THE PILLAR OF LIGHT

LOUIS TRACY

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THE PILLAR OF LIGHT

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THE GULF ROCK LIGHTHOUSE.
SECTION.

The Pillar of Light

By

Louis Tracy

Author of "The Wings of the Morning"

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." Matthew vii: 25

New York
GERARD J. CLODE
156 Fifth Avenue
1904

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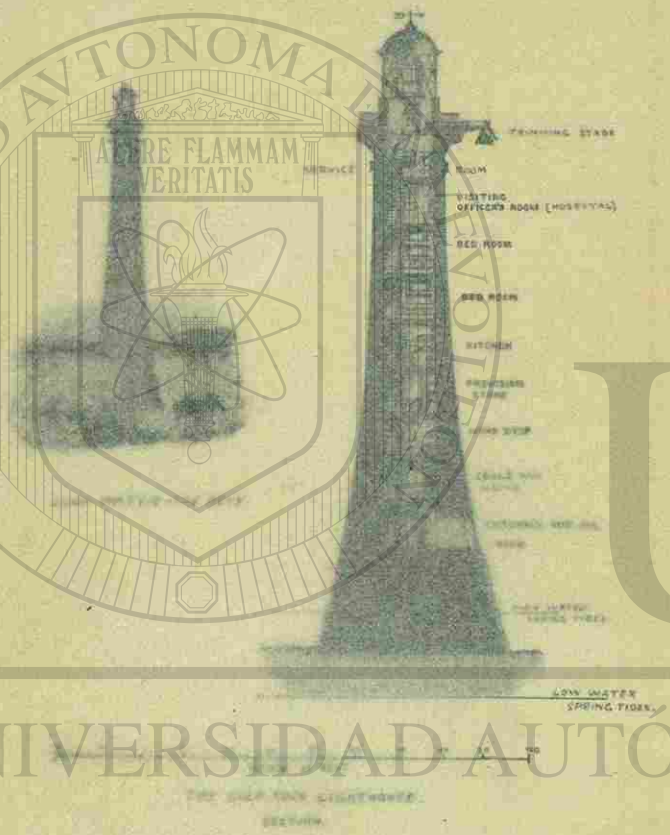

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May, 1904

CAPILLA ALFONSINA

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Plimpton Press Norwood Mass.

A. 4851

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CHAPTER I

FLOTSAM

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

Overhead, the magnificent lantern, its eight-ringed circle of flame burning at full pressure, illumined the drifting vapor with an intensity that seemed to be born of the sturdy granite pillar of which it was the fitting diadem. Hard and strong externally as the everlasting rock on which it stood, — replete within with burnished steel and polished brass, great cylinders and powerful pumps, — the lighthouse thrust its glowing torch beyond the reach of the most daring wave. Cold, dour, defiant it looked. Yet its superhuman eye sought to pierce the very heart of the fog, and the furnace-white

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glare, concentrated ten thousand-fold by the encircling hive of the dioptric lens, flung far into the gloom a silvery cloak of moon-like majesty.

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

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

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

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

He was engaged, it is true, in the unromantic action

of filling his pipe, — a simple thing, beloved alike of poets and navvies, — yet his eyes drank in the mute glory of the scene, and, captive to the spell of the hour, he murmured aloud:

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

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

"Did you hail me?" he inquired.

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

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

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

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

He left a piece of good advice behind him.

"If I was you, cap'n," he said, "I'd turn in. Jones

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is feelin' A1 this mornin'. He comes on at eight. You ought to be dead beat after your double spell of the last two days. I'll keep breakfast back until three bells (9.30 A.M.), an' there's fresh eggs an' haddick."

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

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

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

The presence of the steamship, a tiny dull spot on the glowing picture, peopled the void with life and banished poetry with the thinly sheeted ghosts of the fog. In a little more than an hour she would be abreast of the Gulf Rock Light. The watcher believed — was almost certain, in fact—that she was the *Princess Royal*, homeward bound from New York to Southampton. From her saloon deck those enthusiasts who had risen early

enough to catch a first glimpse of the English coast were already scanning the trimly rugged outlines of the Scilly Isles, and searching with their glasses for the Land's End and the Lizard.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Even yet a landsman would have stared insolently in that direction and declared that there was naught

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

"Jim!" he cried.

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

"What do you make of that?"

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

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

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

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the current, voyage forth again to the fabled realm of Lyonnesse.

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

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

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

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

Jim kept his eye glued to the telescope.

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

"That is what I had in mind."

Jim lowered the glass.

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

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

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

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

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

"Jones won't hear of it."

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

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

He focused the telescope again, gave a moment's scrutiny to the steamer, and then re-examined the boat. The stillness of the morning was solemn. Beyond the lazy splash of the sea against the Gulf Rock itself, and an occasional heavy surge as the swell revealed and instantly smothered some dark tooth of the reef, he heard no sound save the ring of Stephen Brand's boots on the iron stairs as he descended through the oil-room,

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the library and office, to the first bedroom, in the lower bunk of which lay Mr. Jones, keeper and chief, recovering from a sharp attack of sciatica.

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

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

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

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

Watching the boat, Jim centered her in the telescopic field, and looked anxiously for a sharp arrow-shaped

ripple on the surface of the sea. The breeze which had vanquished the fog now kissed the smiling water into dimples, and his keen sight was perplexed by the myriad wavelets.

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

Nearly half an hour passed. The *Princess Royal*, a fine vessel of yacht-like proportions, sprinting for the afternoon train, was about eight miles away, sou'west by west. According to present indications steamer and derelict would be abreast of the Gulf Rock Light simultaneously, but the big ship, of course, would give a wide berth to a rock-strewn shoal.

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

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

A clang of metal beneath caught their ears — the

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opening of the stout doors, forty feet above high-water mark, from which a series of iron rungs, sunk in the granite wall, led to the rocky base.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Ay, it's smooth enough."

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

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

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

A light splash came to them, and, a few seconds later, Brand's head and shoulders swung into view. After a dozen vigorous breast strokes he rolled over on to his

side, and waved his left hand to the two men high above him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The head-keeper, vaguely excited, peered through his glass. Both boat and swimmer were in the annular field. Brand had resumed the breast stroke. The swing of the tide carried the broken bow towards him.

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He was not more than the boat's length distant when he dived suddenly and the cormorants flapped aloft. A black fin darted into sight, leaving a sharply divided trail in the smooth patch of water created by the turning of the derelict.

Jones was genuinely startled now.

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

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

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

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

Jim's first expletive died in his throat.

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

For a single instant they saw the dark hair and face of the man above the surface. The shark whirled about and rushed. Brand sank, and again the giant

man-eater writhed in agonized contortions and the sea showed masses of froth and dark blotches. The flutterings of the birds became irregular and alarmed. Their wheeling flights partly obscured events below. The gulls, screeching their fright, or it might be interest, kept close to the water, and the cormorants sailed in circles aloof.

Jones was pallid and streaming with perspiration.

"I wouldn't have had it happen for fifty quid," he groaned.

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

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

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

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

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

Jim was about to chant his thanks in other terms

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when his attention was caught by Brand's curious actions.

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

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

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

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

The rower stood up again, drove a boat-hook into

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

Jim closed the telescope with a snap.

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

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

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

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

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

The gulls and cormorants, filling the air with raucous

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cries, were rustling in rapid flight in the wake of the boat, darting ever and anon at the water or making daring pecks at the floating carcass.

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER II

A CHRISTENING

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

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

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

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

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

"A what-a?" roared the sailor, whose crudely developed nervous system was not proof against the jar

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A CHRISTENING

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

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

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

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

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

"A what-a?" roared the sailor, whose crudely developed nervous system was not proof against the jar

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of incredulity induced by this statement. Had Brand said "a tiger," he could not have exhibited greater concern.

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

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

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

He looked up to Jones.

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

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

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

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

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

With the rocking of the boat, the foul bilge-water

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

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

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

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

Jim handed the jug to his exhausted companion.

"Here, cap'n," he said, cheerfully. "Take a couple of mouthfuls of this. It'll warm the cockles of your

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heart. An' the sooner you shin up the ladder and get them soaked rags off you the better. Can you manage? It's a near thing for the kid, if not too late now."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Is it a he or a she?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Now, back up to the rock," said Brand. "I will dress and rejoin you quickly. The boat must be thoroughly examined and swabbed out: Jones will signal

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for help. Meanwhile, you might moor her tightly. When the tide falls she will be left high and dry."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Unconscious that he had stated the primordial thesis, he left the foragers alone. Hauling the sail out of the water, he discovered that the stern-board was missing, broken off probably when the mast fell. His trained scrutiny soon solved a puzzle suggested by the state of

the cordage. Under ordinary conditions, the upper part of the mast would either have carried the sail clean away with it or be found acting as a sort of sea-anchor at a short distance from the boat.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The weapon was duly delivered.

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

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

"Wot's he a-doin' of?" came the sharp demand.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"His teeth are like so many fixed bayonets. Of

course, you would like to keep 'em, but he would look fine in the museum. Plenty of folk in Penzance, especially visitors, would pay a bob a head to see him."

Brand paused in his labor.

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

"Do you mean to say —"

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

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

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

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

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

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which rejected the salty elements and took in only those parts of the compound needed by the blood. You follow me?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"That's your way of puttin' it," Jim was forced to

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

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

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

"Is there nothing left to help us?"

"Only this."

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

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

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

Brand passed a hand wearily across his forehead.

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

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

"Perhaps the baby's clothes are marked."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes. Here you are."

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

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

"I'm feared there's nothing else," said Jones. "I've not looked very carefully, as it'll take me all my time

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to get everything dry afore the tug comes. As for ironin', it can't be done. But my missus 'll see after her until somebody turns up to claim her."

"That may be never."

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

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

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

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

Jones made no protest. He knew that Brand's suggestion was a good one. And he promised silence with regard to the fight with the shark. Men in the lighthouse service are quick to grasp the motives which cause others to avoid publicity. They live sedate, lonely lives. The noise, the rush, the purposeless

activities of existence ashore weary them. They have been known to petition the Trinity Brethren to send them back to isolated stations when promoted to localities where the pleasures and excitements of a town were available.

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

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

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

"Breakfast ready, cap'n. Corfee, eggs an' haddick — fit for the Queen, God bless her! An' baby's had another pint of Jones's brew — Lord love her little eyes, though I haven't seen 'em yet. A minnit ago

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Jones sung down to me that the *Lancelot* has just cleared Carn du."

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

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

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

Brand explained matters, and hinted at his theory.

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

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

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

That evening a fisherman brought a note from Mrs. Sheppard. Among other things, she wrote that the baby's clothes were beautifully made and of a very ex-

pensive type. She was feverish, the doctor said, but the condition of her eyes and lips would account for this, apart from the effects of prolonged exposure.

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

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

"Trevillion," said Brand.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER III

THE SIGNAL

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

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

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

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

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

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

principles of gravitation as codified and arranged by a rocking boat.

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

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

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

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

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

She sat up suddenly.

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

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

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

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

Thus disparaged, Pollard defended himself and his craft.

"Me an' *Daisy* 'll sail to Gulf Light quicker'n any

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other two tubs in Penzance, missy. Her be a long run at this time o' year, but you'm get there all right, I 'xpect. Wi' a norrard breeze we'm be safe enough. If the wind makes 'ee c'n zee et comin', 'ee knaw."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A masterful young gentleman he looked, and one

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

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

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

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

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

"'This is a nice thing," he cried, when he came within speaking distance of the girl in the boat. "I manage to bamboozle the admiral out of three days' leave and I rush to Penzance to be told that Constance

and you are off to the Gulf Rock for the day. It is too bad of you, Enid."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He helped her down the stone steps.

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

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

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

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

"Will you be able to land?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was not all. He did not mention that, during a torpedo attack on a foggy night, he ran up to three battleships undefended by nets and stenciled his initials within a white square on five different parts of

their sleek hulls, thus signifying to an indignant admiral and three confounded captains (dictionary meaning of "confounded") that these leviathans had been ingloriously sunk at their moorings by torpedoes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Fine," agreed his nearest henchman. Then,

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catching the gloom of the captain's gaze after Stanhope's retreating figure, he added:

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

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

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

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

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

Everybody agreed that it was.

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

coach Jones was. They did: Jones's pints were retailed on the premises for money down.

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

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

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

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

But old Ben Pollard knew what he was about. Not until the granite pillar of the distant Gulf Rock opened up beyond Carn du was it necessary to turn the boat's

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head seawards. Even then, by steering close to the Runnelstone, they need not, during two-thirds of the time, be more than a mile or so distant from one of the many creeks in which they could secure shelter in case of a sudden change in the weather.

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

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

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

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

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

"She do look like snaw," he admitted.

"Well, what does that matter?"

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

"It be a bit risky," grumbled Ben.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"That is the 'Help wanted' signal," cried Constance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"With your pretty face and saucy ways, Enid," he said, "I shall have trouble enough to keep you in the nest without worrying as to the manner of your leaving it. Work at your drawing, by all means. Avoid color

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as the bane of true art. But where Connie and I live you shall live, until you choose to forsake us."

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

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

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

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

"Twenty minutes, Ben."

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

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

The fisherman was right. His trained senses perceived a distinct diminution in the volume of snow. Soon they could see fifty, a hundred, two hundred yards

ahead. On the starboard quarter they caught a confused rushing noise, like the subdued murmur of a millrace. The tide had covered the rock.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It was Stephen Brand.

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"Thank God!" murmured Constance.

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

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

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

He vanished.

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

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

"That will mean delay," cried Enid.

"Five or six hours at least, missy."

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

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

The fisherman told him the opinion he had formed.

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

"Ay, ay, sir."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER IV

THE VOICE OF THE REEF

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

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

When the two girls stood with Stephen Brand in the narrow entrance to the lighthouse, the gravity of their bright young faces was due solely to the fact that their

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father had announced the serious accidents which had befallen his assistants. No secret monitor whispered that fate, in her bold and merciless dramatic action, had roughly removed two characters from the stage to clear it for more striking events.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pollard grinned reassuringly.

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

So they settled it that way, all so simply.

A man sets up two slim masts a thousand miles apart and flashes comprehensible messages across the void. The multitude gapes at first, but soon accepts the thing

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as reasonable. "Wireless telegraphy" is the term, as one says "by mail."

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

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

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

"Oh, brave!" murmured Enid.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brand, adjusting his binoculars, scrutinized the boat.

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

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

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

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

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

Indeed, the protection of the stout plate glass, so thick and tough that sea-birds on a stormy night dashed themselves to painless death against it, was very welcome. Moreover, though neither of the girls would admit it, there was a sense of security here which was strangely absent when they looked into the abyss beneath the stone gallery. Constance balancing a telescope, Enid peering through the field-glasses, followed the progress of the *Daisy* in silence, but Brand's eyes wandered uneasily from the barometer, which had fallen rapidly during the past hour, to the cyclonic nimbus spreading its dark mass beyond the Seven Stones Lightship. The sun had vanished, seemingly for the day, and the indicator attached to the base of the wind vane overhead pointed now sou'west by west. It would not require much further variation to bring about a strong blow from the true southwest, a quarter responsible for most of the fierce gales that sweep the English Channel.

Nevertheless, this quick darting about of the fickle breeze did not usually betoken lasting bad weather. At the worst, the girls might be compelled to pass the night on the rock. He knew that the tug with the two relief men would make a valiant effort to reach the lighthouse at the earliest possible moment. When

the men joined him the girls could embark. As it was, the affair was spiced with adventure. Were it not for the mishap to the assistant-keepers the young people would have enjoyed themselves thoroughly. The new airt of the wind, too, would send the *Daisy* speedily back to port. This, in itself, justified the course he had taken. On the whole, a doubtful situation was greatly relieved. His face brightened. With a grave humor not altogether artificial, he cried:

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

"And poor me!" chimed in Enid.

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

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

"How?"

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

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

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

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

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

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They rang him downstairs by the correct call for "Meal served."

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

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

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

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

His amazement was complete when he encountered the redoubtable *Daisy* bowling home before a seven-

knot breeze. He instantly came round and ranged up to speaking distance. When he learnt what had occurred he readily agreed to return to Penzance in order to pick up the relief lighthouse-keepers, and thus save time in transferring them to the rock.

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

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

The people most concerned knew nothing of these proceedings.

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

"I don't see why they don't have decent windows," said Enid. "Of course it blows hard here in a gale,

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but just look at that tiny ventilator, no bigger than a ship's port-hole, with a double storm-shutter to secure it if you please, for all the world as if the sea rose so high!"

Constance took thought for a while.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"And what will you reply?"

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

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

Whereupon Constance laughed loud and long.

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

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

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

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

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

"What admiral?"

"Any old admiral."

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

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

This offered too good an opening to be resisted.

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

Brand looked up quizzically.

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

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

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

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

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

"And carry wands?" added the recovered Enid.

"And dress in velvet cloaks and buckled shoes?"

"And —"

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

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

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

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

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

Beneath, Brand wrote, with scholarly ease:

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

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

"Barometer falling. Temperature higher."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Enid clapped her hands.

"I am delighted," she exclaimed.

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

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

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

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

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CHAPTER V

THE HURRICANE

THEY descended into the service-room.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brand had not told her all the facts of that memorable

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He adjusted a switch in the instrument.

"I had no difficulty in constructing a diaphragm which would intercept all sounds," he said. "The struggle came when I wanted an agent which would distinguish and register a particular set of sounds, no matter what additional din might be prevalent at the same time. My hopes were wrecked so often that I began to despair, until I chanced one day to read how the high-tension induction coil could be tuned to dis-

regard electrical influences other than those issued at the same pitch. My anxiety, until I had procured and experimented with a properly constructed coil, was very trying, I assure you."

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

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

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

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

"Well, with this little chap on the bridge, the pointer would have told the captain unerringly. I don't suppose it will be thick whilst you are here, or you would see it pick up the distant blasts of a steamer long before we can hear them, and follow her course right round the arc of her passage. It is most interesting to watch its activity when there are several ships using their

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sirens. I have never had an opportunity of testing it on more than three vessels at once, but as soon as I could deduce a regular sequence in the seemingly erratic movements of the indicator, I marked the approach and passing of each with the utmost ease."

"Would that stop collisions at sea?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You will see," said her father. "You cannot imagine how the clock dawdles in this circumscribed

area. Work alone conquers it. Otherwise, men would quit the service after a month's experience."

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

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

He selected the requisite flags from a locker, the phrase he needed being coded. Soon the strong breeze was trying to tear the bunting from the cordage, and though they could not hear the three whistles with which the little yacht acknowledged the signal, they could easily see the jets of steam through their glasses.

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

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

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

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

Her father laughed.

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

Undauntedly, but much flurried by a sea ever increasing in strength as the force of the ebb tide encountered the resistance of the wind, the *Lapwing* held on. With wind and sea against her she would have made

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slow work of it. As it was, there was help forthcoming for both journeys unless the wind went back to the north again as rapidly as it had veered to the southwest.

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

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

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

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

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

"He has left Lady Margaret!" cried Constance.

"He never went home!" essayed Enid.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Abashed, Enid held her peace.

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

"Is all well?"

"Yes," he answered.

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

"All right," waved Brand.

The distant figure started again:

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

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Enid indulged in an extraordinary arm flourish.

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

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

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

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

"Good-bye," was the response.

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

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

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

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

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

"Good little boat!" said Brand. The crisis had passed. She was headed, at full speed, for the Bay. And not too soon. 'Ere she reached the comparative

shelter of Clement's Island she was swept three times by green water.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

They voted this an admirable notion. The girls enlivened the meal by relating to him the doings and sayings of current interest ashore during the past two months. By a queer coincidence, which he did not

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mention, his relief was again due within a week, just as on the occasion of Enid's first appearance on the rock. The fact struck him as singular. In all probability he would not return to duty. He had completed twenty-one years of active service. Now he would retire, and when the commercial arrangements for the auriscope were completed, he would take his daughters on a long-promised Continental tour, unless, indeed, matters progressed between Stanhope and Enid to the point of an early marriage.

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

Brand, the lighthouse-keeper, and Brand urging the claims of his adopted daughter, would be two very different persons.

Of course, all Penzance knew that he was a gentleman, a scientist in a small way, and a man of means: otherwise Constance and Enid would not have occupied the position they held in local society. Those unacquainted with English ways ofttimes make the mistake of rating a man's social status by the means he possesses or the manner of his life in London. No greater error could be committed. The small, exclusive county town, the community which registers the family connections of many generations, is the only

reliable index. Here, to be of gentle birth and breeding — not bad credentials even in the court of King Demos — confers Brahminical rank, no matter what the personal fortunes of the individual.

Brand, it is true, did not belong to a Cornish county family, but there were those who conned him shrewdly. They regarded him as a well-meaning crank, yet the edict went forth that his daughters were to be "received," and received they were, with pleasure and admiration by all save such startled elderly mammas as Lady Margaret Stanhope, who expected her good-looking son to contract a marriage which would restore the failing fortunes of the house.

All unconscious of the thoughts flitting through his brain, for Brand was busy trimming a spare lamp, the two girls amused themselves by learning the semaphore alphabet from a little hand-book which he found for them.

When the night fell, dark and lowering, the lamp was lighted. They had never before seen an eight-wicked concentric burner in use. The shore lighthouses with which they were better acquainted were illuminated by electricity or on the catoptric principle, wherein a large number of small Argand lamps, with reflectors, are grouped together.

To interest them, to keep their eyes and ears away from the low-water orgy of the reef, he explained to them the capillary action of the oil. Although they had learnt these things in school they had not realized the exactness of the statement that oil does not burn,

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but must first be converted into gas by the application of heat. On the Gulf Rock there were nearly 3,000 gallons of colza oil stored in the tanks beneath, colza being used in preference to paraffin because it was safer, and there was no storage accommodation apart from the lighthouse.

Requiring much greater heat than mineral oil to produce inflammable gas, the colza had to be forced by heavy pressure in the cistern right up to the edge of the wicks, and made to flow evenly over the rims of the burner, else the fierce flame would eat the metal discs as well.

He read them a little lecture on the rival claims of gas and electricity, and demonstrated how dazzlingly brilliant the latter could be on a dark, clear night by showing them the fine light on the Lizard.

