appeared to be in as good condition as on that day when he and Mr. Sawyer set out from the *West Wind* to have a look at the wreckage.

Opening one of the lockers, he took therefrom a handful of cotton waste, and while Captain Eph alternately read and explained to his first assistant what he had written, Sidney cleaned the motor as the engineer of the schooner had taught him.

He was still busily engaged in this task when, the report having been read, Mr. Peters exclaimed in a tone of approval:

"Now I call that way up fine! If it don't stir the inspector a bit, he ain't the man I've always took him to be. When do you allow the lad's father ought to get here?"

"Wa'al, I can't say as to that, Sammy, seein's how we haven't had a chance to send the letter ashore yet, and even if that was done, I couldn't figure to any certainty on how long it would take to carry it to Porto Rico. Of course I ought to know all about that, seein's I've fished on the Banks, man and boy, for pretty nigh half my life; but yet I don't. Somehow I'm afraid I ain't up in geography as I ought'er be. Any way, the first part of the work is done, meanin' the makin' of the report, and now it stands us in hand to keep a bright lookout for a craft that can be hailed."

"When this 'ere fog lifts, I reckon we shall see fishermen enough," Mr. Peters replied as if sending a message to the mainland was something which could be readily done, and, apparently dismissing from his mind the report and the possible consequences of making it, he called the keeper's attention once more to the boat in which Sidney had come ashore.

Then it was that he became for the first time aware of what the lad was doing, and with that odd chuckle in which he sometimes indulged when it seemed as if he was choking, Mr. Peters whispered hoarsely in the ear of his superior officer:

"Will you look at that little shaver! I declare if he ain't takin' right hold of that motor as if he had been born in her! He's no common lad, Cap'n Eph, you mark my words!"

"You're right, Sammy, you're right, an' we'd good proof of that when he come in, for it ain't many grown men who could have held the course in the fog as he did. When it shut down so thick, I said to myself, says I, 'This is the last we shall see of the boat,' when lo and behold, in he sails as if it was clear weather. Stavin' the timbers was what you might call an accident, an' didn't come about through carelessness, so I allow that he put her in here as neatly as any sailorman could. But what about fixin' her up?"

Mr. Peters explained in detail how he believed the work might be performed with the limited material at hand, and Sidney listened to the conversation intently, for there was in his mind the belief that once the boat had been repaired, he might set out to find his father without awaiting the tardy movements of the letter.

Mr. Peters was no amateur at mending a boat, as both his mates were ready to testify, and when he had come to the end of his plans, Captain Eph said approvingly:

"You're right, Sammy, you're right, an' I don't see anything to hinder you goin' ahead jest as you've begun. It ain't very likely we could turn her to much account, even if she was in good condition; but we must have her ship-shape before the lad's father arrives, so begin work on her as soon as you please, and I'll lend a hand whenever it's needed."

Having thus received the sanction of his superior officer, Mr. Peters lost no time in beginning the task, and Sidney was forced to cover the motor with the canvas, because it would be impossible for both of them to work on the craft at the same time.

"I reckon you'll be wantin' to take a look at Carys' Ledge before you leave us?" Captain Eph said when the lad was at liberty. "An' seem's how its nigh to low water, you may not have a better chance, although I'm free to admit we haven't got much to show you. If you feel like crawlin' 'round over the rocks, come with me."

Sidney was not particularly eager to make a tour of the ledge, perhaps because it was not very interesting from whatever point you might view it; but it seemed as if he was in duty bound to accept the invitation, and the two set off across the brown, jagged boulders, on which, before the tower was built, so many good vessels had foundered.

When Captain Eph and the boy were at the extreme southern point of the ledge, looking back at the tower, Sidney asked in a tone of wonderment:

"How did they build the light-house on these rocks?"

"Well, I'll allow it was a pretty tough job; but nothing to be compared with what the Board has done in other places. Now I was reading, not a great while ago, in one of the books the inspector sends us, about their building a tower on a rock off the coast of Oregon called Tillamook. Putting one up here wasn't a marker alongside the trouble they had with that, because there wasn't many days in the summer when a full crew couldn't work here."

"And was Tillamook Rock worse than this ledge, sir?" Sidney asked.