"But in hazy weather the oil wins," he said, with the proper pride of every man in his own engine. "Fishermen sailing into Penzance along a course equidistant from the two points tell me that if they can see anything at all on a foggy night they invariably catch a dull yellow radiance from the rock, whilst the Lizard is invisible. The oil has more penetrative power. Its chemical combination is nearer the mean of nature's resources."

At the proper time he banished them to the kitchen to prepare dinner, a feast diverted from the hour of noon by the chances of the day. He adopted every expedient to keep them busy, to tire them physically and mentally, to render them so exhausted that they

would sleep in blissful calm through the ordeal to come.

As he could not leave the lamp, and they refused to eat apart from him, the dinner, in three courses, was a breathless affair. Going up and down five flights of stairs with soup, joint and pudding, whilst one carried the tray and the other swung a hand lantern in front, required time and exertion. They were cheerful as grigs over it.

Enid, whose turn it was to bring up the plates of tapioca, pleaded guilty to a slight sensation of nervousness.

"I could not help remembering," she said, "what an awful lot of dark iron steps there were beneath me. I felt as if something were creeping up quickly behind to grab me by the ankles."

"You should go up and down three times in the dark," was Brand's recipe. "When you quitted the door level for the third ascent you would cease to worry about impossible grabs."

Constance looked at her watch.

"Only eight o'clock! What a long day it has been," she commented.

"You must go to bed early. Sleep in my room. You will soon forget where you are; each of the bunks is comfortable. Now I will leave you in charge of the lamp whilst I go and lock up."

They laughed. It sounded so home-like.

"Any fear of burglars?" cried Enid.

"Yes, most expert cracksmen, wind, and rain, and — sleet," he added quietly. "I must fasten all the

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storm-shutters and make everything snug. Don't stir until I wake you in the morning."

"Poor old dad!" sighed Constance. "What a vigil!"

He was making new entries in the weather report when she remarked thoughtfully:

"It is high-water about half past one, I think?"

He nodded, pretending to treat the question as of no special import.

"From all appearances there will be a heavy sea," she went on.

"Just an ordinary bad night," he said coolly.

"Do the waves reach far up the lighthouse in a gale?" she persisted.

Then Brand grasped the situation firmly.

"So that your slumbers may be peaceful," he said, "I will call your kind attention to the fact that the Gulf Rock light has appeared every night during the past twenty-five years, or since a date some four years before you were born, Constance. It contains 4,000 tons of granite and is practically monolithic, as if it were carved out of a quarry. Indeed, I think its builder went one better than nature. Here are no cracks or fissures or undetected flaws. The lowest course is bolted to the rock with wrought-iron clamps. Every stone is dovetailed to its neighbors, and clasped to them with iron, above, below and at the sides. If you understand conic sections I could make clearer the scientific aspect of the structure, but you can take it from me you are far safer here than on a natural rock many times the dimensions of this column."

"That sounds very satisfactory," murmured Enid, sleepily.

"I am overwhelmed," said Constance, who grasped the essential fact that he had not answered her question.

Soon after nine o'clock he kissed them good-night. They promised not to sit up talking. As a guarantee of good behavior, Enid said she would ring the electric bell just before she climbed into her bunk.

The signal came soon and he was glad. He trusted to the fatigue, the fresh air, the confidence of the knowledge that he was on guard, to lull them into the security of unconsciousness.

The behavior of the mercury puzzled him. In the barometer it fell, in the thermometer it rose. Increasing temperature combined with low pressure was not a healthy weather combination in January. Looking back through the records of several years, he discovered a similar set of conditions one day in March, 1891. He was stationed then on the Northeast coast and failed to remember any remarkable circumstance connected with the date, so he consulted the lighthouse diary for that year. Ah! Here was a possible explanation. The chief-keeper, a stranger to him, was something of a meteorologist.

He had written: "At 4.15 P.M. the barometer stood at 27.16°, and the thermometer at 45.80°. There was a heavy sea and a No. 7 gale blowing from the S. S.-W. About five o'clock the wind increased to a hurricane and the sea became more violent than I have seen it during five years' experience of this station.

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Judging solely by the clouds and the flight of birds, I should imagine that the cyclonic centre passed over the Scilly Isles and the Land's End."

Then, next day:

"A steady northeast wind stilled the sea most effectually. Within twenty-four hours of the first signs of the hurricane the Channel was practicable for small craft. A fisherman reports that the coast is strewn with wreckage."

Brand mused over the entries for a while. With his night glasses he peered long into the teeth of the growing storm to see if he could find the double flash of the magnificent light on the Bishop Rock, one of the Atlantic breakwaters of the Scilly Isles. It was fully thirty-five miles distant, but it flung its radiance over the waters from a height of 143 feet, and the Gulf Rock lamp stood 130 feet above high-water mark. A landsman would not have distinguished even the nearer revolutions of the St. Agnes light, especially in the prevalent gloom, and wisps of spindrift were already striking the lantern and blurring the glass.

Nevertheless, he caught the quick flashes reflected from clouds low, but unbroken. As yet, there was a chance of the incoming tide bringing better weather, and he bent again over the record of the equinoctial gale in 1891. Soon he abandoned this hope. The growing thunder of the reef as the tide advanced gave the first unmistakable warning of what was to come. As a mere matter of noise the reef roared its loudest at half-tide. He understood now that a gale had swept across

the Atlantic in an irregular track. Howsoever the winds may rage the tides remain steadfast, and the great waves now rushing up from the west were actually harbingers of the fierce blast which had created them.

Of course, the threatened turmoil in no wise disconcerted him. It might be that the rock would remain inaccessible during many days. In that event the girls would take the watch after the lamp was extinguished and they must learn to endure the monotony and discomforts of existence in a storm-bound lighthouse. They would be nervous unquestionably — perhaps he had forgotten how nervous — but Brand was a philosopher, and at present he was most taken up with wonderment at the curious blend of circumstances which resulted in their presence on the rock that night.

Ha! A tremor shook the great pillar. He heard without the frenzied shriek of the first repulsed roller which flung itself on the sleek and rounded wall. Would the girls sleep through the next few hours? Possibly, if awake, they would attribute the vibration of the column to the wind. He trusted it might be so. Shut in as they were, they could not distinguish sounds. Everything to them would be a confused hum, with an occasional shiver as the granite braced its mighty heart to resist the enemy.

But what new note was this in the outer chaos? An ordinary gale shuddered and whistled and chanted its way past the lantern in varying tones. It sang, it piped, it bellowed, it played on giant reeds and crashed with cymbals. Now — he looked at the clock, after

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midnight — there was a sustained screech in the voice of the tempest which he did not remember having heard before. At last the explanation dawned on him. The hurricane was there, a few feet away, shut off from him by mere sheets of glass. The lighthouse thrust its tall shaft into this merciless tornado with grim steadfastness, and around its smooth contours poured a volume of unearthly melody which seemed to surge up from the broad base and was flung off into the darkness by the outer sweep of the cornice.

The wind was traveling seventy, eighty, mayhap a hundred miles an hour. Not during all his service, nor in earlier travels through distant lands, had he ever witnessed a storm of such fury. He thought he heard something crack overhead. He looked aloft, but all seemed well. Not until next day did he discover that the wind-vane had been carried away, a wrought iron shank nearly two inches thick having snapped like a piece of worsted at the place where the tempest had found a fault.

He tried to look out into the heart of the gale. The air was full of flying foam, but the sea was beaten flat. If the growling monster beneath tried to fling a defiant crest at the tornado, the whole mass of water, many tons in weight, was instantly torn from the surface and flung into nothingness. Some of these adventurers, forced up by the reef, hit the lighthouse with greater force than many a cannon-ball fired in battles which have made history. Time after time the splendid structure winced beneath the blow.

If Stephen Brand were ever fated to know fear he was face to face with the ugly phantom then. The granite column would not yield, but it was quite within the bounds of possibility that the entire lantern might be carried away, and he with it.

He thought, with a catching of his breath, of the two girls in the tiny room beneath. For one fleeting instant his mortal eyes gazed into the unseen. But the call of duty restored him. The excessive draught affected the lamp. Its ardor must be checked. With a steady hand he readjusted the little brass screws. They were so superbly indifferent to all this pandemonium. Just little brass screws, doing their work, and heeding naught beside. Suddenly there came to him the triumphant knowledge that the pure white beam of the light was hewing its path through the savage assailant without as calmly and fearlessly as it lit up the ocean wilds on a midsummer night of moonlight and soft zephyrs.

"Thank God for that!" he murmured aloud. "How can a man die better than at his post?"

The ring of iron beneath caught his ears. He turned from the lamp. Constance appeared, pale, with shining eyes. She carried the lantern. Behind her crept Enid, who had been crying; she strove now to check her tears.

"Is this sort of thing normal, or a special performance arranged for our benefit?" said his daughter, with a fine attempt at a smile.

"Oh, dad, I am so frightened," cried Enid. "Why does it howl so?"

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CHAPTER VI

THE MIDDLE WATCH

It says a good deal for Stephen Brand's courage that he was able to laugh just then, but it is a fine thing for a man, in a moment of supremest danger, to be called on to comfort a weeping woman.

The next minute might be their last — of that he was fully conscious. Even before the girls reached his side he felt a curious lifting movement of the whole frame of the lantern. Steel and glass alike were yielding to the sustained violence of the wind-pressure. Well were they molded, by men whose conscience need harbor no reproach of dishonest craftsmanship; they were being tested now almost beyond endurance.

Some natures would have found relief in prayer. Gladly would Constance and Enid have sunk on their knees and besought the Master of the Winds to spare them and those at sea. But Brand, believing that a catastrophe was imminent, decided that in order to save the girls' lives he must neither alarm them nor lose an unnecessary instant.

To desert the light — that was impossible personally. If given the least warning, he would spring towards the

iron rail that curved by the side of the stairs to the service-room, and take his chance. Otherwise he would go with the lamp. There was no other alternative. The girls must leave him at once.

The laugh with which he greeted their appearance gave him time to scheme.

"I ought to scold you, but I won't," he cried. "Are you plucky enough to descend to the kitchen and make three nice cups of cocoa?"

Just think what it cost him to speak in this bantering way, careless of words, though each additional syllable might mean death to all three.

His request had the exact effect he calculated. For once, Constance was deceived, and looked her surprise. Enid, more volatile, smiled through her tears. So it was not quite as bad as they imagined, this gale. Their father could never be so matter-of-fact in the face of real peril to all of them. Cocoa! Fancy a man giving his thoughts to cocoa whilst they were expecting the lighthouse to be hurled into the English Channel.

He turned again to manipulate the brass screws.

"Now, do not stand there shivering," he said, "but harden your hearts and go. Use the oil stove. By the time it is ready —"

"Shivering, indeed!"

Constance, of the Viking breed, would let him see that he had no monopoly of the family motto: "*Audèo.*" She, too, could dare.

"Down you go, Enid," she cried. "He shall have his cocoa, poor man."

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He looked over his shoulder and caught his daughter glancing at him from the well of the stairs.

"Bad night," he shouted cheerfully, and he cheated her quick intelligence a second time.

They were gone. Perchance it was his last sight of them in this life. Three times the stalwart frame-work creaked. Once it moved so perceptibly that the curtain rings jingled. Then he remembered the words of Isaiah:

"For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall."

The blast of the terrible ones! What a vivid pen-picture of the awesome forces of nature. How long would this tornado continue? Already it must have strewed its path with havoc at sea and on land. His physical senses were elevated to the supernatural. He seemed to acquire abnormal powers of sight and hearing. He could see the trees bending before the wrathful wind, hear the crashing tiles and brickwork as houses were demolished and people hurled to death. But there was no ecstasy of soul, no mental altitude. In quick reaction came the fanciful memory of the hardy old salt who cheered his shipmates during a terrific gale with the trite remark:

"I pity the poor folk ashore on a night like this."

What a curious jumble of emotions jostled in his brain. A step from the sublime to the ridiculous! Not even a step. They were inextricably interwoven, the

woof and the warp of things. He recalled the odd expression of an officer who had passed unscathed through the Inferno of Spion Kop.

"I had no sense of fear," said he, "but my teeth began to ache."

Brand, a student, even of himself, discovered that his dominant sensation was one of curiosity.

"If it has to be," said his nervous system, "let it come quickly." He felt like a man lying on the operating table waiting for the chloroform.

Suddenly, the bright flame of the lamp lessened. The use that was his second nature caused him to raise the wicks and admit more draught. Even whilst his deft fingers arranged the complex burner, his ear caught a change in the external din. The shriek of the wind dropped to a thunderous growl. This was a gale, not a tempest. God be praised, the crisis had passed!

The hurricane had lasted thirty-five minutes. A similar tornado sufficed to wreck one-half of the City of St. Louis. This one, as he learnt afterwards, swept around the south of Ireland, created a tidal wave which did great damage to the Scilly Isles and the headlands of the south coast, yet spent itself somewhere in the North Sea. Dwellers in inland cities were amazed and incredulous when the newspapers spoke of its extraordinary violence. A truth is harder to swallow than a lie, all the time.

Up clattered Enid with the steaming beverage; Constance, the lantern-bearer, providing the rear-guard.

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"I do believe it is blowing worse than ever," said Enid, striving desperately to be unconcerned. In reality, the angry wind was no longer able to behead the waves. With a rising tide and the gale assisting there would soon be a sea worthy of Turner in his maddest mood.

"Good gracious, dad," cried Constance, "how pale you are. And your forehead is wet. What have you been doing?"

Brand hastily mopped his face with a handkerchief.

"During some of the heavy gusts," he explained, "I was compelled to stand on the trimming stage. And — the micrometer valve required adjustment."

She eyed him narrowly. The margin of suspicion was wider.

"There is nothing else wrong?" she asked.

He approached and kissed her ear.

"Since when did my little girl begin to doubt me?" he said quietly.

Her eyes filled. Even the hint of a reproach from him was intolerable. For the life of her she could no longer control the flood of terror which welled up beyond restraint.

"Forgive me, dad," she murmured, "but I thought, and I still think, that we were and are in a position of the utmost peril. I can't help knowing that it is high-water about two o'clock. It is now only a quarter to one. The worst is not over. Do you think I cannot read your dear face! Dad! if there is danger, don't send us away again."

Tears were streaming down her white cheeks. Enid, holding the tray in speechless bewilderment during this outburst from her proud and self-reliant sister, set it down on the writing-desk with a crash.

"Oh, dear," she wailed, "I don't want any cocoa if we're gug-gug-going to be drowned."

Certainly if Stephen Brand had imagined, two minutes earlier, that he was about to laugh long and loudly, in a genuine surrender to an uncontrollable spasm of mirth, he would have feared lest his wits were leaving him. Yet he laughed now until his vision was blurred. And the wonderful relief of it! What a tonic, after the ordeal he had endured!

It chanced, just then, that an emancipated wave embraced the granite column, hit the cornice, and deluged the lantern, its disintegrated mass striking the glass with force enough to break any ordinary window. The astounded girls could not refuse the evidence of eyes and ears. Here was the frantic sea leaping to a height of one hundred and forty feet and more, yet their father was treating the incident as the merriest joke of many a month.

No better cure for their hysteria could be contrived. Brand was obviously not acting. The hearty pulsations of laughter had restored his ruddy color. Evidently they were alarmed about nothing.

"Here, Enid, drink your parting cup," he cried at last. "Have no fear. It is only the *dochan doris* before many another feast."

Feeling somewhat ashamed of themselves, though

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smiling very wistfully, they obeyed him. He sipped his cocoa with real nonchalance. Another wave turned a somersault over the lantern. Brand's only anxiety was to blow at the steaming liquid and cool it sufficiently.

Yet was he watching them and hammering out the right course to adopt. He alone understood that, to the novice, the amazing ordeal from which the lighthouse had successfully emerged was as naught compared with the thunderous blows of the waves, the astounding reverberations of the hollow pillar, the continuous deluge of spray striking the lantern, which the infuriated sea would inflict on them.

To urge any further effort to sleep was folly. They must remain with him and be comforted.

Being reasonable girls, of fine spirit under conditions less benumbing, it was better that they should grasp the facts accurately. They would be timid, of course, just as people are timid during their first attempt to walk 'twixt rock and cataract at the Falls of Niagara, but they would have confidence in their guide and endure the surrounding pandemonium.

"Here's to you, Enid. Still we live," he cried, and drained his cup.

"I sup-pup-pose so," she stammered.

"Better sup up your cocoa," said Constance. "Now I am quits with you for this afternoon."

"I'll tell you what," went on Brand, confidentially. "In that locker you will find a couple of stout pilot-coats. Put them on. As I cannot persuade you to

leave me you must sit down, and it is cold in here. Moreover, for the first time in twenty-one years I will smoke on duty. I have earned a little relaxation of the law."

Out of the corner of his eye he saw that Constance, if not Enid, had not missed the subtle hint in his words. But she was quite normal again. She gave no sign; helped her sister into the heavy reefer, and made herself comfortable in turn.

"Neither of you will ever regret tonight's experience — when it is nicely over," he said. "You are like a couple of recruits in their first battle."

"I am sure —" began Enid.

A huge wave, containing several hundred tons of water, smote the lighthouse, and cavorted over their heads. The house that was founded upon a rock fell not, but it shook through all its iron-bound tiers, and the empty cups danced on their saucers.

Not another word could Enid utter. She was paralyzed.

"That fellow — arrived — in the nick of time — to emphasize my remarks," said Brand, lighting his pipe. "This is your baptism of fire, if I may strain a metaphor. But you are far better situated than the soldier. He gets scared out of his wits by big guns which are comparatively harmless, and when he has been well pounded for an hour or so, he advances quite blithely to meet the almost silent hail of dangerous bullets. So, you see, in his case, ignorance is bliss."

"Are we in bliss?" demanded Constance.

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"You have been. The lighthouse has out-faced a hurricane such as has not visited England before in my life-time. It is over. The wind has dropped to a No. 10 gale, and we have not lost even a bit of skin to my knowledge. Now the cannonade is beginning. Certainly, we may have the glass broken, by a rare accident, but no worse fate can befall us."

A heavy thud was followed by a deluge without. They heard the water pouring off the gallery.

Constance leaned forward, with hands on knees. Her large eyes looked into his.

"This time, dad, you are not choosing your words," she said.

"I am sorry you should think that," was the reply. "I selected each phrase with singular care. Never be misled by the apparent ease of a speaker. The best impromptu is prepared beforehand."

"You dear old humbug," she cried.

Now the quiet deadliness of the scene which followed the reappearance of Enid and herself from their bedroom was manifest to her. Enid, too, was looking from one to the other in eager striving to grasp the essentials of an episode rapidly grouping its details into sequence. Brand knew that if he parried his daughters' questioning they would be on their knees by his side forthwith, and he wished to avoid any further excitement.

"Please attend, both of you," he growled, with mock severity. "I am going to tell you something that will console you."

His voice was drowned by some part of the Atlantic whirling over the lantern.

"This kind of thing does not go on all the time," he continued. "Otherwise we should have five hours of spasmodic conversation. As soon as the tide rises sufficiently to gain an uninterrupted run across the reef we will have at least two hours of comparative quiet. About four o'clock there will be a second edition for an hour or so. I suppose that any suggestion of bed —"

"Will be scouted," exclaimed Enid.

"A nice pair of beauties you will be in the morning," he grumbled artfully.

Not even Constance was proof against this new burthen of woe. She glanced around.

"You say that," she cried, "knowing that the nearest looking-glass is yards away."

He pointed with his pipe.

"In the second drawer of the desk you will find a heliograph. It is only a toy, but will justify me."

They ran together, and found the little circular mirror. The next wave passed unheeded. Smiling, he went up to the lamp. Even yet there was hope they might go to bed when the respite came.

After much talk of disordered hair, wan cheeks, rings round the eyes, cracked lips, and other outrageous defects which a pretty woman mourns when divorced from her dressing-table, Constance called him.

"Here is a queer thing," she said. "Have you heard any steamer hooting?"

"No," he answered. Bending between the two of

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them he saw that the pointer of the auriscope bore due southwest, though the last siren of which they had any knowledge sounded from the opposite direction.

He picked up a little trumpet resembling the horn of a motor-car.

"I use this for tests," he explained. Its tiny vibrator quickly brought the needle round towards his hand.

"It is improbable in the highest degree that any steamer is near enough to affect the auriscope," he said. "On a night like this they give the coast a wide berth."

He quitted them again. The girls, having nothing better to do, watched the dial to see if any change occurred. He heard them use the small trumpet three times. Then Enid sang out:

"Oh, do come, dad. It goes back to the southwest regularly."

He joined in the watch. The needle was pointing north in obedience to the sound-waves created in the room. Suddenly, it swung round nearly half the circumference of the dial.

"Hush!" he said. They listened intently, but the roar of wind and water was too deafening. They could hear naught else. He went to the southwest point of the glass dome, but the lantern was so blurred with rivulets of water that he could see nothing save a tawny vastness where the light fell on the flying spindrift.

To make sure, he tested the auriscope again, and with the same result.

"A vessel is approaching from the southwest," he

announced, gravely. "Evidently she is whistling for help. I hope she will not attempt to approach too near the reef. I must have a look out."

He put on an oilskin coat and tied the strings of a sou'wester firmly beneath his chin.

The small door of the lantern opened towards the Bay, so he had no difficulty in gaining the gallery. The girls watched him forcing his way against the wind until he was facing it and gazing in the direction of the Scilly Isles.

"Perhaps some poor ship is in danger, Connie," whispered Enid. "It makes me feel quite selfish. Here was I, thinking of nothing but my own peril, yet that little machine there was faithfully doing its duty."

"It was not alone in its self-abandonment. We shall never know, dearest, how much father suffered when he sent us off with a jest on his lips. I am sure he thought the lantern would be blown away."

"And he with it! Oh, Connie!"

"Yes. He believed, if that awful thing took place whilst we were below, we might escape. I can see it all now. I had the vaguest sort of suspicion, but he hoodwinked me."

"Had we known we would not have left him," cried Enid, passionately.

"Yes, we would. Think of him, sticking to his post. Was it for us to disobey?"

Overcome by their feelings, they stood in silence for a little while. Through the thick glass they could dimly

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distinguish Brand's figure. A great wave assailed the lantern and Enid screamed loudly.

"Don't, dear!" cred Constance, shrilly. "Father would not remain there if it were dangerous."

Nevertheless, they both breathed more freely when they saw him again, an indeterminate shape against the luminous gloom.

Constance felt that she must speak. The sound of her own voice begat confidence.

"I have never really understood dad until tonight," she said. "What an ennobling thing is a sense of duty. He would have died here quite calmly, Enid, yet he would avoid the least risk out there. That would be endangering his trust. Oh, I am glad we are here. I have never lived before this hour."

Enid stole a wondering glance at her sister. The girl seemed to be gazing into depths immeasurable. Afterwards the words came back to her mind: "That would be endangering his trust."

Brand faced the gale a full five minutes. He returned hastily.

"There is a big steamer heading this way — a liner, I fancy," he gasped, half choked with spray. "I fear she is disabled. She is firing rockets, and I suppose her siren is going constantly, though I cannot hear it."

He ran to the room beneath. Flushed with this new excitement, the girls donned their oilskin coats and arranged their sou'westers. When he hurried up the stairs he was carrying four rockets. He noted their preparations.

"Don't come out until I have fired the alarm signal," he shouted, "and tie your dresses tightly around your knees."

They heard the loud hissing of the rockets, and the four reports traveled dully from the sky. Three white star-bursts and one red told the Land's End coastguards that a ship in need of help was near the Gulf Rock. Probably they had already seen the vessel's signals. In any event, they would not miss the display from the lighthouse.

Walking with difficulty, the girls crept out on to the balcony.

Brand had already gone to the windward side. The first rush of the gale made them breathless, yet they persevered and reached him. They were greeted by a climber, but their father, with a hand on their shoulders, pressed them down, and the spray crashed against the lantern behind them. He knew they would take no harm. When the vessel passed, their boots and stockings would be soaked. Then he could insist that they should go to bed.

At first they distinguished nothing save a chaotic blend of white and yellow foam, driving over the reef at an apparently incredible speed. Overhead, the black pall of the sky seemed to touch the top of the lantern. Around, in a vast circle carved out of the murky wilderness, the wondrous beam of the light fought and conquered its unwearied foes. Constance caught the three quick flashes of the Seven Stones lightship away to the right. She fancied she saw a twink-

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ling ahead, but this was the St. Agnes light, and neither girl could make out other sight or sound until Brand pointed steadily towards one spot in the darkness.

Before they could follow his indication they were compelled to duck to avoid another wave. Then, as if it had just popped up out of the sea, they divined a tiny white spark swinging slowly across a considerable area. It was by that means that Brand had estimated the size and nearness of the steamer, and soon they glimpsed the red and green side-lights, though ever and anon these were hidden by the torrents of water sweeping over her decks. Of the vessel they could see nothing whatever.

Steadily she rolled along her fearful path. Having once found her, there was no difficulty in estimating the rapidity of her approach. Enid, whose eyes were strong and far-sighted, fancied she caught a fitful vision of a big, black hull laboring in the yellow waves.

Though it was difficult to speak, she crept close to Brand and screamed:

"Is she drifting onto the reef?"

"I fear so," he answered.

"Then she will be lost!"

"Yes. Unless they manage to pass to s'uth'ard."

Luckily for poor human nature, mental stress and physical effort rarely unite forces. The mere attempt to resist the wind, the constant watchfulness needed to avoid the ambitious seas, though these, strange to say, appeared to be diminishing in size and volume as the tide rose, served to dull the horror of the threatened tragedy.

Brand quitted them for an instant to glue his eyes to the lantern, after wiping a space on the glass: he must see if the lamp needed tending. Satisfied by the scrutiny, he stood behind the girls, who had shrunk closely together the moment he retired.

"They are trying hard to steer clear of the reef," he shouted. "Twice they have got her head round, but the sea is too strong for them. I am afraid she is doomed."

Now, they unquestionably saw the great body of the ship. Her funnels showed most clearly, making sharply defined black daubs on the heaving desert of froth. The plunging whirls of the masthead light were enough to prove how the unfortunate vessel was laboring in what might prove to be her final agony.

And the pity of it! The wind was dropping. In another hour the weather might moderate appreciably, the tide would sweep her away from the horrible reef, and help would be forthcoming. Indeed, even then, a powerful steam trawler was preparing to fight her way out of Penzance harbor, with brave men on board ready to take any risk to save a ship in distress.

But the hour was grudged by fate. They could plainly hear the hoarse blasts of the steamer's foghorn, and again a rocket spurted its path to the clouds. She was barely a mile away, and, if anything, in a worse position than before, as the wind remained fixed in the southwest, and the tide, at this stage, curved in towards the land ere it began to flow back again to the Atlantic.

"Can nothing be done?" screamed Constance, ren-

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dered half frantic by the thought that the steamer would go to pieces before their eyes.

"Nothing," was the answer. "Pray for them. They are in the hands of God."

In gruesome distinctness they watched the vessel's approach. The siren ceased. Had those on board abandoned hope? Pitching and rolling in a manner that suggested the possibility of foundering in deep water, she came on with fatal directness. Suddenly, a dreadful thought came to Brand's mind. The lighthouse stood on the easterly and most elevated portion of the reef, whose bearings ran southwest by west and north-northwest. At low-water, some two acres of jagged rocks were exposed. On all sides the soundings fell to sixteen and eighteen fathoms. What if this helpless leviathan, of ten thousand tons or more dead weight, were to strike the pillar? This was quite possible with the tide at its present level. It all depended whether her bows were raised or lowered at the moment of impact. In the one case she would smash away many feet of rock, and perhaps damage the foundations of the lighthouse: in the other, her sharp prow would stab into the vitals of the granite, and the huge column might collapse in common ruin with its colossal assailant.

One of the girls, he never remembered which of them, spoke to him. He could not answer. For a second time that night he knew what fear meant. He watched the onward plunging of the vessel with stupefied eyes. He saw, as in a dream, that her officers and crew were

still making desperate efforts to weather the reef. But, with the utter malignity of fate, though they might have swung her to port, she would not budge a yard to starboard, for now both wind and waves assailed her most vehemently on the starboard quarter.

Then when she was little more than twice her own length distant, he was certain that a dim form on the bridge signaled to the chart-house. With a miraculous deftness, on the assumption that her wheel was put hard over, she fell away from the racing seas. Her red light disappeared; her green light curved into full view. The next wave lifted her bodily, with a mad joy that it should be able to use her to batter its enemy, the rock.

Then she struck, with a sickening crash that was plainly audible above the roar of the reef. This was not enough. Another rush of foaming water enveloped her and smashed her again on an inner ledge. There she lodged, falling inertly over to starboard.

And Brand found his voice once more, for, as sure as this terrible night would have its end, so surely had the gallant captain of the steamer refused to imperil the lighthouse when all hope of saving his ship had vanished.

The tears were in Brand's eyes. His arms encircled the two girls.

"There goes a fine ship, commanded by a brave man," he cried.

And that was the beginning of the captain's requiem.

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CHAPTER VII

THE LOTTERY

Just as the spin of a coin may mean loss or gain in some trumpery dispute or game of the hour, in like manner, apparently, are the graver issues of life or death determined at times. It is not so, we know. Behind the triviality on which men fasten with amazement as the governing factor in events there lies an inscrutable purpose. Yet, to those watching the destruction of the splendid vessel, there was little evidence of other than a blind fury in the fashion of her undoing.

The hoarse words had scarce left Brand's lips before a third wave, higher and more truculent than its predecessors, sprang right over the lost ship and smothered her in an avalanche of water. No doubt this monster swept away some of the officers and crew. It was impossible to be certain of aught save the one thing — that the steamer would surely break up before their eyes. The wind, now blowing in fierce gusts, the sea, rising each minute, the clouds of spray chasing each other in eerie flights through space, the grinding, incessant, utterly overwhelming noise of the reef, made all sights and sounds indefinite, nebulous, almost fantastic.

But when the giant billow receded, leaving the ship like a dark rock in the midst of innumerable cascades, the catastrophe took place which Brand would have foreseen were his thoughts less tumultuous. With the support of the sea withdrawn from half its length the huge hull must either slip back into deep water or break in two. The slender steel shell of an ocean liner is not constructed to resist the law of gravity acting on full five thousand tons. So the solid-looking colossus cracked like a carrot, and the after part fell back into the watery chasm, there to be swallowed instantly, amidst a turmoil which happily drowned the despairing shrieks of far more than half of those on board.

Constance and Enid screamed bitterly in their woe, but again they were saved from utter collapse by the exigencies of the moment. Brand, who expected to see the remainder of the ship blown up by the inrushing of the sea to the furnaces, dragged them forcibly below the level of the protecting balustrade.

Yet nothing of the sort took place. A vast cloud of steam rushed upwards, but it was dissipated by the next breath of the gale. This incident told the lighthouse-keeper much. The vessel had been disabled so long that her skilful commander, finding the motive power of no further avail, and certain that his ship must be driven ashore, had ordered the fires to be drawn and the steam to be exhausted from all boilers except one. Therefore, her shaft was broken, reasoned Brand. Probably the accident had occurred during the height of the hurricane, and her steering gear, of little use with-

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out the driving force of the engines to help, might have been disabled at the same time.

When the horror-stricken watchers looked again at the wreck the forward part had shifted its position. It was now lying broadside on to the seas, and the lofty foremast thrust its truck to within a few feet of them.

They were spared one ghastly scene which must surely have bereft the girls of their senses. The majority of the first-class passengers had gathered in the saloon. Some clung like limpets to the main gangway. A number, mostly men, crowded together in the drawing-room on the promenade deck. Farther than this they could not go, as the companion hatchways had been locked by the officer of the watch, the decks being quite impassable.

When the hull yielded, the spacious saloon was exposed to the vicious waves. Finding this new cavern opened to them, great liquid tongues sprang into the darkness and licked out hapless victims by the score. Of this appalling incident those in the lighthouse knew nothing until long afterwards.

When the ship struck, the electric dynamos stopped and all her lights went out. The lighthouse lamp, owing to its rays being concentrated by the dioptric lens, helped not at all to dissipate the dim and ghastly vision beneath, but the great frame of the fore part of the vessel served as a break-water to some extent, and temporarily withheld the waves from beating against the column.

Hence Brand, straining his eyes through the flying

ruck, fancied he could make out the figure of the captain as he left the bridge, and, with some of the crew, took shelter behind the structure of the library and state cabins on what remained of the promenade deck. At the same moment the frenzied occupants of the library and gangway contrived to burst open the door of the main companion.

If they had to die they might as well die in the open and not boxed up in impenetrable darkness. As a matter of fact, the bolts were forced by a man who fired his revolver at them. The sea quickly discovered this new outlet. The next wave, passing through the saloon, sent tons of water pouring through the open hatch. One good result accrued. The strong canvas awning which prolonged the spar deck was carried away, and the group of survivors, benumbed with cold and wholly overcome by their desperate position, could see the entire height of the granite column in front crowned with its diadem of brilliance. The liberated passengers saw it for the first time.

The sight brought no hope. Between ship and lighthouse was a true maelstrom of more than sixty feet of water, created by the back-wash from the stone-work and the shattered hull. Even if the passage could be made of what avail was it? The iron entrance door was full fifty feet above the present level of the sea. It could only be approached by way of the rungs of iron embedded in the granite, and every wave, even in the comparative moderation caused by the obstructing wreck, swept at least twenty feet of the smooth stone

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tiers. It is this very fact that prevents rock lighthouses from seldom if ever serving as refuges for ship-wrecked sailors. The ascending ladder is so exposed, the sea usually so turbulent under the least stress of wind, that no human being can retain hand-hold or footing.

Yet, there was one faint chance of succor, and it was not a sailor who grasped it. The first that Brand knew of the desperate venture was the sight of a spectral man climbing up the shrouds of the fore-mast. On a steamer, whose yards are seldom used for sails, the practicable rope-ladder ceases at the fore, main, or mizzen-top, as the case may be. Thenceforward, a sailor must climb with hands and feet to the truck, a feat which may occasionally be necessary when the vessel is in dock; it is hardly ever attempted at sea.

The venturesome individual who thus suddenly made himself the center of observation carried a line with him. Not until he essayed the second portion of his perilous ascent did Brand realize what the other intended to do, which was nothing less than to reach the truck, the very top of the mast, and endeavor to throw a rope to the gallery.

And he might succeed, too — that was the marvel of it. The tapering spar came very near to them, perhaps twelve feet distant, and the wind would certainly carry the rope across the chasm if carefully thrown. A few strong and active men might use this aerial ferry. Well, better they than none. Brave fellow; would that the Lord might help him!

Higher and nearer swung the stalwart youngster, for

none but a lithe and active boy could climb a pole with such easy vigor. At last he reached the truck, and a faintly heard cheer from beneath mingled with the hysterical delight of Enid and Constance, when, with legs twined round the mast, he rested his arms for an instant on the flat knob of the truck.

Here his face came into the lower focus of the light — strong, clean-shaven, clear-cut features, a square, determined chin, two dark, earnest eyes, and a mop of ruffled black hair, for his deer-stalker cap had blown off 'ere he cleared the spar deck.

"Look out for the line," they heard him shout. The wind brought his voice plainly, but evidently he could distinguish no syllable of Brand's answering hail:

"Shall I make fast?"

"Can't hear a word," he cried. "If you can hear me hold a hand up."

Brand obeyed.

"Catch the line," he went on. "It is attached to a block with a running tackle. Haul in and make fast."

"The megaphone!" shouted Brand to Constance. She darted away to bring it, and when the adventurer clinging to the fore-mast had thrown a coil successfully, Brand took the instrument.

"Why don't you come this way? The others will follow," he bellowed.

"There are women and children down below. They must be saved first, and they cannot climb the mast," was the reply.

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"All right, but send up a couple of sailors. We are short-handed here."

"Right-o," sang out the other cheerily, though he wondered why three men should anticipate difficulty.

Down he went. Without waiting, Brand and the girls hauled lustily at the rope. It was no child's play to hoist a heavy pulley and several hundred feet of stout cordage. More than once they feared the first thin rope would break, but it was good hemp, and soon the block was hooked to the strong iron stanchions of the railing. To make assurance doubly sure, Brand told Enid to take several turns of the spare cord around the hook and the adjacent rails.

Meanwhile, Constance and he saw that the rope was moving through the pulley without their assistance. Then through the whirling scud beneath they made out an ascending figure clinging to it. Soon he was close to the gallery. Catching him by arms and collar they lifted him into safety. He was one of the junior officers, and Constance, though she hardly expected it, experienced a momentary feeling of disappointment that the first man to escape was not the handsome youth to whose cool daring some at least of the ship's company would owe their lives.

The newcomer was a typical Briton.

"Thanks," he said. "Close shave. Have you a light? We must signal after each arrival."

Enid brought the small lantern, and the stranger waved it twice. The rope traveled back through the

pulley, and this time it carried a sailor-man, who said not one word but stooped to tie his boot-lace.

"How many are left?" inquired Brand of the officer.

"About eighty, all told, including some twenty women and children."

"All wet to the skin?"

"Yes: some of them unconscious, perhaps dead."

"Can you hold out?"

"Yes; A nip of brandy —"

"I will send some. We must leave you now. These with me are my daughters."

At last the crust of insular self-possession was broken. The man looked from one to the other of the seeming lighthouse-keepers.

"Well, I'm —," he blurted out in his surprise. "That American youngster wondered what the trouble was."

A shapeless bundle hove in sight. It contained two little girls, tied inside a tarpaulin and lashed to the rope. This, evidently, was the plan for dealing with the helpless ones.

Brand instantly divided his forces. Enid he dispatched to make hot cocoa in the quickest and most lavish manner possible. Constance was to give each new arrival a small quantity of stimulant (the lighthouse possessed a dozen bottles of brandy and whiskey) and act as escort. The women and children were to be allotted the two bedrooms. Any bad cases of injury or complete exhaustion could be disposed of in the visiting officer's room, whilst all the men fit to take care of themselves were to be distributed between the en-

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trance, the coal-room, the workshop and the stairways. The kitchen, store-room and service-room were to be kept clear, and the store-room door locked. Eighty! Brand was already doing problems in simple arithmetic.

A similar problem, with a different point to be determined, was occupying the active mind of the "American youngster" who had solved the knottiest proposition put forward during that eventful night.

He watched the forwarding of the shrieking, shuddering, or inanimate women. He timed the operation by his watch, as the reflected light from the lamp was quite sufficient for the purpose.

Then he approached the captain.

"Say, skipper," he cried, "how long do you give the remains of her to hold out?"

"It is not high-water yet," was the answer. "Perhaps half an hour. Forty minutes at the utmost."

"Then you'll have to boost this thing along a good deal faster," said the cheerful one. "They're going up now at the rate of one every two minutes. That's thirty in half an hour. Fifty of us will travel a heap quicker at the end of that time if your calculation holds good."

The captain, who appeared to be in a stupor of grief, roused himself.

A few short and sharp orders changed the aspect of affairs. Frightened and protesting ladies were securely tied together, and hoisted, four at a time, like so many bags of wheat. When it came to the men's turn even less ceremony and greater expedition were used.

Indeed, already there were emphatic warnings that much valuable time had been lost in the early stage of the rescue. Though the wind was now only blowing a stiff gale, the sea, lashed to frenzy by the hurricane, was heavier than ever .The ship was vanishing visibly. A funnel fell with a hideous crash and carried away a life-boat. The rest of the spar deck and nearly the whole of the forward cabins were torn out bodily. By repeated thumping on the reef the vessel had settled back almost onto an even keel, and the fore-mast, which had so providentially neared the summit of the lighthouse, was now removed far beyond the possibility of a rope being thrown.

The survivors on deck worked with feverish energy. The time was drawing short. They did not know the second that some unusually tempestuous wave would devour them utterly.

"Now, Mr. Pyne, you next," cried the chief officer, addressing the young Philadelphian, who, *mirabile dictu*, had found and lighted a cigar.

"Guess I'll swing up along with the captain," was the answer.

"Up with him," shouted the captain, fiercely, himself helping to loop Pyne to the fourth officer.

All others had gone. The officers were leaving the ship in order of seniority, the juniors first. Just as the quartette were about to swing clear of the ship the captain grasped Pyne's hand.

"Thank you, lad," he said, and away they went.

There were left on the vessel the third, second, and

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first officers, the purser, and the captain. The others wanted the captain to come with them. He resisted, held out for his right to be the last to quit a ship he had commanded for more than twenty years, and hoarsely forbade any further argument.

Very unwillingly, they left him hauling alone at the rope, though their predecessors, knowing the need of it, helped vigorously from the gallery. Indeed, it was with difficulty that Pyne was held back from returning with the descending rope. They told him he was mad to dream of such a piece of folly, and perforce he desisted.

But when the captain deliberately cast off the deck-pulley from which the rope had been manipulated they knew that the boy had read his soul. The now useless cordage dangling from the gallery was caught by the wind and sea and sent whipping off to leeward.

Brand, brought from the lantern by the hubbub of shouting, came out, followed by Constance. He suggested, as a last resource, that they should endeavor to fire a line across the vessel by means of a rocket.

They agreed to try, for the spectacle of the captain, standing bareheaded on all that was left of the bridge, moved them to a pitch of frenzy not often seen in an assemblage of Anglo-Saxons, and especially of sailors.

Brand turned to procure the rocket, but a loud cry caused him to delay. The expected wave had come, the vessel was smothered in a vortex of foam, the tall fore-mast tottered and fell, and when the water subsided again all that was visible of the great steamer was

some portion of her hull and the solidly built bow, which was not wrenched from the keel-plate until another hour had passed.

The agonized cry of a strong man is a woful thing. Constance, by reason of the gathering at the side of the gallery, was unable to see all that was taking place. But the yell which went up from the onlookers told her that something out of the common, even on this night of thrills, had occurred.

"What is it, dad?" she asked, as her father came to her.

"The end of the ship," he said. "The captain has gone with her."

"Oh, dear, why wasn't he saved?"

"I think he refused to desert his ship. His heart was broken, I expect. Now, Connie, duty first."

Indeed, she required no telling. As each of the shipwrecked men entered the lantern, she handed him a glass of spirits, asked if he were injured, and told him exactly how many flights of stairs he had to descend. But cocoa and biscuits would be brought soon, she explained: greatly amazed, but speechless for the most part, the men obeyed her directions.

One of the last to claim her attention was the young American, Mr. Pyne. Her face lit up pleasurably when she saw him.

"I was wondering what had become of you," she said. "My sister has asked me several times if you had arrived, and I imagined that I must have missed you by some chance."

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Now all this was Greek to him, or nearly so. Indeed, had it been intelligible Greek, he might have guessed its purport more easily.

Holding the glass in his hand he looked at her in frank, open-eyed wonder. To be hailed so gleefully by a good-looking girl, whom he had never to his knowledge set eyes on, was somewhat of a mystery, and the puzzle was made all the more difficult by the fact that she had discarded the weather-proof accoutrements needed when she first ventured forth on the gallery.

"I'm real glad you're pleased. My name is Charles A. Pyne," he said, slowly.

It was now Constance's turn to be bewildered. Then the exact situation dawned on her.

"How stupid of me," she cried. "Of course you don't recognize me again. My sister and I happen to be alone with my father on the rock tonight. We were with him on the balcony when you acted so bravely. You see, the light shone clear on your face."

"I'm glad it's shining on yours now," he said.

"You must go two floors below this," said she severely. "I will bring you some cocoa and a biscuit as quickly as possible."

"I am not a bit tired," he commented, still looking at her.

"That is more than I can say," she answered, "but I am so delighted that we managed to save so many poor people."

"How many?"

"Seventy-eight. But I dare not ask you now how

many are lost. It would make me cry, and I have no time for tears. Will you really help to carry a tray?"

"Just try me."

At the top of the stairs Constance called to her father:

"Anything you want, dad?"

"Yes, dear. Find out the chief officer, and send him to me. He can eat and drink here whilst we talk."

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CHAPTER VIII

AN INTERLUDE

"Please be careful; these stairs are very steep," said Constance, swinging the lantern close to her companion's feet as they climbed down the topmost flight.

"If I fall," he assured her, "you will be the chief sufferer."

"All the more reason why you should not fall. Wait here a moment. I must have a look at the hospital."