"Why bless your heart, lad, Carys' Ledge ain't to be compared with it, 'cording to what I've read. It's just one big stone, so to speak, standin' high out of fifteen fathom of water, an' a full mile from the mainland. As I remember, it's located twenty miles south of the mouth of the Columbia River. It seems, 'cordin' to the printed story, that that 'ere rock was split in two, with a wide crack running east an' west, an' the top of it was about a hundred feet above the level of the sea. Nothin' larger than fifty foot square could be built on it, an' it was a mighty ticklish job for even sailormen to get a footin' there, even in the fairest of fair weather. Why, the foreman of the first crew that went off was drowned when the natives thereabouts allowed that the sea was calm. That put a damper, so to speak, on the work; but the Board was bound to have a light there, an' when they get their minds set on a thing, it's pretty sure to be brought about."

"If I remember rightly, it was sometime in October of 1879, when the steam tender landed four men with drills, hammers, and such like, to say nothing of provisions, fuel, a stove, an' some canvas for them to make a shanty of. There those poor, wretched creeters hung to the rock like starfish, not able to do much of anything more than keep themselves from tumbling off into the water. It was three days before they got five other men an' a small derrick on to that blessed rock, an' for near to two weeks they had nothin' to shelter them from the rain and the spray but that 'ere square of canvas they had carried out."

"I wonder it didn't blow away," Sidney said thoughtfully.

"Ay, so it would, lad, if their first work hadn't been to put ring-bolts in the rock, an' lash it down to them."

"Didn't they do anything all those two weeks, except cling to the rock, sir?"

"Oh, yes, they managed to chisel out a kind of a hole at one side where they could bolt some timbers to the solid foundation, an' cover them with canvas. That was enough to give 'em a place to crawl into when the sea ran too high; but look you, lad; I ain't certain that I'm tellin' this story straight, so supposin' we go back to the watch-room, an' I'll give it to you set down in print, the same as I read it, then there won't be any mistake."

It was not pleasant to be scrambling about on the ledge while the fog was yet so dense as to be very nearly like rain, and Sidney was well pleased to accede to the proposition.

When they were come to the watch-room Captain Eph gave to the lad the book in which the remainder of the story of Tillamook Rock light could be found, and Sidney read the following, as it had been written by Mr. Johnson, chief clerk of the Light-House Board:

"After setting up the main derrick and cutting a pathway up the face of the rock, they opened a bench around it by suspending the workmen on staging supported by bolts let into the rock's crest. The bench once formed, the reduction was pushed to the center. The outer surface of the rock was easily removed with moderate charges of black powder, but the nucleus was hard and firm, and giant powder was necessary to open the mass, when large charges of black powder acted satisfactorily."

"The working party, in spite of their rude, uncomfortable quarters, worked diligently through the winter with good results. But the work was much delayed by spells of weather so bad that little could be done. The coast was visited by a tornado in January, which caused the waves, reflected from the rock, to be carried by the wind over its crest, so that for many days continuously the receding floods poured over the eastern slope, making work impossible."

"On one such day this cataract carried away the supply-house, and even endangered the quarters of the working party. For more than two weeks at this time it was impossible for the steam-tender

which supplied their wants to cross the bar at the mouth of the Columbia River to go to their assistance; when, after sixteen days, communication was reopened, the party was found to be safe, but much in want of fresh provisions. These were supplied by an endless line running between the mast of the supply-vessel and a ring-bolt driven into the top of the rock, in water-tight casks suspended from a traveler by slings, which was made to move along the line.

"In May the top of the rock was leveled and a foundation made about 88 feet above the sea, and, on the 31st, three masons, four derricks, a small engine, and the appliances for laying the masonry, were landed. The stone, a fine grained, compact basalt, quarried near Portland and cut to dimensions by contract, was delivered at Astoria and shipped to the rock on the tender. The first cargo was landed on June 17; on the 22nd the corner-stone was laid, and then the rest of the material was shipped to the rock as the weather permitted.

"The light is forty-eight feet above the base of the tower and 136 feet above sea-level. It was shown for the first time on February 1, 1881. If it had been finished a month earlier it would possibly have saved the English iron bark *Lupata* of 1,039 tons burden, which was dashed to pieces on the main shore, not a mile from the light-house, with a loss of the vessel, its freight, and every one of the twenty persons on board. The bark came so near the rock that the creaking of the blocks and the voices of the officers giving orders were distinctly heard, but the night was so dark that nothing could be seen except her lights. The superintendent of construction had a bon-fire built on the rock as soon as possible, but the vessel was probably lost before the signal could be seen. It was on this night that the working party lost their supply-house and came so near losing their quarters, if not their lives."