The visiting-officer's room, which also served the purposes of a library and recreation room in normal times, now held fourteen injured persons, including two women, one of them a stewardess, and a little girl.

Most of the sufferers had received their wounds either in the saloon or by collision with the cornice of the lighthouse. The worst accident was a broken arm, the most alarming a case of cerebral concussion. Other injuries consisted, for the most part, of cuts and bruises.

Unfortunately, when the ship struck, the surgeon had gone aft to attend to an engineer whose hand was crushed as the result of some frantic lurch caused by the hurricane; hence the doctor was lost with the first batch of victims. Enid discovered that among the

few steerage passengers saved was a man who had gained some experience in a field-hospital during the campaign in Cuba. Aided by the plain directions supplied with the medicine chest of the lighthouse, the ex-hospital orderly had done wonders already.

"All I want, miss," he explained, in answer to Constance's question, "is some water and some linen for bandages. The lint outfit in the chest is not half sufficient."

She vanished, to return quickly with a sheet and a pair of scissors.

"Now," she said to Mr. Pyne, "if you come with me I will send you back with a pail of water."

She took him to the kitchen, where Enid, aided by a sailor, pressed into service, was dispensing cocoa and biscuits. Pyne, who remained in the stairway, went off with the water and Constance's lantern. The interior of the lighthouse was utterly dark. To move without a light, and with no prior knowledge of its internal arrangements, was positively dangerous. All told, there were seven lamps of various sizes available. Brand had one, four were distributed throughout the apartments tenanted by the survivors of the wreck, two were retained for transit purposes, and the men shivering in the entrance passage had no light at all.

Constance took Enid's lantern in order to discover the whereabouts of Mr. Emmett, the first officer, the tray-carrying sailor offering to guide her to him.

When Pyne came back he found Enid in the dark and mistook her for Constance.

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"They want some more," he cried at the door.

"Some more what?" she demanded. It was no time for elegant diction. Her heart jumped each time the sea sprang at the rock. It seemed to be so much worse in the dark.

"Water," said he.

"Dear me. I should have thought everybody would be fully satisfied in that respect."

He held up the lantern.

"Well, that's curious," he cried. "I imagined you were the other young lady. The water is needed in the hospital."

"Why didn't you say so?" she snapped, being in reality very angry with herself for her flippancy. She gave him a full pail and he quitted her.

Constance, having delivered her father's message to Mr. Emmett, was greeted with a tart question when she re-entered the kitchen:

"Why on earth didn't you tell me that young man was attending to the injured people? Is he a doctor?"

"I think not. What happened?"

"He came for a second supply of water and nearly bit my head off."

"Oh, Enid! I am sure he did not mean anything. Didn't you recognize him? It was he who climbed the mast and flung the rope to us."

"There!" said Enid, "I've gone and done it. Honestly, you know, it was I who was rude. He will think me a perfect cat."

"That isn't what people are saying," explained Mr.

Pyne, whose approach was deadened by the outer noise. "There's a kind of general idea floating round that this locality is an annex of heaven, with ministering angels in attendance."

In the half light of the tiny lamps he could not see Enid's scarlet face. There was a moment's silence, and this very self-possessed youth spoke again.

"The nice things we all have to tell you will keep," he said. "Would you mind letting me know in which rooms you have located the ladies?"

Constance, as major domo, gave the information asked for:

"They are in the two bedrooms overhead. Poor things! I am at my wits' end to know how to get their clothing dried. You see, Mr. Pyne, my sister and I have no spare clothes here. We only came to the rock this afternoon, by the merest chance."

"That is just what was troubling me," he answered. "I am sort of interested in one of them."

"Oh," said Constance, "I do wish I could help. But, indeed, my own skirts are wringing wet."

"From what I can make out, then, my prospective step-aunt will catch a very bad cold."

The queer phrase puzzled the girls, but Constance, rarely for her, jumped at a conclusion.

"Your prospective step-aunt. You mean, perhaps, your fiancée's aunt?" she suggested.

"I don't know the lady. No, ma'am. I was right first time. Mrs. Vansittart is going to marry my uncle, so I keep an eye on her stock to that extent."

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"How stupid of me!" she explained, whilst a delighted giggle from Enid did not help to mend matters. So Constance became very stately.

"I will ask Mrs. Vansittart to come out and speak to you —" she began.

"No, no! I don't wish that. You might tell her I am all right. That is the limit. And — may I make a suggestion?"

"Pray do."

"It will help considerable if the women-folk take it in turn to get into the beds or bunks. Then, some of their linen could be dried at the stove. I will take charge of that part of the business, if I may. Otherwise, some of them will die."

The girls agreed that this was a capital idea. Constance went upstairs. In the first room she inquired:

"Is Mrs. Vansittart here?"

"Yes," said a sweet but rather querulous voice.

A lady, who had already appropriated the lower bunk, raised herself on an elbow.

The little apartment, like every part of the building, save the rooms reserved by Brand's directions, was packed almost to suffocation. This, if harmful in one respect, was beneficial in another. The mere animal warmth of so many human beings was grateful after the freezing effect of the gale on people literally soaked to the skin.

The girl, not unmoved by curiosity, held the light so that it illumined Mrs. Vansittart. A woman of forty, no matter how good-looking and well-preserved she

may be, is in sorry plight under such conditions. Constance saw a beautiful face, deathly white and haggard, yet animated and clearly chiseled. The eyes were large and lustrous, the mouth firm, the nose and chin those of a Greek statue. Just now there were deep lines across the base of the high forehead. The thin lips, allied to a transient hawk-like gleam in the prominent eyes, gave a momentary glimpse of a harsh, perhaps cruel disposition. A charming smile promptly dispelled this fleeting impression. Instantly Constance was aware of having seen Mrs. Vansittart before. So vivid was the fanciful idea that she became tongue-tied.

"Do you want me?" asked the stranger, with a new interest, and still smiling. Constance found herself wondering if the smile were not cultivated to hide that faintly caught suggestion of the bird of prey. But the question restored her mental poise.

"Only to say that Mr. Pyne —" she began.

"Charlie! Is he saved?"

Mrs. Vansittart certainly had the faculty of betraying intense interest. The girl attributed the nervous start, the quick color which tinged the white cheeks, to the natural anxiety of a woman who stood in such approximate degree of kin to the young American.

"Oh, yes," said the girl, with ready sympathy. "Don't you know that all of you owe your lives to his daring? He asked me to — to say he was all right, and — that he hoped you were not utterly collapsed."

The addendum was a kindly one. No doubt, Mr. Pyne had meant her to convey such a message. Mrs.

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Vansittart, it was evident, had received a shock. Perhaps she was a timorous, shrinking woman, averse to the sudden stare of others.

"I know nothing," she murmured. "It was all so horrible. Oh, God! shall I ever forget that scene in the saloon. How the people fought. They were not human. They were tigers, fierce tigers, with the howls and the baleful eyes of wild beasts."

This outburst was as unexpected as her staccato question. Constance bent over her and placed a gentle hand on her forehead.

"You must try to forget all that," she said, soothingly. "Indeed, it must have been very terrible. It was dreadful enough for us, looking down at things through a mist of foam. For you — But there! You are one of the few who escaped. That is everything. God has been very good to you!"

She was stooping low and holding the lantern in her left hand.

Suddenly, Mrs. Vansittart's eyes gleamed again with that lambent light so oddly at variance with her smile. The slight flush of excitement yielded to a ghostly pallor. With surprising energy she caught the girl's arm.

"Who are you?" she whispered. "Tell me, child, who are you?"

"My father is the lighthouse-keeper," said Constance. "I am here quite by chance. I —"

"But your name! What is your name?"

"Constance Brand."

"Brand, did you say? And your father's name?"

"Stephen Brand. Really, Mrs. Vansittart, you must try to compose yourself. You are over-wrought, and —"

She was about to say "feverish." Indeed, that was a mild word. The strange glare in Mrs. Vansittart's eyes amazed her. She shrank away, but only for an instant. With a deep sigh, the lady sank back on the pillow and fainted.

Constance was then frightened beyond question. She feared that the seizure might be a serious one, under the circumstances. To her great relief, another woman, who could not help overhearing the conversation and witnessing its sequel, came to the rescue.

"Don't be alarmed," she said. "Mrs. Vansittart is very highly strung. She fainted in the saloon. She does not realize that Mr. Pyne not only saved her, but nearly every woman here, when the door was broken open. Now, don't you worry, my dear, I will look after her. You have a great deal to do, I am sure."

Constance realized that the advice was good. She could not attend to one and neglect many.

Telling the women of the plan to dry their underclothing in sections, she asked them to help her by arranging matters so that their garments should be divided into lots. Then she went to the second bedroom and made the same suggestion. The case of the sufferers in the hospital required more drastic measures. The little girl she stripped with her own hands and clothed her in one of Brand's flannel shirts and a commandeered reefer jacket.

Two of Brand's spare suits and a couple of blankets

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enabled the two injured women, who were able to walk, to get rid of their wet garments in the crowded room beneath, and the lockers of Jackson and Bates made it possible for the men who most needed attention to be made comfortable by the invaluable hospital orderly.

Constance was kept busy flying up and down to the kitchen, whilst Enid, having met all immediate demands in the matter of a hot beverage and something to eat, supplemented her labors.

Pyne worked like a Trojan. As each pile of sodden garments was delivered to him he squeezed out as much water as possible with his hands and then applied himself to the task of baking them dry. He did this, too, in a very efficient way, speedily converting the kitchen into a miniature Turkish bath. At the end of an hour, he had succeeded so well that more than one-half of the females were supplied with tolerably dry and warm under-clothing. With their heavier garments, of course nothing could be done.

Once, on the stairs, Enid detained Constance for a moment's chat.

"Mrs. Vansittart is odd," she said.

Constance, so taken up was she with many errands, had forgotten the lady.

"How thoughtless of me," she cried. "Is she better?"

"Yes. But when I went in just now to give her her clothes, she said to me: 'Are you the sister of the other — of Constance Brand?' It was no time for explanations, so I just said 'Yes.' She gave me such a

queer look, and then smiled quite pleasantly, apologizing for troubling me."

Constance laughed.

"Perhaps she knew dad years ago," she said.

"What do you think Mr. Pyne said about her?"

"How can I tell? Did you speak of her to him?"

"I told him she had fainted when you delivered his message. He said: 'Guess she can faint as easy as I can fall off a house.' Isn't he funny?"

"I think he is splendid," said Constance.

The wreck was now wholly demolished. The first big wave of the retreating tide enveloped the lighthouse and smote it with thunderous malice. Screams came from the women's quarters.

"Go, Enid," said Constance. "Tell them they have nothing to fear. They must expect these things to happen for nearly two hours. Tell them what dad said. Twenty-five years, you know."

Brave hearts! What infinite penetration inspired the man who first said "*Noblesse oblige!*"

Constance looked in at the kitchen. Pyne loomed through a fog of steam.

"Pay no heed to these —" she was interrupted by another mighty thump and cataract roar — "these blows of Thor's hammer," she cried.

"Play me for an anvil," he returned.

She descended to the depths, to reassure the men. Talking with shrill cheerfulness at each doorway was easy. It helped her to go down, down, feeling stone and iron trembling as every surge was hurled many

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feet above her head. At last, she stood on the lowest floor. Beneath her feet was naught but granite and iron bars. Here was solidity. How grateful to know of this firm base, rooted in the very world. Her heart leaped to her mouth, but not with fear. She was proud of the lighthouse, strong in the knowledge of its majestic strength.

Nevertheless, in this place, the source of her own sense of security, she found uneasiness among the men. They were all sailors in this lowest habitable region. Their pre-conceived ideas had been rudely reversed. The ship, the noble structure which defied the storm by yielding to its utmost fury, had for them no terrors. But the stark pillar which flinched from no assault bewildered them. It was impossible to believe that it could withstand the strain. Ha! Listen to that. The battering-ram of ocean applied to a thin shaft of stone. Surely it must be pounded into fragments.

Said one, with indefinite bellow amidst the black turmoil: "I can't stand this, mates."

"Up aloft for me!" cried another.

"Let's die with our eyes open, anyhow," chimed in a third.

But a light flashed in the rolling orbs of the man who was already on the stairs. Astounded, he drew back. Constance stood in their midst, a mere girl, radiant, smilingly unconcerned, addressing them in calm words broken only by the fitful noises.

"Sorry your quarters — so very unpleasant. Only

last a — couple of hours. Twenty-five years — far worse gales. Want any more cocoa?"

"Thank you kindly, miss, we're quite comfortable." This from the man who wished to die with his eyes open.

"Please, miss, may we smoke?" said he who couldn't stand it.

Constance hesitated. Blithely unconscious that a whiff of mutiny had swept through the storm-tossed fold, she pondered the problem. She saw no harm in it.

"Yes," she said. "Smoke by all means. I will ask my father, and if it should be dangerous I will come back and let you know. In a few hours it will be daylight and if the sea falls he will come and open the door."

By sheer inspiration she had uttered the formula destined to annihilate the necromantic bluster of the hammering waves. Open the door! So this ponderous racket was a mere tidal trick, a bogey, which each passing minute would expose more thoroughly.

"All right, miss, an' Gawd bless yer," growled one who had not spoken hitherto. There was a chorus of approval. Constance gave a little gulp. The cultured and delicate lady lying in the bunk above had not spoken so.

"Indeed," she gasped, "God has blessed some of us this night."

Then she fled, further utterance failing her.

Nearer the sky, Brand tended the lamp and discussed matters with chief officer Emmett. The sailor, with

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the terse directness of his class, told how the *Chinook* had made an excellent voyage from New York until she ran into bad weather about four hundred miles west of the Lizard.

"It seems to me," he said, "as if we dropped onto the track of that hurricane after it had curved away to the norrard, and that the d——d thing swooped down on us again when we were abreast of the Bishop Light."

Brand nodded. This surmise agreed with his own theory of the storm, as indicated by the sea.

Mr. Emmett held out a clenched fist with thumb jerked towards the reef.

"I wouldn't breathe a word if *he* wasn't gone," he said, "but the old man was drivin' her too hard. I knew it, and the chief knew it" — he meant the chief engineer — "but he wouldn't listen to either Mac or me. Fact is, he was fair crazy to set up a new record for the boat. She's been crossin' the Atlantic forty times a year for upwards of twenty years, and the recent alterations, although they added fifty feet to her length, only increased her engine-power in proportion."

"You surprise me," broke in Brand. "You speak as if the *Chinook* were nearly as old as this lighthouse, yet I have never even heard her name before."

"You know her well enough all the same," said the other ruefully. "This is her maiden voyage since she was altered; an' they rechristened her, too — always a d——d unlucky thing to do, I say. Bless your heart, man, she is the old *Princess Royal*. Eh? What's that?"

He guffawed mournfully at Brand's involuntary exclamation.

"Certain! Well, surely I ought to know. I have passed most of my service with the company in her, and when I took a crew to Cramp's to navigate her to New York after she was smartened up I little imagined I would see her laid by forever the next time we saw the lights of Old England. My goodness, even what was left of the old girl ought to know her way better'n that."

"But what did really happen?"

"Drivin' her, I tell you — drivin' her full pelt to land the mails at Southampton twelve hours ahead of schedule. With that awful sea liftin' her, and a shaft twenty feet longer, what could you expect? Poor Perkins! A rare hard worker, too. Now he's gone down with his ship an' over two hundred passengers an' crew."

"Judging by the number saved I feared that more were lost."

"It's the off season, you know. The passenger list was light. For the Lord's sake, think of what it might have been in May or June!"

"It is bad enough as it is. All has not ended with the disappearance of the vessel."

The sailor shot a sharp glance at Brand.

"You can't be thinkin' anyone was to blame —" he commenced. But Brand waved aside the fancied imputation.

"Blame!" he said. "With a broken shaft! In that whirlwind! No, no. I sent for you to talk over the new difficulty which has to be faced. There are food,

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water and fuel here for three men for two months. If you do a little sum you will find that the available stores on the basis of full rations will maintain eighty-one people for two days and a quarter."

"But we're only six miles from the mainland." Mr. Emmett had not yet grasped the true meaning of the figures.

"I have been here more than once for six weeks at a stretch, when, for all the assistance we could receive, we might as well have been within the Arctic Circle."

Again the sailor jerked his thumb towards the reef.

"Is it as bad as all that?" he queried anxiously.

"Yes."

"But six weeks. Good Lord!" Mr. Emmett had done the little sum.

"That is exceptional. A week is the average unless the unexpected happens, after a gale like this. And a week will test our endurance to the limit."

Mr. Emmett whistled softly. A grisly phantom was creeping at him. He shivered, and not from cold.

"By Jove!" he said. "What's to be done?"

"In the first place, you must help me to maintain iron discipline. To leave the rock today or tomorrow will be an absolute impossibility. On the next day, with luck and a steady moderation of the weather, we may devise some desperate means of landing all the active men or getting fresh supplies. That is in the hands of Providence. I want you to warn your officers, and others whom you can trust, either sailors or civilians. Better arrange three watches. My daughters will have

charge of the stores. By going through the lists in the store-room I can portion out the rations for six days. I think we had better fix on that minimum."

"Of course I will back you up in every way," said Mr. Emmett, who felt chillier at this moment than at any time during the night. "I know you are acting wisely, but I admit I am scared at the thought of what may happen — if those days pass and no help is available."

Brand knew what would happen, and it was hard to lock the secret in his heart. He alone must live. That was essential, the one thing carved in stone upon the tablets of his brain, a thing to be fought out behind barred door, revolver in hand.

Whatever else took place, if men and women, perhaps his own sweet girls, were dying of thirst and starvation, the light must shine at night over its allotted span of the slumbering sea. There, on the little table beside him, lay the volume of Rules and Regulations. What did it say?

"The keepers, both principal and assistant, are enjoined never to allow any interests, whether private or otherwise, to interfere with the discharge of their public duties, the importance of which to the safety of navigation cannot be overrated."

There was no ambiguity in the words, no halting sentence which opened a way for a man to plead: "I thought it best." Those who framed the rule meant what they said. No man could bend the steel of their intent.

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To end the intolerable strain of his thoughts Stephen Brand forced his lips to a thin smile and his voice to say harshly:

"If the worst comes to the worst, there are more than three thousand gallons of colza oil in store. That should maintain life. It is a vegetable oil."

Then Constance thrust her glowing face into the lighted area.

"Dad," she cried, cheerfully, "the men wish to know if they may smoke. Poor fellows! They are so miserable — so cold and damp and dreary down there. Please say 'Yes.'"

CHAPTER IX

MRS. VANSITTART

THE purser, faithful to his trust, had secured the ship's books. He alone, among the survivors of the *Chinook*, had brought a parcel of any sort from that ill-fated ship. The others possessed the clothes they wore, their money, and in some cases their trinkets.

Mr. Emmett suggested that a list of those saved should be compiled. Then, by ticking off the names, he could classify the inmates of the lighthouse and evolve some degree of order in the community.

It was found that there were thirty-seven officers and men, including stewards, thirty-three saloon passengers, of whom nineteen were women, counting the two little girls, and seven men and one woman from the steerage.

"It isn't usual, on a British ship, for the crew to bulk so large on the list," said Mr. Emmett huskily. "But it couldn't be helped. The passengers had to be battened down. They couldn't live on deck. We never gave in until the last minute."

"I saw that," said Brand, knowing the agony which prompted the broken explanation.

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"An' not a mother's soul would have escaped if it wasn't for young Mr. Pyne," went on the sailor.

"Is that the name of the youngster who climbed the fore-mast?"

"That's him. It was a stroke of genius, his catching onto that way out. He was as cool as a cucumber. Just looked up when he reached the deck an' saw the lighthouse so near. Then he asked me for a rope. Planned the whole thing in a second, so to speak."

"He is not one of the ship's company?"

"No, sir, a passenger, nevvy of Cyrus J. Traill, the Philadelphian millionaire. Haven't you heard of Traill? Not much of a newspaper reader, eh? There was a lady on board, a Mrs. Vansittart, who was coming over to marry old Traill, so people said, and the weddin' was fixed to take place in Paris next week. Young Pyne was actin' as escort."

"Is she lost? What a terrible thing!"

The chief officer glanced down the purser's lists and slapped his thigh with much vehemence.

"No, by gosh! Here she is, marked O. K. Well, that beats the band."

"So the lad has discharged his trust to his uncle?"

Mr. Emmett was going to say something, but checked the words on his lips.

"Queer world," he muttered. "Queer world."

With that he devoted himself to planning out the watches. Soon he and the purser betook themselves to the depths with a roll-call. As they crept below gingerly — these sailor-men were not at home on com-

panion ladders which moved not when the shock came — they met Enid, for the first time. She, coming up, held the swinging lantern level with her face. They hung back politely.

"Please come," she cried in her winsome way. "These stairs are too narrow for courtesy."

They stepped heavily onward. She flitted away. Emmett raised his lantern between the purser's face and his own.

"What do you think of *that?*" he whispered, awe-stricken.

The man of accounts smiled broadly.

"Pretty girl!" he agreed, with crudely emphatic superlatives.

Emmett shook his head. He murmured to himself: "I guess I'm tired. I see things."

Enid handed an armful of dry linen to the damp, steaming women in the lower bedroom. She was hurrying out; someone overtook her at the door. It was Mrs. Vansittart.

"Miss Brand," she said, with her all-sufficing smile, "give me one moment."

They stood in the dark and hollow-sounding stairway. The seas were lashing the column repeatedly, but the night's ordeal was nearly ended. Even a timid child might know now that the howling terror without had done its worst and failed. From the cavernous depths, mingling with the rumble of the storm, came the rhythm of a hymn. Those left in gloom by the

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withdrawal of Mr. Emmett's lantern were cheering their despondent souls.

Surprised, even whilst Enid awaited the older woman's demand, the listeners heard the words:

"Awake, my soul, and with the sun
Thy daily stage of duty run;
Shake off dull sloth, and joyful rise
To pay thy morning sacrifice."

The rough tones of the men were softened and harmonized by the distance. It was a chant of praise, of thanksgiving, the offering of those who had been snatched from death and from mortal fear more painful than death.

The singing ceased as suddenly as it began. Mr. Emmett and the purser were warning the first watch.

The interruption did not seem to help Mrs. Vansittart. She spoke awkwardly, checking her thoughts as though fearful she might be misunderstood, or say too much.

"I am better," she explained, "quite recovered. I — gave up my bunk to one who needed it."

"I am sure we are all doing our best to help one another," volunteered Enid.

"But I am restless. The sight — of your sister — aroused vague memories. Do you mind — I find it hard to explain — your name is familiar. I knew — some people — called Brand — a Mr. Stephen Brand — and his wife."

She halted, seemingly at a loss. Enid, striving help-

lessly to solve the reason for this unexpected confidence, but quite wishful to make the explanation easier, found herself interested.

"Yes," she said. "That is quite possible, of course, though you must have been quite a girl. Mrs. Brand died many years ago."

Mrs. Vansittart flinched from the feeble rays of the lantern.

"That is so — I think I heard of — of Mrs. Brand's death — in London, I fancy. But — they had only one child."

Enid laughed.

"I am a mere nobody," she said. "Dad adopted me. I came here one day in June, nineteen years ago, and I must have looked so forlorn that he took me to his heart — thank God!"

Another solemn chord of the hymn floated up to them:

"Let all thy converse be sincere,
Thy conscience as the noonday clear."

The rest of the verse evaded them. Probably a door was closed.

Mrs. Vansittart seemed to be greatly perturbed. Enid, intent on the occupation of the moment, believed their little chat was ended. To round it off, so to speak, she went on quickly:

"I imagine I am the most mysterious person living, in my early history, I mean. Mr. Brand saw me floating towards this lighthouse in a deserted boat. I was

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nearly dead. The people who had been with me were gone, either starved and thrown into the sea or knocked overboard during a collision, as the boat was badly damaged. My linen was marked 'E. T.' That is the only definite fact I can tell you. All the rest is guess-work. Evidently, nobody cared to claim me. And here I am."

Mrs. Vansittart was leaning back in the deep gloom, supporting herself against the door of the bedroom.

"What a romance!" she said, faintly.

"A vague one, and this is no time to gossip about it. Can I get you anything?"

Enid felt that she really must not prolong their conversation, and the other woman's exclamation threatened further talk.

"No, thank you. You'll excuse me, I know. My natural interest —"

But Enid, with a parting smile, was halfway toward the next landing, and Mrs. Vansittart was free to re-enter the crowded apartment where her fellow-sufferers were wondering when they would see daylight again. She did not stir. The darkness was intense, the narrow passage draughty, and the column thrilled and quivered in an unnerving manner. She heard the clang of a door above and knew that Enid had gone into the second apartment given over to the women. Somewhere, higher up, was the glaring light of which she had a faint recollection, though she was almost unconscious when unbound from the rope and carried into the service-room.

And at that moment, not knowing it, she had been near to Stephen Brand, might have spoken to him, looked into his face. What was he like, she wondered. Had he aged greatly with the years? A lighthouse-keeper! Of all professions in this wide world how came he to adopt that? And what ugly trick was fate about to play her that she should be cast ashore on this desolate rock where he was in charge? Could she avoid him? Had she been injudicious in betraying her knowledge of the past? And how marvelous was the likeness between Constance and her father! The chivalrous, high-minded youth she had known came back to her through the mists of time. The calm, proud eyes, the firm mouth, the wide expanse of forehead were his. From her mother — the woman who "died many years ago," when she, Mrs. Vansittart, was "quite a girl" — the girl inherited the clear profile, the wealth of dark-brown hair, and a grace of movement not often seen in Englishwomen.

Though her teeth chattered with the cold, Mrs. Vansittart could not bring herself to leave the vault-like stairway. Once more the hymn-singers cheered their hearts with words of praise. Evidently, there was one among them who not only knew the words but could lead them mightily in the tunes of many old favorites.

The opening of a door — caused by the passing to and fro of some of the ship's officers — brought to her distracted ears the concluding bars of a verse. When the voices swelled forth again she caught the full refrain:

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"Raise thine eyes to heaven
When thy spirits quail,
When, by tempests driven,
Heart and courage fail."

Such a message might well carry good cheer to all who heard, yet Mrs. Vansittart listened as one in a trance, to whom the divinest promise was a thing unasked for and unrecognized. After passing through the greater peril of the reef in a state of supine consciousness, she was now moved to extreme activity by a more personal and selfish danger. There was she, a human atom, to be destroyed or saved at the idle whim of circumstance: here, with life and many things worth living for restored to her safe keeping, she saw imminent risk of a collapse with which the nebulous dangers of the wreck were in no way comparable. It would have been well for her could she only realize the promise of the hymn: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Not so ran Mrs. Vansittart's jumble of thoughts. The plans, the schemes, the builded edifice of many years, threatened to fall in ruin about her. In such bitter mood there was no consolation. She sought not to find spiritual succor, but bewailed the catastrophe which had befallen her.

It assuredly contributed to that "affliction which is but for a moment," that Constance should happen just then to run up the stairs towards the hospital. Each flight was so contrived that it curved across two-thirds

of the superficial area allotted to the stairway. Anyone ascending made a complete turn to the right-about to reach the door of the room on any given landing and the foot of the ladder to the next.

Hence, the girl came unexpectedly face to face with Mrs. Vansittart. The meeting startled her. This pale woman, so thinly clad in the demi-toilette of evening wear on ship-board, should not be standing there.

"Is anything wrong?" she cried, raising her lantern just as Enid did when she encountered the sailors.

"No, no," said the other, passing a nervous hand over her face. Constance, with alert intelligence, fancied she dreaded recognition.

"Then why are you standing here? It is so cold. You will surely make yourself ill."

"I was wondering if I might see Mr. Brand," came the desperate answer, the words bubbling forth with unrestrained vehemence.

"See my father?" repeated the girl. She took thought for an instant. The lighthouse-keeper would not be able to leave the lamp for nearly three hours. When dawn came, she knew he would have many things to attend to, signals to the Land's End, the arrangement of supplies, which he had already mentioned to her, and a host of other matters. Four o'clock in the morning was an unconventional hour for an interview, but time itself was topsy-turvy under the conditions prevalent on the Gulf Rock.

"I will ask him," she went on hurriedly, with an un-

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comfortable feeling that Mrs. Vansittart resented her judicial pause.

"Thank you."

To the girl's ears the courteous acknowledgment conveyed an odd note of menace. If the eyes are the windows of the soul surely the voice is its subtle gauge. The more transparently simple, clean-minded the hearer, the more accurate is the resonant impression. Constance found herself vaguely perplexed by two jostling abstractions. If they took shape it was in mute questioning. Why was Mrs. Vansittart so anxious to revive, or, it might be, probe, long-buried memories, and why did her mobile smile seem to veil a hostile intent?

But the fresh, gracious maidenhood in her cast aside these unwonted studies in mind-reading.

"He has so much to do," she explained. "Although there are many of us on the rock tonight he has never been so utterly alone. Won't you wait inside until I return?"

"Not unless I am in the way," pleaded the other. "I was choking in there. The air here, the space, are so grateful."

So Constance passed her. Mrs. Vansittart noted the dainty manner in which she picked up her skirts to mount the stairs. She caught a glimpse of the tailor-made gown, striped silk underskirt, well-fitting, low-heeled, wide-welted expensive boots. Trust a woman to see all these things at a glance, with even the shifting glimmer of a storm-proof lantern to aid the quick appraisement.

As the girl went out of her sight a reminiscence came to her.

"No wonder I was startled," she communed. "That sailor's coat she wears helps the resemblance. Probably it is her father's."

Then the loud silence of the lighthouse appalled her. The singing had ceased, or was shut off by a closed door. One might be in a tomb as surrounded by this tangible darkness. The tremulous granite, so cold and hard, yet alive in its own grim strength, the murmuring commotion of wind and waves swelling and dying in ghost-like echoes, suggested a grave, a vault close sealed from the outer world, though pulsating with the far-away existence of heedless multitudes. Thus, brooding in the gloom, a tortured soul without form and void, she awaited the return of her messenger.

Constance, after looking in at the hospital, went on to the service-room. Her father was not there. She glanced up to the trimming-stage, expecting to see him attending to the lamp. No. He had gone. Somewhat bewildered, for she was almost certain he was not in any of the lower apartments, she climbed to the little door in the glass frame.

Ah! There he was, on the landward side of the gallery. What was the matter now? Surely there was not another vessel in distress. However, being relieved from any dubiety as to his whereabouts she went back to the service-room and gave herself the luxury of a moment's rest. Oh, how tired she was! Not until she sat down did she realize what it meant to live as she

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had lived, and to do all that she had done, during the past four hours.

Her respite was of short duration. Brand, his oilskins gleaming with wet, came in.

"Hello, sweetheart, what's up now?" he cried, in such cheerful voice that she knew all was well.

"That was exactly what I was going to ask you," she said.

"The *Falcon* is out there," he replied, with a side nod towards Mount's Bay.

Constance knew that the *Falcon* was a sturdy steam-trawler, a bull-dog little ship, built to face anything in the shape of gales.

"They can do nothing, of course," she commented.

"No. I stood between them and the light for a second, and they evidently understood that I was on the lookout, as a lantern dipped seven times, which I interpreted as meaning that they will return at daybreak. Now they are off to Penzance again."

"They turned safely then?"

"Shipped a sea or two, no doubt. The wind is dropping, but the sea is running mountains high."

He had taken off his oilskins. Constance suddenly felt a strong disinclination to rise. Being a strong-willed young person, she sprang up instantly.

"I came to ask you if you can see Mrs. Vansittart," she said.

"Mrs. Vansittart!" he cried, with a genuine surprise that thrilled her with a pleasure she assuredly could not account for.

"Yes. She asked if she might have a word with you."

He threw his hands up in comic despair.

"Tell the good lady I am up to my eyes in work. The oil is running low. I must hie me to the pump at once. I have my journal to fill. If there is no sun I cannot heliograph and I have a host of signals to look up and get ready. And, a word in your ear, Connie dear. We will be 'at home' on the rock for the next forty-eight hours. Give the lady my very deep regrets and ask her to allow me to send for her when I have a minute to spare, some hours hence."

She kissed him.

"You dear old thing," she cried. "You will tire yourself to death, I am sure."

He caught her by the chin.

"Mark my words," he laughed. "You will feel this night in your bones longer than I. By the way, no matter who goes hungry, don't prepare any breakfast until I come to you. I suppose the kitchen is your headquarters?"

"Yes, though Enid has had far more of Mr. Pyne's company. She is cook, you know."

"Is Pyne there too?"

"He is laundry-maid, drying clothes."

"I think I shall like him," mused Brand. "He seems to be a helpful sort of youngster. That reminds me. Tell him to report himself to Mr. Emmett as my assistant,—if he cares for the post, that is."

He did not see the ready spirit of mischief that danced

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in her eyes. She pictured Mr. Pyne "fixing things" with Mr. Emmett "mighty quick."

When she reached the first bedroom floor Mrs. Vansittart had gone.

"I thought it would be strange if she stood long in this draught," mused Constance. She opened the door. The lady she sought was leaning disconsolate against a wall.

"My father —" she began.

"I fear I was thoughtless," interrupted Mrs. Vansittart. "He must be greatly occupied. Of course, I can see him in the morning before the vessel comes. They *will* send a ship soon to take us off?"

"At the earliest possible moment," was the glad answer. "Indeed, dad has just been signalling to a tug which will return at daybreak."

There was a joyous chorus from the other inmates. Constance had not the requisite hardihood to tell them how they misconstrued her words.

As she quitted them she admitted to herself that Mrs. Vansittart, though disturbing in some of her moods, was really very considerate. It never occurred to her that her new acquaintance might have suddenly discovered the exceeding wisdom of a proverb concerning second thoughts.

Indeed, Mrs. Vansittart now bitterly regretted the mpulse which led her to betray any knowledge of Stephen Brand or his daughter. Of all the follies of a wayward life, that was immeasurably the greatest, in Mrs. Vansittart's critical scale.

But what would you? It is not often given to a woman of nerves, a woman of volatile nature, a shallow worldling, yet versed in the deepest wiles of intrigue, to be shipwrecked, to be plucked from a living hell, to be swung through a hurricane to the secure insecurity of a dark and hollow pillar standing on a Calvary of storm-tossed waves, and then, whilst her senses swam in utmost bewilderment, to be confronted with a living ghost.

Yet that was precisely what had happened to her.

Fate is grievous at times. This haven of refuge was a place of torture. Mrs. Vansittart broke down and wept in her distress.

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CHAPTER X

PYNE'S PROGRESS

A PRIMROSE light in the east heralded a chilly dawn. The little world of the Gulf Rock bestirred itself in its damp misery at the news. The fresh watch, delighted by the prospect of activity, clattered up and down the iron stairs, opened all available windows, unclamped the door when Brand gave the order, and busied itself exceedingly with the desultory jobs which offered to so many willing hands.

It was now, by the nautical almanac, dead low water on the reef, but the strong southwesterly wind, hurling a heavy sea completely over the rocks, showed that the standards of war and peace differ as greatly in the matter of tides as in most other respects.

As the light increased it lost its first warm tinge. Steel gray were sky and water, sombre the iron-bound land, whilst the whereabouts of the sun became a scientific abstraction. Therefore, the heliograph was useless, and Brand, helped by some of the sailors, commenced to flaunt his flag-signals to the watching telescopes on the far-off promontory of the Land's End. The *Falcon*, strong-hearted trawler, was plunging

towards the rock when the first line of gay bunting swung clear into the breeze. And what a message it was — in its jerky phrases — its profound uncertainties — for communication by flag code is slow work, and Brand left much to an easier system of talk with the approaching steamer.

"*Chinook* — New York to Southampton — struck reef during hurricane — propeller shaft broken — 78 survivors in lighthouse — captain, 201 passengers, officers and crew — lost with ship."

The awful significance of the words sank into the hearts of the signallers. For the first time, the disaster from which, by God's Providence, they had emerged safely became crystallized into set speech. Seventy-eight living out of two hundred and eighty who might have lived! This was the curt intelligence which leaped the waves to fly over the length and breadth of the land, which sped back to the States to replace the expected news of a safe voyage, which thrilled the civilized world as it had not been thrilled for many a day.

Not a soul in the lighthouse gave thought to this side of the affair. All were anxious to reassure their loved ones, but, in their present moribund condition, they could not realize the electric effect of the incident on the wider world which read and had hearts to feel.

Even whilst Stephen Brand was signalling to the *Falcon*, with little white flags quickly extemporized as soon as she neared the Trinity buoy, newspaper corre-

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spondents ashore were busy at the telegraph-office, and their associates on the trawler were eagerly transcribing the lighthouse-keeper's words wherewith to feed to fever heat the sensation which the night had provided for the day.

Brand, foreseeing the importance of clearness and brevity, had already written out a full draft of his detailed message.

Faithful to his promise, Stapleton was acting as signaller-in-chief on board the *Falcon*, so Brand might manipulate his flags as quickly as lay in his power, with chief officer Emmett reading the words at his elbow: there was no fear that any mistake would be made by the receiver.

The story, if condensed, was complete. Beginning with an explanation of the liner's disablement, it dealt with her desperate but unavailing struggle to weather the reef, described Pyne's gallant and successful effort to get in touch with the lighthouse, the rescue of a fourth of those on board, the names of the survivors, and, finally, their predicament in the matter of food and water.

All this took long to tell.

Within the lantern, Mr. Charles A. Pyne, appointed supernumerary assistant-keeper, was burnishing brasswork as per instructions received. He little knew the use which was being made of his name by the tiny bits of linen tossing about on the exterior gallery. In such wise, helped by a compositor and dignified by head-

lines, does a man become a hero in these days of knighthood conferred by the Press.

Constance was scrutinizing the *Falcon* from the trimming-stage. Hearing Enid's cheery "Good-morning" to Pyne when that young lady raced upwards from the kitchen to catch a glimpse of the reported vessel, she dropped her glasses for a moment.

"Jack is on board," she announced. "Of course he would be there. And there is such a lot of other men — half Penzance, I think."

Enid joined her; Pyne, too, thought he could polish a burner up there as well as on the floor of the service-room.

Stanhope's stalwart figure, clad in oilskins, was clearly defined as he stood alone on the port side of the *Falcon's* small bridge, reading off the signals and sending back spasmodic twitterings of the flags which he, also, had procured, to indicate that each word was understood.

"Who is the skipper of the tug?" inquired Pyne quietly.

Both girls laughed.

"You mean Jack," cried Enid. "He is not the captain. He is an officer of the Royal Navy, our greatest friend."

"Jack is his front name, I suppose," went on Pyne, breathing on the copper disc in his hands to test its clearness.

"We will introduce you, even at this distance," said Constance airily. "Mr. Pyne — this is Lieutenant

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John Percival Stanhope, only son of the late Sir Charles and Lady Margaret Stanhope, of Tregarthen Lodge, Penzance, one of the best and dearest fellows who ever lived."

"It must be nice to be a friend of yours, Miss Brand, if you always talk about the favored person in that way," said Pyne, rubbing industriously.

Enid, to whom the mere sight of the steamer had restored all her vitality, giggled joyously.

"You know, Mr. Pyne, we all love Jack, as the song says. It was a mere accident that he did not accompany us to the rock yesterday. Connie would not let him come."

"Ah," said Pyne.

"I forbade him," explained Constance, "because he has only three days' leave from his ship, and I thought he should give the first afternoon to his mother instead of playing poodle for Enid."

"How dare you call Jack a poodle?" was the indignant exclamation."

"Allow me," drawled Pyne. "I'm very glad your sister classified him."

Constance suddenly felt her neck and face aflame. Pyne was standing on her left, Enid on her right. The quiet jubilation of Pyne's voice was so unmistakable that Enid, for one instant, withdrew her eyes from the distant ship. A retort was quick on her lips, until she bethought her that the American's statement might have two meanings.

Being tactful withal, she chose her words whilst she bubbled forth:

"He promised to take us for a drive today. That is the dot and dash alphabet father and he are using. If dad requires all the dots I'm sure Jack is monopolizing the dashes. He must be furious about this gale."

Constance, who wanted to pinch Enid severely, had reverted to her normal healthy hue by this time. She dropped her glasses.

"We are shamefully wasting precious minutes here," she said. "Enid, you and I ought to be in the kitchen."

Then she glanced with cold self-possession at Pyne, who was whistling softly between his teeth as he plied the duster.

"As for you," she said, "I never saw anyone work so hard with less need."

He critically examined the shining burner.

"We Americans are taught to be strenuous," he said smilingly. "That is the only way you can cut in ahead of the other fellow nowadays, Miss Brand."

She almost resigned the contest. That unhappy explanation had delivered her bound into his hands. Yet she strove desperately to keep up the pretence that their spoken words had no ulterior significance.

"Such energy must be very wearing," she said.

"It is — for the other man."

"But in your case it is unnecessary. My father believes we will be here at least forty-eight hours." Then she became conscious that again she had not said exactly what she meant to say. "So you, at any rate, need not wear your fingers to the bone," she added hurriedly.

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"Guess it must be a national vice," he said with irritating complacency. "Just now I feel I have a regular hustle on."

"Your example equals your precepts. Enid, tear yourself from the attractive spectacle. There are eighty-one ravenous people to be fed."

"Sorry you haven't hit upon the real reason of my abounding industry," said Pyne, who skipped down the ladder first to give the girls a helping hand as they descended.

"Please tell us. It may be inspiring," said Constance.

"I'm going to ask the boss if I can't take a turn as scullery-maid when I'm through here."

"Then I veto the idea now," she answered. "Enid and I have had a most comfortable nap, and I am certain you have not closed your eyes all night. I will make it my personal business to see that both my father and you lie down for a couple of hours immediately after breakfast."

"Or else there will be a mutiny in the kitchen," chimed in Enid.

"Connie," she whispered, when they were safely out of hearing from the service-room, "I never saw a worse case. Talk about the young men suddenly smitten you read of in novels —"

Her sister whirled round.

"How can you be so silly?" she blazed forth.

"Why did you libel Jack so readily?" tittered Enid.

The other, utterly routed, went on in dignified silence.

She did not speak again until they surveyed the store apportioned for the coming feast.

"Eighty-one!" she murmured. "What a monstrous deal of people for a half-penny worth of bread!"

"What is the use of repining?" sang Enid, with a fortissimo accent on the penultimate syllable. "For where there's a will there's a way. Tomorrow the sun will be shining, although it is cloudy today."

But Constance was not to be drawn a second time. Her clear brain was troubled by a formless shadow. It banished from her mind all thought of a harmless flirtation with the good-looking youngster who had brought a blush of momentary embarrassment to her fair face.

How dreadful it would be to meet hunger with refusals — perhaps there were worse things in the world than the midnight ordeal of an angry sea.

Indeed, when Pyne did join them in accord with his intention, he soon perceived the extent of the new danger. The stress of the night had only enhanced the need of an ample supply of food. Everybody — even the inmates of the hospital — was outrageously hungry, and the common allotment was half a cup of tea and half a ship's biscuit.

For the midday meal there would be two ounces of meat or bacon, one potato, and another half biscuit with about a wine-glassful of water. For supper the allowance was half a cup of cocoa and two ounces of bread, which must be baked during the day. Not quite starvation, this menu, but far from satisfying to strong men and worn-out women.

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The *Falcon*, knowing the uselessness of attempting to creep nearer to the Gulf Rock, had gone off with her budget to startle two continents. Stanhope's last message was one of assurance. He would do all that lay in man's power. The lighthouse soon quieted down to a state of passive reaction. Pyne, refusing to be served earlier, carried his own and Brand's scanty meal on a tray to the service-room.

The unwearied lighthouse-keeper was on the balcony, answering a kindly signal from the Land's End, where the coast-guards were not yet in possession of the news from Penzance.

He placed the tray on the writing-desk and contemplated its contents ruefully.

"I guess that banquet won't spoil for keeping," he said to himself. "I'll just lay round and look at it until the boss quits making speeches by the yard."

A couple of minutes passed. Brand was hoisting the last line of flags, when the American heard faltering footsteps on the stairs.

"Don't follow so close, Mamie," said a child's voice. "My arm hurts just 'nuff for anything when I move."

A towzled head of golden hair emerged into the light. It was one of the two little girls, whom Pyne had not seen since they were swung aloft from the sloping deck of the *Chinook*.

Their astonishment was mutual. The child, aged about eight, recognized in him a playmate of the fine days on board ship. She turned with confident cry.