"Of course I have seen a good many light-houses," Sidney said as he finished reading that which has been set down; "but I never understood before how much labor must be done, and how many dangers met before the lamps can be in position to point out the way to sailors."

"There's a good deal to this business that those ashore don't give heed to," Captain Eph replied. "After the lamps are ready for lightin' there must be men hired to take care of 'em, an' if you'll look a bit further back in that book, you'll see that the Board don't pick up anybody as keeper who is loafin' around out of a job."

The old man turned the leaves until having found the matter to which he referred, and then said as if announcing some important discovery:

"Jest read that 'ere, an' then you'll know more about the kind of men who have charge of lights in this country than you ever did before," and Sidney read aloud:

"The class of men from whom keepers are selected is so good that the punishment of dismissal is infrequently inflicted. But it follows swiftly in two cases. A keeper found intoxicated is not only summarily dismissed the service, but he is instantly ejected from the station; and a keeper who allows his light to go out is dismissed without regard to his excuse or his previous good conduct.

"The Board considers it the duty of every light keeper to stand by his light as long as the light-house stands, and that for him to desert it when in danger is as cowardly as for a soldier to leave his guns on the advance of an enemy.

"His failure to keep his light burning, especially in time of danger, may cause the wreck of vessels looking for it, and result in the loss of much property and many lives.

"Keepers are trained to consider the care of the light and the light-house property their paramount duty, beyond any personal consideration; and the *esprit de corps* is such that instances have happened where the keepers on duty have, as in the case of the first light on Minot's Ledge, gone down with their light-house and died at their post; others, where the keeper has saved his lens, letting his family shift for themselves; and there are repeated instances where the keeper has saved his light-house property and lost his own.

"An instance of heroism is that of the keepers of Sharp's Island light-house, in Chesapeake Bay. It was lifted from its foundations, thrown over on its side, and carried away by ice early in February, 1881. The keeper and his assistant clung to the fallen house, and, although one of their

boats remained uninjured, they were adrift in the bay sixteen and a half hours without fire or food, always in imminent danger, as the heavy floating ice often piled up against and threatened to swamp the house. It grounded, however, on an island shortly after midnight, at high tide, and was full of water.

"Being satisfied that it would not float off again, the two keepers went ashore in their boat, and when the tide had fallen they returned, saved and took to the shore the lens, its pedestal, the oil, and library, much damaged by water, and even the empty oilcans, and then reported the facts through their inspector to the Board.

"Meantime the keepers of another light-house, fearing the ice, had deserted their post, and gone on shore. The fact that no vessels could have needed their lights while the ice remained unbroken, and that they returned to their post when the danger had passed, did not avail them. So soon as the fact of their desertion was determined they were dismissed the service, and the two keepers who had spent those terrible hours afloat in Sharp's Island light-house, and then saved its apparatus, were highly complimented by a letter direct from the Board itself, and then were appointed to the deserters' places.

"The appointment of light-house keepers is restricted to persons between the ages of eighteen and fifty, who can read, write, and keep accounts, are able to do the requisite manual labor, to pull and sail a boat, and have enough mechanical ability to make the necessary minor repairs about the premises, and keep them painted, whitewashed, and in order. After three months of service, the appointee is examined by an inspector, who, if he finds that he has the qualities needed at that especial station, certifies that fact to the Light-House Board, when, upon its approval, the full appointment is issued by the Treasury Department.

"Although but one grade of keeper is recognized by law, usage has divided keepers into a number of grades, with different pay as well as different duties, and with promotion running through the various grades. At one light-house there may be but one keeper; at another, a principal keeper and an assistant; and there is a station where there is a principal keeper with four assistants, the fourth having the lowest grade and the lowest pay, and the others having been appointed at that grade, and promoted as merit was shown and vacancies occurred; or they may have been transferred and promoted from another station.

"Although persons are appointed to the service and assigned to a given station, they are frequently transferred from one station to another, as the interest of the service may demand, and while it is usual to consult a keeper's wishes in his assignments, there is nothing in the regulations to prevent the transfer of a man appointed in Maine to a station in Georgia; and occasionally keepers are, with their own consent, transferred from one district to another at a great distance. Young men who have seen some sea service are preferred as assistants at the larger stations; and at stations requiring but one keeper, retired sea captains or mates who have families are frequently selected.