"I told you so, Mamie. It was up. You said down. Here's the big glass house — and Mr. Pyne."

She quickened her speed, though her left arm was in a sling. Pyne, dreading lest she should fall, hastened to help her.

"I'se all right, Mr. Pyne," she announced with an air of great dignity. "I make one step at a time. Then I ketch the rail. See?"

"You've got it down to a fine point, Elsie," he said. "But what in the world are those women-folk thinking of to let you and Mamie run loose about the place."

Elsie did not answer until Mamie stood by her side. Judged by appearances, Mamie was a year younger. Apart from the nasty bruise on Elsie's left arm and shoulder, the children had escaped from the horrors of the wreck almost unscathed in body and certainly untroubled in mind.

"Mamie came to my room for breakfast," explained Elsie at last. "We'se awful hungry, an' when we axed for 'nother bixit Mrs. Taylor she began to cry. An' when I said we'd go an' find mamma she cried some more."

"Yes. We'se awful hungry," agreed Mamie. "An' please where's mamma?"

Pyne needed no further explanation. The little ones had lost their mother; her disfigured body, broken out of all recognition, was tossing about somewhere in the under-currents of the Channel. None of the women dared to tell the children the truth, and it was a heart-rending task to deny them food.

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So, they were permitted to leave their refuge, with the kindly belief that they would come to no harm and perchance obtain a further supply from one of those sweet-faced girls who explained so gently that the rations must run short for the common good.

Pyne glanced up at the lantern. Outside he could see Brand hauling down the signal. He sprang to the tray and secured his half biscuit and tea cup.

"Come along, Elsie," he said, crooking his left arm for her. "Follow close, Mamie. Mind you don't fall."

"Your mamma is asleep," he assured them in a whisper on the next landing. "She just can't be woke up for quite a long time."

Then he navigated them to the door of the second bedroom, where Mrs. Taylor was. He broke the hard biscuit in two pieces and gave one to each child.

"Here, Mamie, you carry the cup, and go shares in the tea."

"I don't like tea," protested Mamie. "If I can't have coffee I want some milk."

"Well, now, you wait a little bit, and you'll be tickled to death to see what I'll bring you. But drink the tea. It's good an' hot. Skip inside, both of you."

He held the door partly open and they vanished. He heard Mrs. Taylor say:

"Didn't I tell you those two little dears would do their own business best."

He regained the service-room to find Brand steeping the remains of his biscuit in an almost empty cup. The

lighthouse-keeper greeted his young friend with a smile.

"I suppose that you, like the rest of us, never had such an appetite in all your days?" he said.

"Oh, I'm pretty well fixed," said Pyne, with responsive grin.

"Then you are fortunate. There is usually a wretched little fiend lurking in a man's inner consciousness which prompts him to desire the unattainable. Now, I am a poor eater as a rule, yet this morning I feel I could tackle the toughest steak ever cut off a superannuated cow."

"I don't deny," admitted Pyne, "that the idea of a steak sounds good. That is, you know," he went on languidly, "it might sort of appeal to me about one o'clock."

"I should have thought you could do with one now, especially after the hard night we have gone through. Perhaps you are a believer in the French system, and prefer a light breakfast."

Brand finished the last morsel of biscuit and drank the cup dry.

"It's a first-rate proposition — when you are accustomed to it," said Pyne. "But talking about eating when there's little to eat is a poor business, anyway. Don't you find that?"

"I do indeed."

Brand rose and tapped the barometer, adjusting the sliding scale to read the tenths.

"Slightly better," he announced. "If only the wind would go down, or even change to the norrard!"

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"What good would a change of wind do?" inquired Pyne, greatly relieved himself by the change of topic.

"It would beat down the sea to some extent and then they might be able to drift a buoy, with a rope attached, close enough to the rock at low tide to enable us to reach it with a cast of a grappling iron."

"Do you mean that we could be ferried to the steamer by that means?"

"That is absolutely out of the question until the weather moderates to a far greater extent than I dare hope at present. But, once we had the line, we could rig up a running tackle and obtain some stores."

"Is it as bad as all that?" said the younger man, after a pause.

They looked at each other. The knowledge that all true men have of their kind leaped from eye to eye.

"Quite that bad," answered Brand.

Pyne moistened his lips. He produced a case containing two cigars. He held it out.

"Let us go shares in consolation," he said.

Brand accepted the gift, and affected a livelier mood.

"By lucky chance I have an ample supply of tobacco. It will keep the men quiet," he said. "By the way," and he lifted a quick glance at Pyne, "do you know anything about chemistry?"

"Well — er — I went through a course at Yale."

"Can colza oil be converted into a food."

"It contains certain fats," admitted Pyne, taking dubious stock of the question.

"But the process of conversion, the chemical reaction, that is the difficulty."

"Bi-sulphide of carbon is a solvent, and the fatty acids of most vegetable oils can be isolated by treatment with steam super-heated to about 600° Fahrenheit."

Brand threw out his hands with a little gesture of helplessness; just then Constance appeared.

"Dad," she cried, "did not Mr. Pyne tell you of my threat?"

"No, dear one. I am not living in terror of you, to my knowledge."

"You must please go to sleep, both of you, at least until ten or eleven o'clock. Mr. Emmett is sending a man to keep watch here. He will not disturb you. He is bringing some rugs and pillows which you can arrange on the floor. I have collected them for your special benefit."

"At this hour! Impossible, Connie."

"But it is not impossible, and this is the best hour available. You know quite well that the *Falcon* will return at high water. And you must rest, you know."

She bustled about, with the busy air of a house-wife who understood the whole art of looking after her family. But something puzzled her.

"Mr. Pyne," she inquired, "where is your cup?"

"I — er — took it down," he explained.

For some reason, Constance felt instantly that she had turned the tables on him since their last *rencontre*. She did not know why. He looked confused, for one thing: he was not so glib in speech, for another.

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"Down where?" she demanded. "Not to the kitchen. I have been there since you brought up your breakfast and dad's on the same tray."

"I breakfasted alone," remarked Brand calmly. "Mr. Pyne had feasted earlier."

"But he had not," persisted Constance. "I wanted him to —"

She stopped. This impudent American had actually dared to wink at her, a confidential, appealing wink which said plainly: "Please don't trouble about me."

"You gave your tea and biscuit to somebody," she cried suddenly. "Now, who was it? Confess!"

"Well," he said weakly, "I did not feel — er — particularly hungry, so, when I met those two little girls foolin' round for an extra supply, I — er — thought nobody would mind if — er —"

"Father!" said Constance. "He has not had a mouthful."

"Then take him downstairs and give him one. You must have found my conversation interesting, Mr. Pyne, whilst I was eating. But, before you go, let me add a word in season. There must be no further discrimination between persons. Stand or fall, each must abide by the common rule."

Pyne, with the guilty feeling of a detected villian, explained to Constance how the cup might be rescued.

"I shall keep a close eye on you in future," she announced as they went below.

"Do," he said. "That is all I ask for."

"I am a very strict person," she went on. "Dad always encouraged us in the sailor's idea of implicit obedience."

"Kick me. It will make me feel good," he answered.

Entering the second bed-room, where Elsie and Mamie were seated contentedly on the floor, she stooped and kissed them. And not a word did she say to Enid as to the reason why Mr. Pyne should be served with a second breakfast. She knew that any parade of his unselfishness would hurt him, and he, on his part, gave her unspoken thanks for her thought.

Conversation without words is an art understood only by master-minds and lovers, so these two were either exceptionally clever persons or developing traits of a more common genus — perhaps both.

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CHAPTER XI

MRS. VANSITTART'S FEAR.

The tribulations which clustered, in bee-like swarm, in and around the Gulf Rock Lighthouse during those weary hours were many and various. Damp clothing, insufficiency of food, interior temperatures ranging from the chill draught of the entrance passage and stair-ways to the partial suffocation of rooms with windows closed owing to the incursions of the rising tide — this unpleasing aggregate of physical misery was seriously augmented by an ever-increasing list of sick people, an almost total absence of any medical comforts, and a growing knowledge, on the part of those not too despondent to think, that their ultimate relief might be deferred for days rather than hours.

No mere man can understand, and a woman of ordinary experience can but dimly imagine, the difficulty and arduousness of the task undertaken by Constance and Enid.

To cook and supply food for eighty-one persons with utensils intended for the use of three, to give each separate individual an utterly inadequate portion, so skilfully distributed that none should have cause to grumble

at his or her neighbor's better fortune — here were culinary problems at once complex and exhaustive.

By adopting fantastic devices, bringing into service empty jam-pots and sardine-tins, they found it was possible to feed twenty at a time. This meant the preparation of four distinct meals, each requiring an hour's work. Long before the last batch, which included themselves, was lamenting the absurd discrepancy between appetite and antidote in the shape of anything to eat, the first was ravenous again.

The women complained the least. In the occupants of the two bedrooms the girls encountered a passive fortitude which was admirable. It was an extraordinary scene which met their eyes when they entered either of these stuffy apartments. Many of the rescued ladies had not given a thought to changing the demi-toilette of evening wear on board ship for more serviceable clothing when the hurricane overtook the vessel. They all, it is true, possessed cloaks or wraps of some sort, but these garments were still sodden with salt water and therefore unwearable, even if the oppressive warmth in each room rendered such a thing possible. Their elegant costumes of muslin, cotton, silk or satin, were utterly ruined. Lucky were the few whose blouses or bodices had not been rent into tatters.

Some of the worst sufferers in this respect were now the best provided. Blankets and sheets had been ruthlessly torn up and roughly stitched into articles of clothing. Mrs. Vansittart, for instance, who first suggested this *via media*, wore an exquisite Paris gown and

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a loose dressing-jacket arrangement of yellow blanket, the component parts of which she persuaded two other women to sew together on the model provided by her own elegant figure.

A few quick-witted ones who followed her example exhausted the available stock, and pillow-cases and rugs would have undergone metamorphosis in the same way had not Constance come to the rescue by impounding them, declaring that they must be reserved for the use of those sufferers who needed warmth and rest.

The men passed their time in smoking, singing, yarning and speculating on the chance of the weather clearing. Ultimately, when the banging of the waves again made the column feel unsafe, a small section began to plan petty attempts to pilfer the provisions. It is the queer mixture of philosopher and beast in the average human being that makes it possible for the same man, in one mood, to risk his life quite voluntarily to save others, and in another, to organize selfish theft.

After an ingenious seaman had been detected in the attempt to pick the store-room lock, and when a tray of cold ham was deliberately upset whilst a football scrimmage took place for the pieces, Mr. Emmett stopped these ebullitions by arming the watch with assorted weapons from the work-shop and issuing stern orders as to their use in case of need.

Here, again, the warring elements which form the human clay were admirably displayed. On duty, under the bonds of discipline, the coarse-grained foremast hand who had gobbled up a surreptitious lump of

fat pig during the first successful scuffle would brain the daring rascal who tried to better his condition by a similar trick a second time. Discipline, sometimes, converts a skulker into a hero.

When the state of the tide permitted, storm-shutters were opened and a free draught of air allowed to enter through the door. Then all hands eyed the sea with anxiety. The wind was strong and piercing, and the reef maintained its ceaseless roaring. Wherever a window opened towards the land there was a small crowd waiting to peep through it. At last, the sense of orderliness gradually permeating the inmates of the lighthouse actually resulted in the formation of queues, with stated intervals for moving on. There was a momentary relief in looking at the land. The cliffs, the solitary white houses, the little hamlets half hidden in cozy nooks, seemed to be so absurdly near. It was ridiculous to imagine that help could be long deferred. The seaward passing of a steamer, carrying flowers from the Scilly Isles to Penzance for Covent Garden, caused a flutter, but the sight of a Penzance fishing-smack scudding under jib and close-reefed foresail between the rock and Guthenbras Point created intense excitement. Noah, gazing across the flood for the return of the dove with the olive branch, could not be more pleased than these castaways in their granite ark when the brown-sailed boat came within their view.

The window in the coal-cellar opened fair towards the Land's End, and the grimy occupants of this compartment could look their fill at the messenger of life.

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A rich New Yorker in vain offered a hundred dollars to any man who gave up his place in the line after he himself, by the operation of the time-limit, was remorselessly sent away from the narrow loop-hole. Dollars and pounds sterling have a curiously depreciated value under such circumstances.

The men of the watch were always questioned for news by the unemployed majority. They related the comings and goings of the *Falcon*, carried sympathetic inquiries from story to story — promiscuous passing to and fro being forbidden owing to the narrowness of the stairs — and seized every trifling pretext on their own part to reach the topmost height and feast their eyes on the extensive panorama visible from the storm-girt gallery. Had they watched the coast-line less and the reef more their observations would have had value.

Quite early in the day, the purser handed to the occupants of each room a full list of passengers and crew, with the survivors grouped separately. In only three instances were husband and wife both saved. The awful scene in the saloon accounted for this seeming discrepancy. Dazed men and senseless women were wrenched from each other's clasp either by the overwhelming seas or during the final wild fight for life at the head of the companion stairway. A wreck, a fire in a theatre, pays little heed to the marriage tie.

The third, and last meal of the day was eaten in silence and gloom. All the spare lamps were diverted to the kitchen, because Brand, during a further detailed

survey of the stores, made in company with Mr. Emmett and the purser, discovered that there was an alarming deficit of fresh water in the cistern.

In the hurry of the earlier hours a serious miscalculation had been made in transmuting cubic feet into gallons. It became an instant necessity to use every heating appliance at command and start the distillation of a drinkable fluid.

The Gulf Rock Light did not possess a proper apparatus. The only method that could be adopted was to improvise a coil from canvas sewn into a tube. The exterior was varnished, and wrapped in wet cloths to assist the condensation of the steam. Hence, every kettle and pot being requisitioned for this paramount need, cocoa could be supplied to the women alone, whilst the taste of the water, even thus disguised, was nauseating. No more potatoes could be boiled. Raw, they were almost uneatable. And potatoes happened to be the food most plentiful.

The genuine fresh water, reduced to a minimum in the cistern, was only a little better in condition unless it was filtered, and Brand decided that it ought to be retained for the exclusive use of those seriously ill. Patients were multiplying so rapidly that the hospital was crowded; and all fresh cases, as they occurred, perforce remained where they were.

Neither Constance nor Enid felt the time hang heavily on their hands. They were too busy, though the new ordinance regarding the food supply transferred their attention from active cooking to the replenishing

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of utensils which must be kept full of salt-water at boiling-point.

Pyne was an invaluable assistant.

In the adjustment of refractory canvas tubes over hot spouts, in the manipulation of the condensing plant so that it might act efficiently, in the trimming of lamps, and the stocking of the solitary coal fire, he insisted on taking to himself the lion's share of the work.

He always had a pleasant quip or funny story to brighten their talk.

"You can conquer trouble with a grin," he said. "Worry doesn't cut ice."

Enid, of course, chaffed him about his American accent, which, she protested, she would acquire after a week's practice.

"It is so quaint to our ears," she went on. "I never before grasped the reason why Mark Twain makes me laugh. All he does is to act as a phonograph. Every American is a born humorist."

"There's something in that," admitted Pyne. "We do try to dis-inter a joke. Say, have you girls ever heard how an English professor explained the Yankee drawl?"

"No," they cried.

"He said it represented the effort of an uneducated man to make a speech. Every time his vocabulary gave out he lifted his voice to show he wasn't half through with his ideas."

"Oh," said Constance, "that is neither kind nor true, surely."

"Well," agreed Pyne slowly, "that is the view a friend of mine took of the remark. So he asked the professor if he had a nice agreeable sort of definition, all ready for use, of the way Englishmen clipped their syllables. The other fellow allowed that he hadn't pondered on it. 'I guess,' said my friend, 'it represents the effort of an educated ass to talk English.'"

Though the laugh was against them they were forced to snigger approval.

"I think," said Constance, "that our chief national failing is pomposity, and your story hits it off exactly. In one of our small Cornish towns we have a stout little Mayor who made money in cheese and bacon. He went to see the Paris Exhibition, and an Exeter man, meeting him unexpectedly at the foot of the Eiffel Tower, hailed him with delight. 'Hello, Mr. Mayor—' he began. 'Hush,' said the mayor, glancing around mysteriously, 'I'm 'ere *in cog.*'"

None who heard these light-hearted young people yelling with merriment would imagine that they had just dined off a piece of hard-baked bread made without yeast and washed down with water tasting of tar and turpentine.

"Now, Miss Enid, your turn," cried Pyne.

Her eyes danced mischievously.

"Unfortunately, by the accident of birth, I am deprived of the sense of humor," she said.

"It seems to be in the family all right," he hazarded, looking at Constance.

"Alas!" said Enid, "I am an American."

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"I'll smile now, if that is all," said Pyne.

"But, please, I am not joking a little bit. When you go ashore you will probably hear all about me, so I may as well take the wind out of the sails of gossip. I am a mere waif, who came sailing in out of the West one day in a little boat, which must have come from the New World as no one appeared to have lost either me or it in the Old. Dad picked us both up and adopted me."

Pyne did not know whether to take her seriously or not, until he sought confirmation in a pair of tranquil eyes which he gazed into at every opportunity.

"It is quite true," said Constance, gravely. "I suppose that the mysterious affinity between parents and long-lost children which exists in story-books is all nonsense in reality. No family could be more united and devoted to each other than we are, yet Enid is not my sister, and my father is her's only by adoption. He found her, half dying, drifting past this very rock, and before he could reach her he fought and killed a dreadful shark. We are very proud of dad, Mr. Pyne. You see, he is our only relation. Enid knows neither her father nor mother, and my mother died when I was a baby."

"Great Scott!" cried Pyne.

He turned quickly towards the door. Mrs. Vansittart, very pale, with eyes that looked unnaturally large in the faint light, stood there. For an instant he was startled. He had not seen Mrs. Vansittart since they came to the rock, and he was shocked by the change in

her appearance. He did not like her. His alert intelligence distrusted her. But it was not his business in life to select a wife for his uncle, as he put it, and he had always treated her with respectful politeness. Now, owing to some fleeting aspect which he could not account for, some vague resemblance to another which he did not remember having noticed before, he viewed her with a certain expectant curiosity that was equally unintelligible to him.

She held out a scrap of paper.

"Mr. Traill is here," she said quietly.

"Here!" he repeated, wondering what she meant, and perplexed by her icy, self-contained tone, whilst he thought it passing strange that she had no other greeting for him.

"Well," she said, "that is the best word I can find. He is near to us, as near as a steamer can bring him. Mr. Brand has received a signaled message; he wrote it out and sent it to me by a man. I inquired where you were, and was told you were engaged in the kitchen."

For some reason Mrs. Vansittart seemed to be greatly perturbed. Her presence put an end to the gaiety of the place quite effectually.

The young man took the paper in silence.

He read: "Dear Madam — a signal just received from the *Falcon* runs as follows: — 'Mr. Cyrus J. Traill is on board and sends his love to Etta and Charlie. He will make every preparation for their comfort ashore and trusts they are bearing up well under inevitable hardships.' Yours faithfully, Stephen Brand."

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Pyne strode to the door.

"I must see if I can't get Mr. Brand to answer the old boy," he cried. "Perhaps you have attended to that already."

She did not make way for him to pass.

"No," she said. "I came to seek you on that account. If not too late, will you tell your uncle that I do not wish to delay a moment in Penzance. He will please me most by arranging for a special train to await our arrival at the station."

"What's the hurry?" he demanded.

"A woman's whim, if you like, but a fixed resolve, nevertheless."

"Will you travel in that rig-out?" he asked quizzically.

"It is an easy matter to call at a shop if we reach shore by daylight. Then I can purchase a cloak and hat to serve my needs. Otherwise, it is matterless how I am attired. Will you do this?"

"Why, certainly."

She gave a little gasp of relief. In another instant Pyne would have gone, but Enid, who happened to glance through the window which opened towards the northwest, detained him.

"There is no hurry now, for sure," she said. "The *Falcon* is half way to Carn du by this time. I do not suppose she will return until it is too dark to do more than signal important news very briefly."

"But this is important," cried Mrs. Vansittart shrilly. "It is of the utmost importance to me."

"'Fraid it can't be helped ma'am," said Pyne civilly. "Anyhow we're not ashore yet, and I can't see that any time will be wasted."

The electric bell jangled in the room, causing Mrs. Vansittart to jump visibly.

"Oh, what is it?" she screamed.

"My father is calling one of us up," explained Constance. "It may be a message from Jack. You go, Enid."

Enid hurried away. She had scarcely reached the next floor before Mrs. Vansittart, who seemed to have moods in full compass, said sweetly:

"Convey my deep obligations to Mr. Brand, won't you, Charlie. Indeed, you might go now and write out the text of my message to your uncle. Some early opportunity of despatching it may offer."

"All right," he said in the calm way which so effectually concealed his feelings. "Shall I escort you to your room?"

"By no means. I came here quite unassisted. Miss Brand and I can chat for a little while. It is most wearying to be pent all day and all night in one little room. Even the change to another little room is grateful."

Pyne bowed, and they heard his steady tread as he ascended the stairs.

"Quite a nice boy, Charlie," said Mrs. Vansittart, coming forward into the kitchen, with its medley of queer-looking, hissing, steaming contrivances.

"Yes. We think he is exceedingly nice," said Con-

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stance. She wondered why the other woman seemed always to stand in the shadow, by choice. The strongest light in the darkened chamber came from the grate, and Mrs. Vansittart deliberately turned away from it.

"If all goes well he will soon be my nephew by marriage," went on the other. "I quitted New York yesterday week in order to marry his uncle in Paris. Rather a disastrous beginning to a new career, is it not?"

"I hope not, indeed. Perhaps you are surmounting difficulties at the commencement rather than at the end."

"It may be. I am so much older than you that I am less optimistic. But you did not grasp the significance of my words. I said I was to be married in Paris."

"Yes," said Constance, still at a loss to catch the drift of an announcement which Mrs. Vansittart seemed so anxious to thrust upon her.

"Well, the *Chinook* was wrecked last night, or rather, early this morning. The name of the ship was not made known throughout the world until long after daybreak. It is quite impossible that Mr. Traill should have reached this remote corner of England from Paris in the interval."

For one moment the girl was puzzled. Then a ready solution occurred to her.

"Oh, of course, that is very simple. Mr. Traill was awaiting your arrival in Southampton, thinking to take you by surprise no doubt. That is sure to be the ex-

planation. What a shock the first telegram must have given him!"

"How did he ascertain that his nephew and I were alive?"

"The very first thing father did was to telegraph the names of all the survivors. I know that is so because I saw the message."

"Ah. He is a man of method, I suppose. You are proud of him, I heard you say."

"I think there is no one like him in all the world. We are so happy at home that sometimes I fear it cannot last. Yet, thank God, there is no excuse for such night-mare terrors."

Mrs. Vansittart cooed in her gentle way.

"Indeed, you have my earnest good wishes in that respect," she said. "Do we not owe our lives to you? That is an excellent reason for gratitude, if a selfish one. But, some day soon, you will be getting married and leaving the parental roof."

"I do not wish to die an old maid," laughed Constance, "yet I have not discovered a better name than my own up to the present."

She fancied that Mrs. Vansittart winced a little at this remark. Deeming her visitor to be a bundle of nerves, she jumped to the conclusion that the other woman read into the words some far-fetched disparagement of her own approaching marriage.

"Of course," she continued, affably tactful, "I will hold another view when the right man asks me."

"Were you in my place," murmured her visitor, ap-

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parently thinking aloud rather than addressing Constance, "you would not be fearful of misfortune? You would not read an omen of ill luck into this dramatic interruption of all your plans? After many years of widowhood I am about to be married again to a man who is admirable in every way. He is rich, distinguished in manner and appearance, a person of note not only in the States but on the Continent. No woman of my years might desire a better match. Why could not the way be made smooth for me? Why should the poor *Chinook*, out of the hundreds of mail-steamers which cross the Atlantic yearly, be picked out for utter disaster? It is a warning — a threat from the gods!"

The unconscious bitterness of her tone moved the girl to find words of consolation.

"I would not question the ways of Providence in the least," she said. "Surely you have far more reason for thankfulness than for regret."

"Regret! I am not regretting. But I have gone through such trials that I am unnerved. There, child! Forgive me for troubling you. And — and — kiss me, will you, and say you wish me well!"

She moved nearer, as if driven by uncontrollable impulse. Constance, not prepared for such an outburst, was nevertheless deeply touched by this appeal for sympathy.

"I wish you all the joy and happiness which I am sure you deserve," she said, stooping to kiss the wan, shrinking face held up to her.

Mrs. Vansittart burst into a paroxysm of tears and tottered towards the door.

"No, no," she gasped, as Constance caught her by the arm. "Do not come with me. I am — shaken. It will pass. For God's sake, let me go alone!"

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CHAPTER XII

PREPARATIONS

Pyne found Enid rosy-red and inclined to be tearful. The dying light of day was still strong enough in the service-room to permit these things to be seen.

"No bad news, I hope?" he inquired, though the sight of Stephen Brand, seated at his desk and placidly writing, was reassuring.

The question steadied her to an extent.

"It is nothing of any consequence," she said and darted past him.

Brand looked up from his journal. He smiled, though the American thought there was a hint of pain in his eyes.

"I am going to lose one of my girls," he said. "Oh, no, this is not a loss by death but by marriage. If I were a Frenchman, I would describe it as gaining a son. Enid has just received what is tantamount to a proposal."

"By flag-wagging?" Pyne was naturally astounded.

"Yes. You would not expect one of the people from the *Chinook* to be so enterprising."

"I — don't — know," said Pyne, punctuating each word with a deliberate nod.

"Well, in any case, I would not have forwarded the application after an acquaintance of eighteen hours," observed Brand with equal deliberation.

"They're two powerful fine girls," said Pyne, steering clear of the point. "They have just been telling me how Miss Enid happened along. It reads like a fairy tale."

"She was given to me by the winds and waves, yet she is dear to me as my own child. I shall miss her greatly — if all goes well here."

"I've cottoned on to both of them something wonderful. But, if I am not intruding into private affairs, how comes it that Miss Enid is being telegraphed for? Of course I can understand the gentleman being in a hurry. I would feel that way myself if the conditions were favorable."

Pyne could be as stolid as a red Indian when the occasion demanded it. Brand found no hint in his face of the hidden thought in his words.

"Have they said anything to you of a man named Stanhope?" inquired the lighthouse-keeper, resuming the entry in his diary after a sharp glance upwards.

"Y-yes. They pointed him out to me this morning. In the navy, I think. Fellow with a title, and that sort of thing."

"No. His mother is Lady Margaret Stanhope, being an earl's daughter, but his father was a knight. He has been paying attentions to Enid for a year and more, to my knowledge and to his mother's exceeding indignation, I fancy."

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"That is where we on the other side have the pull of you."

"Have you? I wonder. However, Lady Margaret's views have not troubled me. I will deal with her when the time comes. At present it looks fairly certain that Master Jack has settled matters on his own account. I may be mistaken, of course. How do you interpret this?"

He closed the journal and handed to Pyne a memorandum taken down letter by letter by a sailor as Brand read the signal:

"Mother sends her love to Enid."

"Did mother ever convey her love to Enid before?" asked Pyne.

"No."

"Then I call that neat. I take off my hat to Stanhope. He and mamma have had a heart-to-heart talk."

Brand leaned his head on his hands, with clenched fists covering his ears. There was a period of utter silence until the lighthouse-keeper rose to light the lamp.

Pyne watched him narrowly.

"I may be trespassing on delicate ground," he said at last. "If I am, you are not the sort of man to stand on ceremony. In the States, you know, when the authorities want to preserve a park section they don't say: 'Please do not walk on the grass.' They put up a board which reads: 'Keep off.' We never kick. We're used to it."

"My notice-board, if required, will be less curt, at any rate," replied Brand, and they faced each other. Though their words were light, no pleasant conceit lurked in their minds. There was a question to be asked and answered, and it held the issues of life and death.

"What did you mean just now by saying, 'if all goes well here?' Is there any special reason why things should not go well?"

The young Philadelphian might have been hazarding an inquiry about a matter of trivial interest, so calm was he, so smooth his utterance. But Brand had made no mistake in estimating this youngster's force of character, nor did he seek to temporize.

He extended an arm towards the reef.

"You hear that?" he said.

"Yes."

"It may boil that way for weeks."

"So I have been told."

"By whom?"

"Mr. Emmett told me."

"Ah! He and I have discussed the matter already. Yet I imagine that neither he, nor any other man in the place save myself, grasps the true meaning of the fact."

"I've been theorizing," said Pyne. "It occurred to me that this light isn't here for amusement."

He looked up at the lamp and smiled. The pillar, in those days, must have been a haunt of illusions, for Brand, like Constance and Pyne himself in the case of Mrs. Vansittart, thought he caught an expression fa-

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miliar to his eyes long before he had seen that clear-cut, splendidly intelligent face.

But there was no time for idle speculation. He glanced into the well of the stairs to make sure that no one was ascending.

Then he approached nearer to Pyne and said in an intense whisper:

"It is folly to waste words with you. I have reasoned this thing out and now I will tell you what I have decided. I will take the watch from eight until twelve. At twelve you will relieve me, and I will go below to secure provisions and water sufficient to maintain the lives of my daughters, you and myself for a few hours longer than the others. By right, if I followed the rules I have promised to obey, I alone should live. That is impossible. A Spartan might do it, but I cannot abandon my girls and yet retain my senses. I trust you because I must have a confederate. If the weather does not break before tomorrow night we must barricade the stairs — and fight — if necessary."

His face was drawn and haggard, his eyes blazing. He shook as one in the first throes of fever. He seemed to await his companion's verdict with an over-powering dread lest any attempt should be made to question the justice of his decree.

"Yes. I figured it out that way, too," said Pyne. "It's queer, isn't it, to be in such a fix when there's all sorts of help within call, so to speak. We might as well be in a mine closed up by an explosion. And, I'll tell you what — I'm real sorry for you."

Brand, collapsing under the strain, sank into a chair.

"It is an awful thing," he moaned, "to condemn so many men, women, and children, to such a death."

A spasm of pain made Pyne's lips tremulous for an instant. He had forgotten Elsie and Mamie.

But his voice was fully under control when he spoke again.

"You can count on me in the deal in all but one thing," he said.

The older man looked up fiercely. What condition could be imposed in the fulfilment of a duty so terrible?

"I am here by chance," went on Pyne. "One of your daughters may have told you that Mrs. Vansittart came from New York to marry my uncle. Anyhow you would know she was dear to him by his message today. She is sort of in my charge, and I can't desert her. It's hard luck, as I don't care a cent for her. She's the kind of woman old men adore — fascinating, bird-like creatures — when the cage is gilded."

Brand sprang to his feet and raced up to the trimming-stage. When his hands were on the lamp he felt surer of himself. It gave him strength during the hurricane and it would strengthen him now.

"There can be no exceptions," he said harshly. Pyne waited until the lighthouse-keeper rejoined him.

"I ought to have put my proposition before you first and made a speech afterwards," he said. "Constance and Enid will join you here when you say the word, but I will be on the other side of the barricade."

"Nonsense!" cried Brand. "You have no right to

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thrust away the chance that is given you. You saved all these people once. Why should you die uselessly?"

"What! Suppose it pans out that way. Suppose we live a couple of weeks and escape. Am I to face the old man and tell him — the truth? No, sir. You don't mean it. You wouldn't do it yourself. What about that shark the girls told me of. I can guess just what happened. He wanted the light refreshment in the boat. Did you scoot back when you saw his fin? I'm a heap younger than you, Mr. Brand, but that bluff doesn't go."

"Thank Heaven, we have twenty-four hours yet!" murmured Brand.

"It will be all the same when we have only twenty-four seconds. Let us fix it that way right now. Don't you see, it will be easier to deceive the girls? And there's another reason. Barricade and shoot as you like, it will be a hard thing to keep three-score desperate men boxed up down below. When they begin to diet on colza there will be trouble. A few of us, ready to take chances, will be helpful. Some of them may have to die quick, you know."

Brand closed his eyes in sheer affright. In that way he tried to shut out a vision.

"Be it so," he gasped. "May the Lord help us."

It was the responsibility that mastered him. Judges on the bench often break down when they sentence a criminal to death, but what judge, humane, tender-hearted and God-fearing, ever pronounced the doom

of seventy-eight people snatched from a merciful death to be steeped in horrors.

At last his iron will predominated. The knowledge that the path of duty lay straight before him cheered his tortured soul. No man could say he erred in trying to save his children. That was a trust as solemn as any conferred by the Elder Brethren of the Trinity.

He placed a hand on Pyne's shoulder, for this youngster had become dear to him.

"Had I a son," he said, "I should wish him to be like you. Let us strive to forget the evils that threaten us. Brooding is useless. If need be, you will take charge of the lower deck. There is starvation allowance for three more days at the worst. But I hate the thought of starting the new scale tomorrow."

"It may not be necessary."

"Candidly, I fear it will. I know the Cornish coast too well. When bad weather sets in from the south-west at this season it holds for a week at the lowest computation."

"Is there no other way? Can nothing be done out there?"

"Able men, the best of sailors, the most experienced of engineers, have striven for half a century to devise some means of storm communication with a rock lighthouse placed as this is. They have failed. There is none."

"That's good," cried Pyne quite pleasantly. "Where is your pouch? I feel like a smoke. If I hadn't fired

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that question at you I should have wasted a lot of time in hard thinking."

Brand had to scheme that night to reach the store-room unobserved. The *Falcon*, steaming valiantly to her observation post near the buoy, aided him considerably. He permitted the night watch to gather in the service-room whilst he supplied the men with tobacco, and stationed the officer on the gallery to observe the trawler in case she showed any signal lights.

Since the attempt on the lock Constance gave the key to her father after each visit. For the rest, the inmates of the pillar were sunk in the lethargy of unsatisfied hunger. Constance and Enid, utterly worn out with fatigue, were sound asleep in the kitchen, and the tears coursed down the man's face as he acted the part of a thief in securing the measured allowance of flour and bacon for one meal. The diet of one hungry meal for eighty-one people gave twenty-seven hungry meals for three. He ought to have taken more, but he set his teeth and refused the ungrateful task.

It is oft-times easy for a man to decide upon a set course, but hard to follow it.

"A week!" he murmured. "Perhaps ten days! That is all. Pray Heaven I may not go mad before they die!"

Pyne, watching the light, knew that Brand had succeeded. The *Falcon* went; gradually the watch dispersed.

"Where is the hoard?" asked Pyne, making believe that they were playing some comedy.

"Hidden in the kitchen lockers. I could obtain only distilled water. You must persuade the girls in the morning that something went wrong with the apparatus."

As opportunity offered, Brand transferred the tins to the lockers of the service-room. Pyne, who missed nothing, shook his head when it became evident that the last consignment was safely stored away.

"Not much there," he commented.

"I will take no more!" was the fierce cry.

"You ought to."

"I refuse, I tell you! Don't torture me further."

"Any chance of a row in the morning? The purser and Mr. Emmett mount guard when the store-room is opened."

"I acted my role well. I built up the vacancies with empty tins."

"My sakes!" cried Pyne pityingly, "you deserve to win through."

"I think my heart will break," muttered Brand. "But look! The lamp! It needs adjusting."

Indeed, a fresh gale seemed to be springing up. The wind-vane having gone, the index was useless. It was not until a burst of spray drenched the lantern that Brand knew of a change taking place. The wind was backing round towards the north.

The barometer fell slightly. It portended either more wind and dry weather, or less wind accompanied by rain. Who could tell what would happen? Fair

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or foul, hurricane or calm, all things seemed to be the ungovernable blundering of blind chance.

When the rock was left in peace after the fall of the tide, Pyne promised to keep the light in order if Brand would endeavor to sleep until day-break. Rest was essential to him. He would assuredly break down under the strain if the tension were too long maintained, and a time was coming when he would need all his strength, mental and physical.

"Here have I been snoozing in odd corners ever since I came aboard," urged the American, "and I have nothing to do but starve quietly. It's ridiculous. My funeral is dated: yours isn't. You can't be on deck all the time, you know. Now, just curl up and count sheep jumping over a wall or any old game of the sort until your eyes close of their own accord."

Brand yielded. He lay on the hard boards, with a chair cushion for pillow; all the rugs rescued by Constance were now needed in the hospital. In less than a minute he was sound asleep.

"That was a close call," mused Pyne. "In another hour he would have cracked up. He's a wonder, anyhow."

The lighthouse-keeper slept until long after day-break. Pyne refused to allow anyone to disturb him.

Soon after seven o'clock the watch reported that two vessels were approaching from the Bay. One was the *Falcon*, and the sailors soon made out that the other was the Trinity tender from Plymouth.

When they were both nearing the buoy, Brand was aroused.

It was evident that the brief rest had cleared his brain and restored his self-confidence. Instantly he took up the thread of events, and his first words showed how pleased he was that someone of authority in the lighthouse service should be in active communication with him.

Through his glasses he distinguished Stanhope on board the Trinity steamer, standing by the side of the inspecting-officer of the South-Coast lights. Other officials were there, but near Stanhope was a tall elderly man, unknown, and certainly a stranger in Penzance.

The *Falcon* was now chartered by press-men, so the civilian on the official boat was evidently a person of consequence. Indeed, Brand imagined, long before Pyne was able to verify the impression, that the newcomer was Mr. Cyrus J. Traill, whom he had failed to notice in the poor light of the previous evening.

He knew quite well that the experienced chief of the lighthouse service would appreciate fully the disabilities under which he labored, with eighty-one mouths to feed from a stock already far below the three months' maximum.

The first telegraphed question betrayed the prevalent anxiety.

"Hope all is well?"

What was he to say? Was it not best to speak boldly and let men know the truth, not alone as to their present desperate plight but revealing the measures he had devised for the protection of the light? He could not

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make up his mind to launch out into a full explanation that instant.

So he signaled:

"Everyone alive, but many cases of grave collapse."

Stanhope was again the signaler — evidently he had arranged matters with the Admiral at Portsmouth — so Brand expected the prompt reply:

"How are Constance and Enid?"

"Quite well and cheerful."

The tall man near Stanhope bent closer.

"Are Mrs. Vansittart and Pyne all right?"

Brand assumed that the lady was in no worse condition than others. Constance, telling him the state of the sick during a hasty visit, had not mentioned her name.

So he sent the needed assurance, and went on forlornly:

"Suppose no effort can be made to open communication?"

To his great surprise, the answer came:

"We are constructing a raft. When the tide falls this afternoon we will try what can be done."

Ah, how glad he was that he had not obeyed his earlier impulse, and horrified the anxious rescuers by a prophecy of lingering death for many, with the prelude, perchance, of murderous excesses committed by men on the verge of madness. If that story had to be told he would not flinch, but it was a grateful thing that the hour of its telling might at least be deferred.

A long message followed, a string of loving words

from relatives ashore to those known to be imprisoned on the rock. During the merely perfunctory reading off of the signals his active mind was canvassing the probabilities of success or failure for the venture of the afternoon. It was high-water about three o'clock, and, in his judgment, with the wind in its present quarter, about northwest by west, the cross seas which would sweep the reef and engulf the lighthouse at half-tide would render it wildly impossible for any raft ever built by man's hands to live in the immediate vicinity of the rock.

However, the issue lay with others now. He knew that they would do all that brave men would dare. He was tempted to make known the inspiring news to all hands, but refrained, because he feared ultimate failure. Beneath his feet was a human volcano. Stirred too deeply, it might become active and dangerous.

So the apathetic multitude in his charge, hungrily awaiting a scanty morsel of food which only provoked what it failed to gratify, must rest content with the long statement written out by the purser and read by him at the door of each room.

Pyne took to Mrs. Vansittart the news of his uncle's presence on the steamer.

"If you would like to see him," he said, "I have no doubt Mr. Brand will let you stand on the gallery for a little while."

She declined, excusing herself on the ground of weakness.

"In this high wind," she said, "it will be very cold

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out there, and any further exposure would make me very ill."

"That's true enough," he agreed, though he wondered why she raised no question concerning the message she wished him to convey to Mr. Traill.

Had she forgotten the urgency of her words over night? He had carried her instructions quite faithfully to Brand and the latter smiled at the fantasy.

"Time enough to think of such things when we are assured of the lady's departure," he said, and they left it at that.

Thinking to interest her, Pyne told her of the crowd on the *Falcon*.

"Mostly reporters, Brand thinks," he said. "What a story they will build up in the New York papers. It will be more fun than a box of monkeys to get hold of this week's news and read all the flapdoodle they are printing."

But Mrs. Vansittart was not to be roused from her melancholy. She dreaded the least physical suffering. Privation was a new thing in her life. Today she was inert, timid, a woman who cowered away from the door and was obviously anxious that he should leave her to the quiet misery of the packed bedroom.

As the day passed, a wearisome iteration of all that had gone before, a new feature in the relations of the crowded community made itself disagreeably apparent. Men drew apart from each other, singly, or in small groups. An inconsolable gloom settled on the women. By some means, the knowledge spread that they might

all starve to death in the heart of this cold dungeon. They began to loathe it, to upbraid its steadfastness with spoken curses or unrestrained tears. The sanctuary of one day was becoming the tomb of the next. No longer was there competition to look at land or sea from the open windows. Everywhere was settling down a pall of blank, horrible silence and suspicion.

Even Constance yielded to the common terror once when the men of the watch escorted the bearer of a tray-load of provisions to the occupants of the coal-cellar.

"Enid," she whispered, "did you see the light in their eyes? What is it? Does hunger look that way?"

"It must be so, yet it is almost unbelievable. They are far removed from real starvation."

"One would think so. But it is so hard to realize things beforehand. And they have nothing to do. They are brooding all the time. We are slaves to our imagination. Many a sick person is allowed to eat far less than these men have been given, and the deprivation is not felt at all."

"What will become of us, Constance, if we are detained here for many days."

"Dear one, do not ask me. We must not think of such things."

"But dad is thinking of them. I watched his face when I took him a scrap of food just now, and —"

"Hush, dear. Let us pray — and hope."

There was a clatter of feet down the iron stairs.

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The men of the watch were hustling to unbar the iron door. A solidly built, circular raft had been lowered from the Trinity tender.

An assistant-keeper, wearing a cork jacket, with a rope about his waist, was clinging to a stumpy mast in the centre. Two stout guide-ropes were manipulated from the deck of the vessel, and the flat, unwieldly mass of timber was slowly drifting nearer to the lighthouse with the tide.

The door of the column opened towards the east, so the wind, with its pelting sheets of spray, was almost in the opposite quarter, and the stout granite shaft itself afforded some degree of protection for the entrance.

The scheme signaled from the steamer was a good one. None but a lunatic would endeavor to approach the rock itself, but there was a chance that the raft might be made to drift near enough to the door to permit a grapnel to be thrown across the rope held by the gallant volunteer on the raft.

It was his duty to attach the two ropes and thus render it possible for a stronger line to be drawn from the vessel to the pillar. There was no other way. The lighthouse did not possess a rope of sufficient length to be drawn back by the raft without the intervention of some human agency.

This was precisely the puny, half-despairing dodge that the reef loved to play with. Cat-like, it permitted the queer, flat-bottomed craft to approach almost within hail. Then it shot forth a claw of furious surf, the heavy raft was picked up as if it were a floating feather,

turned clean over, and flung many fathoms out to sea, whilst both of its guiding cables were snapped with contemptuous ease.

The assistant-keeper, kept afloat by his jacket, was hauled, half drowned, back through the choking froth, whilst the wave which overwhelmed the raft curled up a spiteful tongue and almost succeeded in dragging out several of the men stationed in the doorway.

With a clang the iron shutter was rushed into its place, and when the sailor was rescued the Trinity boat steamed away to try and secure the raft.

So joyous hope gave way once more to dark foreboding, and the only comfort was the faint one to be extracted from the parting signal:

"Will try again next tide."

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CHAPTER XIII

BEFORE THE DAWN

DISCIPLINE slackened its bonds that night. For one thing Mr. Emmett fell ill. Although inured to hardship in the elemental strife, being of the stocky mariner race which holds the gruff Atlantic in no dread, he had never before been called on to eat sodden bread, to drink condensed steam flavored with varnish, and to chew sustenance from the rind of raw bacon. These drawbacks, added to the lack of exercise and the constant wearing of clothes not yet dry, placed him on the sick list.