"Keepers are forbidden to engage in any business which can interfere with their presence at their stations, or with the proper and timely performance of their light-house duties; but it is no unusual thing to find a keeper working at his station as a shoemaker, tailor, or in some similar capacity, and there are light keepers who fill a neighboring pulpit, who hold commissions as justice of the peace, and there are still others who do duty as school teachers without neglecting their light-houses.

"The Board has done much to make keepers comfortable. They are furnished with quarters for themselves, and in certain cases for their families, and when so far distant from market as to make its carriage equal or exceed its cost, with fuel and rations. Suitable boats are furnished stations inaccessible by land; and at those stations on shore, distant from markets, barns are built for their cattle and horses. Something also has been done for the intellectual needs of the keepers and their families by supplying them with libraries. These are arranged in cases so constructed that they make rather a neat appearance when set upright on a table, and they need only to be closed and locked to be ready for transportation. They contain on an average about fifty volumes each. One of these libraries is left at a station for some three months, when it is exchanged and passed on to another station. This



is usually done when the inspector makes his quarterly inspection; so each of the stations to which libraries are furnished sees some two hundred different books each year."

"Now you can see that we keepers must have some backbone to us, else we couldn't get the appointment, or, getting one, wouldn't hold it very long," Captain Eph said in a tone of satisfaction when Sidney ceased reading, and the lad, at a loss for reply to such a remark, asked:

"Are you all sailormen here?"

"Ay, lad, an' have all been soldiers – there's no need of tellin' you that much in Sammy's case. I've been cap'n of a fisherman nigh to ten years, an' my last cruise Uncle Zenas sailed with me as cook, while Sammy gave an imitation of bein' mate. We went inter the army together, an' have grown up amongst each other, so to speak, till we're jest like three Siamese twins. You won't ever hear any yippin' or scoldin' from us, for – "

"Ahoy there!" came in angry tones from the kitchen. "Are you goin' to let a good dinner go to waste jest because you're too lazy to come down an' eat it? I don't count on keepin' the table set a great while longer, for I want things kind'er ship-shape in case Sonny's father should tumble in on us unexpected-like!"

"That's Uncle Zenas," Captain Eph said in a whisper. "You might think, to hear him howl, that he'd lost his temper; but bless you, lad, he's as mild as a suckin' dove."

"I suppose we ought to go down as soon as we can," Sidney suggested timidly, "for even if he is mild, it sounds as if he was growing angry every minute."

Uncle Zenas was shouting to Mr. Peters, speaking more sharply than he had to the keeper, and Captain Eph said with a feeble attempt at a smile:

"I reckon we'll mosey along, lad, jest to keep him from worryin'," and the cook's superior officer made all haste to gain the kitchen, Sidney following close at his heels.

## CHAPTER IV

### REPAIRING THE MOTOR BOAT

If Uncle Zenas had really lost his temper because the keeper and first assistant had not answered the summons to dinner as quickly as he thought they should have done, there was no trace of anger on his fat, placid face when Captain Eph and Sidney entered the kitchen.

Mr. Peters had moved so rapidly after the cook called, that he was already at the table, apparently ready to make a vigorous attack on the food before him; but waiting for Captain Eph to ask a blessing upon the food, as was the regular custom.

As a rule the old keeper's words were few at such a time, but on this day he prayed at considerable length that the lad who had so suddenly come among them be kept from sin and bodily harm, and that the father's mind be relieved speedily from the burden of grief which weighted it.

During the unusually long prayer Mr. Peters had been moving uneasily in his chair, and no sooner was the last word spoken than he asked abruptly:

"Have we got any gasoline among the stores, Captain Eph?"

"If Uncle Zenas hasn't wasted it there should be a couple of gallons left over from the last lot I bought with our own money. It does seem strange that the Board can't be brought around to the belief that it's cheaper to use an oil stove in the summer, than be messin' with coal, which is unhandy to get into the tower, an' bad stowin' in sich small quarters as ours. Why did you ask, Sammy?"

"I was thinkin' that if we didn't speak some kind of a craft pretty soon, an' I got the lad's boat into trim, he an' I might run over to town. The way I look at it, we're bound to get that report into the inspector's hands right away, else the *West Wind* may have gone to Porto Rico an' back before word can be sent to her captain."

"I ain't so certain but that might be a bit risky," Captain Eph said thoughtfully. "If we could leave Sonny behind, where there's no chance of his comin' to harm, it would be all right; but neither of us know how to run the motor."

"If we picked a fine day, it ought'er be done without risk to anybody, for I'm allowin' the craft could make the round trip in four hours, an' give us time to run up to the post-office," Mr. Peters replied eagerly, and it could readily be understood that he had already arranged the details in his own mind.

"How long will it take you to put the boat in shape, Sammy?" Uncle Zenas asked, after waiting in vain for some word from the keeper.

"If the weather holds as it is now, I can have her in prime condition day after to-morrow. Think you could run her a dozen miles or more, lad?" he asked of Sidney, and the latter replied without hesitation:

"Surely I could! The motor hasn't been hurt any, and it was working all right when I came in here."

"Then this is the way I look at the sitewation, Captain Eph," the first assistant began, waving his knife in the air as if to attract attention. "This 'ere fog mull may hang on for a week or ten days, an' since I've been on the ledge I've known the smother to last a full two weeks without liftin' enough to show a man the end of his own nose. It stands to reason we can't hail any craft that we ain't able to see."

"Are you crazy enough to drag that 'ere little shaver off in a boat while the weather is like this?" Captain Eph asked sternly. "If we had a fog-horn or even a bell, it would be a bit different; but as it is I wouldn't care to make a try at it."

"Of course I'm not quite so wild as that. Allowin' that we don't hail anything before the fog lifts, an' there ain't much chance we will. Then say there's nothin' in sight when the smother blows

off? Wouldn't it be better to strike out for the post-office, instead of waitin' on the chance of sightin' a fisherman?"

"I'm bound, as a truthful man, to say you've got the right of it, Sammy," Captain Eph replied; "but I'm wonderin' whether we're warranted in sendin' the lad on sich a voyage."

"If Mr. Peters went with me, sir, it doesn't seem as if there would be any great danger," Sidney suggested, and after a long pause the keeper announced his decision.

"Keep right at work on the boat, Sammy, an' if she's in good condition when the fog lifts, we'll argue the matter a little; but I ain't willin' to agree off hand that it shall be done."

The first assistant appeared to be satisfied with this questionable promise. He at once began to explain in detail how he proposed to perform the necessary labor on the motor boat, and where it would be possible to get the needed materials.

Sidney listened intently until Mr. Peters had exhausted the subject, and then he asked timidly of the keeper:

"Did you say, sir, that you hadn't any fog signal?"

"Ay, lad, them was my very words. You've been over pretty much the whole of this 'ere ledge, an' I reckon you didn't see anything that looked like one, eh?"

"No, sir; but when I came in here, before seeing the tower, I heard what I thought was a fog signal, and it has been going ever since."

"True for you, my lad, but what you heard, an' are hearin' now, is the whistlin' buoy, anchored off here a couple of miles to the east'ard, an' I reckon you're enough of a sailor to know what sich things are."

"I've heard them often; but never knew how the noise could be got out of a buoy which had no person to attend it."

"When you have the time there's nothin' to hinder your readin' what the Board says about whistlin' buoys; but I won't promise that you'll be any the wiser after doin' it, for in all these years I haven't been able to get it through my head, though I've figgered out a gen'ral idee of how she works. The top of the buoy is shaped a good deal like a pear, an' measures about twelve feet across the widest part. Inside the upper part, an' runnin' down into the sea to a depth of thirty-two feet, is an iron pipe thirty-three inches across it. Right at the very top of the pipe, an' showin' above the whole thing, is a 10-inch locomotive whistle, connected with some little tubes, which the inspector says make a piston-and cylinder movement, whatever that may be.

"Of course these 'ere buoys are anchored in deep water, an' it stands to reason that they rise an' fall on the waves, consequently the water inside the big pipe pumps up an' down, compressin' the air till it jest nat'rally has to escape through the whistle, makin' the noise. The whole thing was invented by a man named Courtenay, an' I'm bound to say he must have had a big head on his shoulders to think out sich a contrivance. It may be, lad, that you'll understand it better by readin' from the report; but I can't tackle the big words, an' don't know a piston or an apex from the Queen of Sheba, consequently it don't do me any great amount of good to puzzle over 'em.

"The Government has got eighty-eight whistling buoys in position, an' every blessed one of 'em cost nigh to eleven hundred dollars. Then there are one hundred an' thirty-nine bell-buoys which cost three hundred dollars apiece, an' five thousand one hundred an' eighty-three other buoys costin' different prices, so you see, lad, that outside the light-house part of the service, it takes a big pile of money to buy buoys an' keep 'em in position."

"An' that's only one little end of the expense," Uncle Zenas added in a tone of solemnity. "When you come to figger up the whole business it'll be easy to see how much responsibility we of Carys' Ledge carry on our shoulders, which reminds me that it's time you folks got up from the table an' let me have a chance to put the kitchen to rights."

"And I'll help you to do it!" Sidney cried gleefully, for it pleased him to have an opportunity of assisting those who had been so kind to him.

"You needn't raise a finger, lad," the cook replied quickly, and he added with a glance at his comrades, "I must say, though, that this is the first time in all the years I've served as second assistant of this 'ere light, that anybody has offered to lend a hand, no matter how much work there was to be done."

Captain Eph peered through the window much as though it was in the highest degree necessary he should gaze out upon the fog just at that moment, and Mr. Peters scuttled down the ladder to his work of boat-repairing, as if the moments had suddenly become very precious.

Despite Uncle Zenas' protests, Sidney did his full share toward putting the kitchen to rights, and when that had been done he began to realize that he needed yet more sleep.

"Gettin' sand in your eyes, eh?" Captain Eph asked with a laugh, as he noted the expression on the boy's face. "Wa'al, I kind'er allowed you'd find out before a great while that you hadn't staid in bed long enough, an' now, seem's you've put in a tolerable hearty dinner, I'd recommend that you turn in for the night."

"But it is only noon," Sidney protested feebly.

"It wouldn't make any difference if it was only sunrise, for you need a heap more sleep than you've had, an' it'll do you a world of good to snooze from now till mornin'. Stay in bed even if your eyes are wide open, an' you'll feel the better for it to-morrow."

"Ain't it about time that you made up your mind where the lad is to sleep?" Uncle Zenas asked, and Captain Eph replied as if astonished because such a question had been asked:

"He's to have my bed, of course; where else should he sleep?"

"But what are you to do?"

"There are two beds for three of us, an' one is on watch all the time, so there's no call for much figgerin'."

"A blanket on the floor will be enough for me," Sidney cried, distressed at the idea of depriving the keeper of his bed; but Captain Eph said in a tone of authority:

"You must leave me to run this 'ere light, lad, 'cordin' to my own idees, seein's how the Government put me in charge, an' I say that you're to use my room so long as you stay with us."

Then the keeper led the way up-stairs, and Sidney could do no less than follow him. Ten minutes later the visitor was sleeping soundly, and Uncle Eph was creeping softly down the iron ladder to insist that the first assistant cease work on the boat temporarily, lest he disturb the tired lad.

"I'll have to stop if you say so, Cap'n, for you're the boss here; but it does seem as if I might keep putterin' 'round so long as I don't use hammer or axe," Mr. Peters said pleadingly. "This 'ere work is mighty important if we count on gettin' word to the lad's father."

"You mustn't take any chances of wakenin' him, Sammy," the keeper said impressively. "I'm allowin' that the chief thing is to get him inter shape, an' sleep is what he needs, so put up your tools an' come inter the kitchen, where we'll have a friendly smoke."

Mr. Peters obeyed, because he did not really dare to do otherwise, knowing from past experience that the keeper was jealous of his authority, and soon the three were sitting in Uncle Zenas' quarters, conversing in whispers lest Sidney's slumbers be disturbed, as they smoked their pipes in peaceful content.

It was Uncle Zenas who first broke the silence by saying:

"I allow it'll be a couple of weeks at the best, before the lad can hear from his father, even if you should send that 'ere report to the inspector this very day."

"Yes, it'll be all of that," Captain Eph replied thoughtfully.

"An' at this season of the year we're likely to have a cold spell any time," the cook continued, and Mr. Peters cried impatiently:

"We all know that, Uncle Zenas. If there's anything you want'er say, why not come right out with it, instead of beatin' clean around the bush?"

"I was thinkin' of that little shaver up-stairs. He ain't rigged to stand very much cold weather, an' he's so terribly small that he'd get lost in one of our coats, yet he's got to have somethin' of the kind."

"I declare I'd never thought of that, Uncle Zenas, an' yet you're in the right," Captain Eph exclaimed. "But what's to be done about it?"

"I was thinkin' if you'd let me have that uniform coat of your'n which you've outgrown, I'd cut it down to fit him," the cook replied modestly, for it was well known that, as Mr. Peters often expressed it, "he was a master hand with a needle."

"You can have anything I've got, Uncle Zenas, if it's to be used for that lad. I don't understand why it is; but the little shaver has got inter my heart mighty deep, even though he's only been here since daylight," and the keeper gazed out into the fog as if he saw there a picture of a "little shaver" who called him "father" many, many years ago, but who now, with his mother, awaited the old man on the shores of that golden river which neither pain, nor sorrow, nor sin can cross.

"S'posen you go after it. I can be rippin' the seams apart while we're smokin'."

Captain Eph went softly up the ladder, tip-toeing his way across the floor of the chamber so softly that those in the kitchen below failed to detect the slightest sound, and when he returned he held in his hand a very respectable looking uniform coat.

"But that's your second-best!" Uncle Zenas exclaimed.

"Yes, yes, don't you allow I've got sense enough to know it? The other is worn so bad it wouldn't pay to make over, an', besides, I've been thinkin' of gettin' a new one, so you'd better take this."

A certain moisture in the old keeper's eyes prevented the cook from making any comment on what seemed like the sacrifice of a good garment, as he set about ripping it apart, and once more Mr. Peters detailed his plans for repairing the motor boat, insisting every now and then that there was no reason why he should not be at work upon it, instead of idling the time away.

When it was time for him to make ready the evening meal, Uncle Zenas went to and fro softly, taking especial care that there should be no clattering of dishes, and a quarter of an hour before sunset Captain Eph and Mr. Peters crept like mice up the stairs to the lantern, without disturbing Sidney's slumbers.

It was a rule which the keeper and his assistants had themselves made, that Uncle Zenas should go on watch immediately after supper, to be relieved by Mr. Peters at eleven o'clock, with Captain Eph to do duty from three in the morning until sunrise; therefore as soon as the evening meal had been eaten and the kitchen put to rights, the cook ascended to the watch-room.

Mr. Peters went to bed immediately that he might be ready and fit for duty at the regular time; but Captain Eph remained a full half hour in his own room watching the sleeping lad, before he lay down on the cook's bed.

It was yet an hour before sunrise next morning, and Captain Eph was poring over the "rules and regulations" as he had done every night for many years, when he heard a slight rustling of garments at the head of the ladder, and, looking around in surprise, saw Sidney, who stood as if asking permission to remain.

"What are you doin' out of bed at this time in the mornin', Sonny?" Captain Eph asked in what he intended should be a sharp tone, and Sidney replied:

"I have been wide awake for an hour, sir, and thought perhaps you would be willing for me to sit here with you. I've slept since noon, and a fellow can't stay in bed all the time, no matter how tired he may have been."

"So you concluded to come on watch, eh?"

"Why couldn't I?" the lad cried excitedly. "Even though I don't know anything about the light, I've surely got sense enough to call one of the crew if anything went wrong."

"There's no question in my mind but that you could take the trick all right; but I've got so in the habit of gettin' up at three o'clock in the mornin' that I couldn't sleep after that time, no matter how hard I might try. Sit ye down, lad, an' tell me what you think of Carys' Ledge light."

"Of course I don't know anything about other light-houses, sir; but I'm certain there isn't a nicer crew anywhere on the coast, than can be found right here," and Sidney laid his hand on the old man's shoulder with something very like a caress.

Captain Eph looked toward the trap-door as if to make certain neither of his mates were astir, and then, lifting the little lad on his knee, he rocked him to and fro as one would a baby, crooning a bit of an old sea song, until Sidney almost believed the old sailor was crying.

Until day broke, dark and forbidding because of the fog which enveloped the tower until it was impossible to get even a glimpse of the ocean, Captain Eph held the lad on his knee while he spun the wildest and weirdest of sea yarns, and when the time came to extinguish the lights, Sidney detained the old keeper long enough to ask if he might be allowed to stand watch with him while he remained on Carys' Ledge.

"Indeed you may, Sonny, if so be you don't come to believe that it's more comfortable in bed, an' I'll show you how to care for the lens. Sammy shall snooze as long as he likes this mornin', an' we two will put the lantern in proper shape."

Nothing, except an opportunity to see his father, could have given Sidney more pleasure than this permission, and eagerly did he follow Captain Eph up the narrow ladder, wondering not a little why the old man took with him the book of instructions to light-keepers.

"It lacks nigh to ten minutes of sunrise," Captain Eph said as he consulted his watch after they were in the lantern, "an' if it so be you're goin' to stand watch with me, it's time you knew somethin' about the rules. Here's number 123: 'Lights must be lighted punctually at sunset, and must be kept burning at full intensity until sunrise.' Do you get it, Sonny?"

"I should be able to remember that much," Sidney replied with a laugh.

"Then here's rule 124: 'All preparations must be made early, that there may be no delay in lighting.'"

"I can keep that in mind and not half try, Captain Eph."

"Number 125 is longer; but it ain't hard to catch the general idee of it. 'When the light is extinguished in the morning the keeper must hang the lantern curtains and immediately begin to put the apparatus in order for relighting. While doing this the linen aprons provided for the keeper's use must be worn, that the lens may not suffer from contact with the wearing apparel. The illuminating apparatus must be carefully covered before the cleaning is begun.' Now here's Sammy's apron for you, an' this one is mine," Captain Eph said, as he took the articles in question from a locker, and showed Sidney how to put one on. "These 'ere are the lantern curtains which we'll hang up at sunrise."

It was quite like a game, Sidney thought, and he was in high glee by the time Captain Eph was ready to read his rule 126.

"Here she is, an' there's a good bit of meanin' to it, lad. 'The lens and the glass of the lantern must be cleaned daily and always kept in the best possible condition. Before beginning to clean the lens it must be brushed with the feather brush to remove all dust. It must then be wiped with a soft linen cloth, and finally polished with buff-skin. If there is oil or grease on any part, it must be taken off with a linen cloth, moistened with spirits of wine, and then polished with a buff-skin. Under no circumstances must a skin which has been wet or damp be used, as this will scratch the lens.'"

"The Board seems to be mighty particular about how the work shall be done," Sidney said with a laugh, and Captain Eph replied:

"If they wasn't we shouldn't have sich lights in this country as we have got. I ain't claimin' that we're the only nation on the face of the earth who knows how to light a coast; but I will say, an' I've heard the same from masters of foreign vessels, that we do the thing up brown regardless of expense. Listen to rule 127, an' than I reckon it'll be time to turn off the light: 'To clean reflectors, first dust them and then rub with a buff-skin, lightly dusted with rouge powder, kept in a small double bag of muslin; then rub lightly with another skin, and finally with a third, which should be passed over the reflector in a light, quick manner with a circular motion. Leakage of gas from the pipe of the

stove used in the watch-room should be carefully guarded against, as this gas will badly tarnish a reflector.' Now we'll turn off the light, stop the clock, an' get to work," and Captain Eph suited the motions to the words.

Sidney stood ready with the lantern curtains until the keeper should show him how they ought to be hung, for he had come to believe there was a rule for the most trifling labor, when an exclamation of surprise caused him to turn toward the door in the floor, and he saw the head and shoulders of Mr. Peters, who was surveying the scene with a comical expression on his face.

"Have I lost my job?" he cried with a laugh, and Captain Eph replied grimly:

"You've always been complainin' that you couldn't get sleep enough in this 'ere light-house, Sammy, an' I thought now was a good time to give you your fill."

"I only wish I'd knowed it, 'cause the bed was good enough for me till breakfast time," Mr. Peters said ruefully, and Sidney asked:

"Must I give up your apron, sir?"

"Bless you, no, lad, we've got spare ones in the locker, an' I'll take one of them, for I reckon Cap'n Eph will want me to do my share of the work so long as I stay on the ledge."

Then the keepers set about cleaning the apparatus in good earnest, and Sidney was able to lend a hand now and then with such effect that the morning's task was completed before Uncle Zenas' voice could be heard from below as he cried:

"Are you men never comin' down to breakfast? What's the use of slavin' my head off, if you're goin' to hang 'round up there till everything gets cold? It would try the temper of a saint to cook for a crew like you!"

"Now, now, Uncle Zenas, there's no need of wastin' so much breath, for we were all ready to come down before you spoke the first word, an' I'm afraid you'll never know what the temper of a saint may be," Captain Eph replied mildly as he led the way down the ladder, and when the three were in the kitchen the cook asked:

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