Again, there were ominous whispers of unfair division in the matter of food. It was not within the realm of accomplishment that the purser, Constance, Enid, and others who helped to apportion the eatables could treat all alike. Some fared better than others in quality if not in quantity. The unfortunate ones growled, and talked of favoritism.

A crisis was reached when the second officer mustered the night watch.

When one sheep leads the others will follow. A stout German from Chicago asked bluntly:

"Vere's de goot of blayin' at moundin' gart? Dere is bud von ting to gart, und dat is der kidchen."

Community of interest caused many to huddle closer to him. Here was one who dared to say what they all thought. Their feet shuffled in support. The officer, faithful to his trust, was tempted to fell the man, but he thought the circumstances warranted more gentle methods.

"Why are you dissatisfied?" he sternly demanded. "What do you suspect? Are you fool enough to imagine that you are being cheated by people who are dividing their last crust with you?"

"How do ve know dat? Dose girls — dey are chokin' mit Mr. Pyne all der day. Dey can'd do dat und be hungry, like us."

"You unmitigated ass!" said the disgusted officer. "There is food here for three people. They have fed eighty-one of us for two days and will keep us going several more days. Can't you figure it out? Isn't it a miracle? Here! Who's for guard and who not? Let us quit fooling."

And the doubters were silenced for the hour.

The hymn-singer endeavored to raise a chorus. He was not greeted with enthusiasm, but a few valiant spirits came to his assistance. A couple of hymns were feebly rendered — and again — silence.

"Say when," observed Pyne calmly when he entered the service-room to find Brand trimming the spare lamp.

"Not tonight," said Brand.

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"Why not? Hell may break loose at any moment downstairs."

"What has occurred? I heard something of a dispute when the watch mustered at eight o'clock."

"Things are worse now. One of the men found a gallon of methylated spirit in the work-shop."

"Good Heavens! Did he drink any of it?"

"He and his mates have emptied the tin. Eight are helplessly drunk — the others quarrelsome. The next thing will be a combined rush for the store-room."

"But why did not the second officer tell me?"

"He thought you had troubles enough. If he could depend on the remainder of the crowd he would rope the sinners. Says he knows a slave knot that will make 'em tired."

Brand's eyes glistened.

"The fools," he said, "and just as the weather is mending, too."

"You don't mean that?"

"Listen."

He glanced up at the glass dome. Heavy drops were pattering on it; they looked like spray, but Pyne shouted gleefully:

"Is it rain?"

"Yes. I was just going to summon the watch to help in filling every vessel. By spreading canvas sheets we can gather a large supply if it rains hard. Moreover, it will beat the sea down. Man alive, this may mean salvation. Tie those weaklings and summon every sober man to help."

With a whoop, Pyne vanished. He met Constance on the stairs, coming to see her father before she stretched her weary limbs on the hard floor of the kitchen.

She never knew exactly what took place. It might have been politeness, but it felt uncommonly like a squeeze, and Pyne's face was extraordinarily close to hers as he cried:

"It's raining. No more canvas whisky. Get a hustle on with every empty vessel."

He need not have been in such a whirl, however.

When the shower came it did not last very long, and there were many difficulties in the way of garnering the thrice blessed water. In the first place, the lighthouse was expressly designed to shoot off all such external supplies; in the second, the total quantity obtained did not amount to more than half a gallon.

But it did a great deal of good in other ways. It brightened many faces, it caused the drunkards to be securely trussed like plucked fowls and dumped along the walls of the entrance passage, and it gave Brand some degree of hope that the rescue operations of the next day might be more successful.

When the rain cleared off, the moon flickered in a cloudy sky. This was a further omen of better fortune. Perhaps the jingling rhyme of Admiral Fitzroy's barometer was about to be justified:

"Long foretold,
Long last;
Short notice
Soon past."

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And the hurricane had given but slight warning of its advent.

"I feel it in my bones that we shall all be as frisky as lambs tomorrow," said Pyne, when he joined Brand after the scurry caused by the rain had passed.

"We must not be too sanguine. There is a chance, now. I won't deny that, but the sea is treacherous."

"This reef licks creation. At Bar Harbor, in Maine, where a mighty big sea can kick up in a very few hours, I have seen it go down again like magic under a change of wind."

"That is quite reasonable. Any ordinary commotion has room to spread itself in the tide-way. Here the tide is broken up into ocean rivers, streams with boundaries as definite as the Thames. The main body sweeps up into the bottle-neck of the Channel. Another tributary comes round the north of the Scilly Isles and runs into the tidal stream again exactly at this point. The result often is that whilst little pleasure boats can safely run out into the Bay from Penzance there is a race over the rock that would break up a stranded battle-ship."

"Say, do you like this kind of life?"

"I have given my best years to it."

Pyne was smoking a pipe, one which Brand lent him. The tobacco was a capital substitute for food, especially as he had established a private understanding with Elsie and Mamie that they were to waylay him when possible and nibble a piece of biscuit he carried in his pocket.

This arrangement was to be kept a strict secret from all, especially from Miss Constance and Miss Enid, whilst the little ones themselves did not know that the she-dragons whom Pyne feared so greatly gave them surreptitious doses from the last tin of condensed milk, retained for their exclusive benefit.

"Do you mind me saying that you are a good bit of an enigma?" he hazarded, between puffs.

"It may be so, but I like the service."

"Just so. I was never so happy as when I took a trip as fourth engineer on a tramp in the Gulf of Florida. But that didn't signify being tied to a long-nosed oiler for the remainder of my days."

"Are you a marine engineer?" inquired Brand, with some show of interest.

"I hold a certificate, just for fun. I had a mechanical twist in me and gave it play. But I am an idler by profession."

The lighthouse-keeper laughed, so naturally that the younger man was gratified. Polite disbelief may be a compliment.

"An idler, eh? You do not strike me as properly classed."

"It's the fact, nevertheless. My grandfather was pleased to invest a few dollars in real estate on the sheep farm where Manhattan Avenue now stands. My uncle has half; my mother had the other half."

"Are both of your parents dead?"

"Yes, years ago. Lost at sea, too, on my father's yacht."

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"What a terrible thing!"

"It must have been something like that. I was only six years old at the time. My uncle lost his wife and child, too, when the *Esmeralda* went down. It nearly killed him. I never thought he would marry again, but I suppose he's tired of being alone."

"Probably. By the way, now that you mention it, Mrs. Vansittart wished to see me yesterday. I could not spare a moment so I sent her a civil message. She told Constance that she thought she knew me."

"Hardly likely," smiled Pyne, "if you have passed nearly the whole of your life in lighthouses."

"I did not quite mean to convey that impression. I knew a man of her late husband's name, many years ago."

"She is a nice woman in some ways," said Pyne reflectively. "Not quite my sort, perhaps, but a lady all the time. She is not an American. Came to the States about '90, I think, and lost her hubby on a ranch in California. Anyhow, the old man is dead stuck on her, and they ought to hit it off well together. The Vansittart you knew didn't happen to marry a relative of yours?"

"No. He was a mere acquaintance."

"Odd thing," ruminated Pyne. "It has just occurred to me that she resembles your daughter, — your elder daughter, — not so much in face as in style. Same sort of graceful figure, only a trifle smaller."

"Such coincidences often happen in the human family. For instance, you are not wholly unlike Enid."

"Holy gee!" said Pyne, "I'm too run down to stand flattery."

"Likeness is often a matter of environment. Characteristics, mannerisms, the subtle distinctions of class and social rank, soak in through the skin quite as sensibly as they are conferred by heredity. Take the ploughman's son and rear him in a royal palace, turn the infant prince into a peasant, and who shall say, when they reach man's estate, 'This is the true King.' You will remember it was said of the Emperor Augustus: *Urbem lateritiam invenit, marmoream reliquit.* 'He found the city brick, he left it marble.' The same noble result may be obtained in every healthy child properly educated."

The college-bred youth had not entered into any general conversation with Brand before. He had the tact now to conceal his astonishment at the manner of his friend's speech.

"You fling heredity to the winds, then?" he asked.

Brand rose to his feet, as was his way when deeply moved.

"Thank God, yes!" he cried.

A faint hoot came to them through the chortling of the wind.

"One of our visitors," shouted Brand, "and here we are gossiping as though snugly seated in arm-chairs at the fireside."

He hurried to the gallery, putting on an oil-skin coat.

"We *must* win through, and I guess I'll play ball with my father-in-law," quoth Pyne to himself as he followed.

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This time it was the *Falcon* alone, and she signaled with a lamp that it was deemed best to defer active operations until the following afternoon. The tide at dawn would not suit.

She went off, and the two men returned to the grateful shelter of the service-room.

Brand forbade further talk. Pyne must rest now and relieve him at three o'clock. The youngster needed no feather-bed: he was asleep in amazingly quick time. There is a supperless hunger which keeps people awake at night with a full larder in the house. The crude article differs from the cultured one so greatly that the man who hungers of necessity cannot sleep too much.

Thus far, the inhabitants of the lighthouse had been given quite enough nutriment to maintain life. There was no reason why any, even the most delicate, should be in real danger during the next forty-eight hours. But scientific reasoning and the animal instincts of mankind clash at times; in that lay the danger whose sullen shadow was deepening the lines in the corners of Brand's eyes.

Every hour, the officer on duty and some men of the watch visited him to report that all was well below. Some of the less drunken mutineers were pitifully sober now: the others were maudlin. Beyond the few words exchanged on this and kindred topics, he was left alone with his thoughts throughout the silent watch. Pyne slept heavily. Glancing at times at the youngster's stalwart figure and firm, handsome face, Brand found himself reviewing the buried years. He thought of the

days when he, too, looked forth on the world with the stern enthusiasm of triumphant youth.

Long-forgotten ghosts were resurrected, shattered ideals built up again. He wondered, if the decades rolled back, would he decide, a second time, to abandon the fine career which lay at his feet and withdraw his grief and his talents to the seclusion of lonely rocks and silent headlands!

He had been happy, as men count happiness, during the decades. No cloud had arisen to mar the complete content of his life. The blossoming of the girls into delightful womanhood was an increasing joy to him, and it was passing strange that his little household should be plunged into a whirlpool of events in the very hour when their domesticity seemed to be most assured. The changeful moods of the elements found no counterpart in his nature. He, knowing the sea, did not expect it to remain fixed in one aspect. Whether in storm or calm the contrary would surely happen 'ere many days had passed. But life was a different thing. How came it that at the very close of so many years of association with the fickle ocean she should play such a trick on him and his daughters, enfold them with perils, snatch them from the quiet pleasures of the life they had planned for the future, and thrust upon them, even if they escaped with their lives, a publicity which he, at any rate, abhorred and even dreaded.

He harbored no delusions on this point. He knew that the drama of the Gulf Rock was now filling the columns of newspapers all over the world. He and his

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beloved girls would be written about, discussed, described in fulsome language, pictured by black and white artists, and eulogized by wide-awake editors eager to make much of a topic dear to the public mind.

On the rock they were undoubtedly in grave danger. Death confronted them — death at once extraordinary and ghastly. No tyrant of the Middle Ages, with all his paraphernalia for wringing truth or lies out of cringing wretches, had devised such a fate as threatened if the inconstant sea should choose to render the reef altogether unapproachable for many days. Yet, if help came, he and those dear to him were already steeped in unavoidable notoriety, bringing in its train certain vague disabilities which he had striven to avoid for over twenty years.

And all this because one fierce gale, out of the many he had endured, sprang into being at a moment when his mates were incapacitated and his daughters happened to pay him a surprise visit.

"It is an insane freak of fortune," he muttered, "so incomprehensible, so utterly out of focus with common events, that if I were a superstitious man, I should regard it as betokening the approach of some great epoch in my life. Surely, a merciful Providence would not bring my girls here to subject them to the lingering torture of hunger and thirst. I must not think of it further. That way lies madness."

There was at least one other troubled soul on the rock which divined some sinister portent in the storm. Mrs.

Vansittart, even at this moment, was staring into the black void with questioning eyes.

He resolutely threw back his head as if he would hurl into the outer darkness the gibbering phantom which whispered these words of foreboding. Although the lamp needed no attention just then, he climbed to the trimming stage merely to find relief in mechanical action. He carefully examined the adjustment, and, to judge how the weather was shaping, went out into the gallery to look at the distant lights.

The three quick flashes of the Seven Stones Lightship were very clear. That was a good sign. The wind came from that quarter, and, blustering though it was, driving gigantic waves before it into the loud embrace of the reef, it maintained the good promise of the last few hours.

Seeking the comparative shelter of the east side, he gazed steadily at the Lizard. Its two fixed electric beams, nearly in line with the Gulf Rock, were dull and watery. A local squall of rain was sweeping down from the land. Changeable, threatening, unsettled — the meteorologist might apply any of these terms to the prevalent conditions.

Far out in the Channel he saw the twinkling masthead lights of several steamers. Blow high or low, mails must travel and vessels put to sea. On such a night, at other times, he would re-enter the lighthouse with a cheery sense of its comfort and home-like aspect. Now he dreaded the brilliant interior of the service-room. Its garish aspect ill accorded with the patient

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misery, the useless repinings, the inebriate stupor which crouched beneath. If he and those committed to his charge were to be saved, either the sea must be stilled or another miracle of the loaves and fishes enacted.

There, alone on the gallery, amidst the din of howling wind and ceaseless plaint of the waves, he seemed to be apart, cut off from the sufferings within. He lifted his eyes to the sombre arch of the heavens. Men said the age of miracles had passed. Pray God it might not be so!

When Brand went out, the sudden rush of cold air through the little door leading to the balcony aroused Pyne.

That young gentleman was rudely awakened from a seriously vivid dream. He fancied that Constance and he were clinging to the tail of an enormous kite, which had been made to hover over the rock by a green imp seated in an absurdly small boat.

They were solemnly advised by other gnomes, imps with sparkling, toad-like eyes, to entrust themselves to this precarious means of escape, but the instant they dropped off the ledge of the gallery their weight caused the kite to swoop downwards. The resultant plunge into the ocean and Constance's farewell shriek were nothing more terrifying than the chill blast and whistle of the air current admitted by Brand. But Pyne did not want to go to sleep again. He did not like emerald-hued spirits which arranged such unpleasant escapades.

He straightened his stiff limbs and sat up.

He was about to feel in a pocket for his pipe — he

experienced the worst pangs of hunger after waking in such fashion — when he saw a woman's head and shoulders emerging out of the stairway.

At first he thought it was Constance, and he wondered why she had muffled her face in the deep collar of a cloak, but the visitor paused irresolutely when her waist was on a level with the floor.

She uttered a little gasp of surprise.

"You, Charlie?" she cried. "I thought you slept in the kitchen?"

"No, Mrs. Vansittart," he said. "I am assistant-keeper and I am here most all the time with Mr. Brand. But what in the name of goodness —"

"I was restless," explained the lady hurriedly. "If I remained another minute among those women I should have screamed aloud. How peaceful you are here. Where is Mr. Brand?"

"Guess he's gone outside to squint at the weather. But come right in. I can offer you a chair. Mr. Brand wants to see you, and this is a quiet time for a chat."

"How does he know me? What did he say?"

Mrs. Vansittart pressed her left hand to her breast. With the other she kept the high collar over her mouth and cheeks. Pyne could only see her eyes, and the alarmed light that leaped into them increased his astonishment at her unexpected presence.

"It seems to me," he answered, "that if you just walk up four more steps and sit down you can ask him all those things yourself."

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"Were you speaking of me to him."

"I did happen to mention you."

"And he said he knew me?"

"No, ma'am. He said nothing of the sort. But, for mercy's sake, what mystery is there about it?"

"Mystery! None whatever. I was mistaken. I have never met him. I came now to explain that to him. Oh—"

She dived suddenly as the gallery door opened. Brand caught a fleeting glimpse of her vanishing form.

"Who was that?" he asked.

Pyne had found his pipe and was filling it with tobacco.

"Mrs. Vansittart," he answered.

"Paying her long-deferred visit, I suppose. She chose a curious hour."

"So I thought. But she just popped her head in to tell you that she didn't know you at all."

Brand smiled.

"Poor lady!" he said. She, like the rest of us, is perturbed and uneasy. I imagine she is of a somewhat hysterical temperament."

"That's so," agreed Pyne.

There were puzzling discrepancies in Mrs. Vansittart's explanation of her untimely appearance. Evidently, she did not expect to meet him there. She thought she would find the lighthouse-keeper alone. The ready deduction presented itself that when she did encounter Brand she did not wish any third person to be present at the interview.

That Constance's father had no cause to look at matters in the same light he was quite certain. Anyhow, it was not his affair, and he declined to trouble his head about Mrs. Vansittart's vagaries.

So the young philosopher lit his pipe and delivered a dictum on the sex.

"Some women," he said, "are made up of contradictions. She is one. I have known her for some time and I thought nothing could phaze her. But there must be a sort of society crust over her emotions, and the wreck broke it. Now, for my part, I like a woman with a clear soul, one in whose eyes you can catch the glint of the inner crystal."

"They are rare," said Brand.

"I suppose so. Indeed, it used to be a mere ideal of mine, built up from books. But they exist, and they are worth looking for."

He waited, lest perchance the other man should take the cue thus offered, but Brand, for the twentieth time, was poring over the records of the days which followed the hurricane reported by a former keeper. The American pursed his lips.

"He has had a bad time with a woman once in his life," he mused. "It must have been Constance's mother, and that is why he doesn't believe in heredity. Well, I guess he's right."

Had he seen Mrs. Vansittart cowering on her knees outside her bedroom door, he might have found cause for more disturbing reflections. She was crying softly, with her face hidden in her hands.

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"Oh, I dare not, I dare not!" she moaned. "I am the most miserable woman in the world. It would have been better if I had gone down with the vessel. The Lord saved me only to punish me. My heart will break. What shall I do? Where shall I hide?"

And her sobbing only ceased when the noise of ascending footsteps drove her into the company of sorrowful women who would nevertheless have forgotten some of their own woes did they but realize her greater anguish.

CHAPTER XIV

THE WAY THEY HAVE IN THE NAVY

"Some people are never satisfied," said Pyne, whilst he helped the cooks by smashing a ham bone with a hammer. The bone had been picked clean of meat and marrow on the first day after the wreck, but it occurred to Enid that if it were broken up and boiled she might procure some sort of nourishment for the two children, who were fast running down in condition.

"What is the matter now?" inquired Constance, whose attentive eyes were hovering between the cooking stove and a distilling kettle.

All the flour and biscuits, with the exception of two tins reserved for extremities, had been used. She was striving to concoct cakes of chocolate out of cocoa, an article more plentiful than any other food of its kind in stock, but water could not be spared, and eating dry powder was difficult to parched palates.

"There are two tug-boats, a trawler, and a Trinity service-boat not half a mile away," said Pyne, "and the cliffs at Land's End are peppered with people."

"Surely that is satisfactory. Dad told me that the

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Falcon signaled this morning he was to expect a special effort to be made at half tide on the flow, and not on the ebb as was arranged yesterday."

"Yes, that is all right so far as it goes." Pyne leaned forward with the air of one about to impart information of great value. "But the extraordinary thing is that whilst every man on board those vessels is thinking like steam how best to get into the lighthouse, we are most desperately anxious to get out of it. So you see, as I said before, some people —"

"Oh, dash!" cried Enid, "I've gone and burnt my finger all through, listening to your nonsense."

"Are there really many people on the cliffs?" demanded Constance.

Pyne pounded the bone viciously.

"I go out of my way to inform you of a number of interesting and strictly accurate facts," he protested, "and one of you burns her fingers and the other doubts my word. Yet, if I called your skepticism unfeeling, Miss Enid would be angry."

"I don't know why kettle lids are so cantankerous," said Enid. "They seem to get hot long before the water does."

"The hottest part of any boil is on top," said Pyne.

Enid smiled forgiveness. "I believe you would be cheerful if you were going to be electrocuted," she said, pensively. "Yet, goodness knows, it is hard to keep one's spirits up this morning. The sea is as bad as ever. What will become of us if we get no relief today?"

"Mr. Pyne," interrupted Constance suddenly, "do

you think that any of the men can have gained access to the store-room during the night?"

"I can't say for sure," he replied. "What has put that into your mind?"

"The purser and I examined all that was left this morning, and we both agreed that some of the things had disappeared. It is very strange."

Pyne was not wholly prepared for this mine being sprung on him. Se he essayed to gain time.

"It doesn't appeal to me in that light. There was a miscalculation about the water. Why not about the food?"

"Because my father went through all the stores personally and portioned them out. Some flour and tinned meat have gone; I am quite sure of it. The question is — who can have taken them. The flour, at least, must have attracted attention if anybody tried to eat it."

"Did you say all that to the purser?" he asked, suspending his labors and looking at her steadily.

"No. We could not remember exactly what proportion of the various articles there ought to be left."

"Then take my advice, Miss Constance, and keep on forgetting," he said.

A quick flush came into her pale cheeks.

"You are not saying that without good cause?" she murmured.

"I have the best of reasons. If the least hint of such a thing goes round among the men there will be ructions."

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Constance went to the door and closed it.

"Enid," she said, "I believe father and Mr. Pyne have got some dreadful plan in their minds which they dare not tell us about."

But the American was not to be cornered in such fashion. He opened the door again and went out, pausing on the threshold to say:

"I wouldn't venture to guess what might be troubling Mr. Brand, but you can take it from me that what he says, goes. Talk about grasping a nettle firmly, I believe your father would grab a scorpion by the tail if he felt that way."

And with this cryptic utterance he quitted them, intending to warn Brand at the first opportunity that the time was at hand when he must harden his heart and take the decisive step of cutting off communication between the service-room and the remainder of the building.

This could be done easily. The flanges of the uppermost iron staircase were screwed to the floor above and below. A few minutes' labor would remove the screws; the steps could be lifted bodily into the service-room and there utilized to seal the well.

"What a howling menagerie will break loose here when they find out," thought Pyne. "It's a hard thing to say, but we ought to have the door open. Quite a stack of folks will need to be pitched outside."

A comforting reflection truly, yet his face bore no token thereof as he joined the lighthouse-keeper and several of the *Chinook's* officers and men on the gallery.

The wind had shifted another couple of points to the north, and the sea, apart from the reef, was running in a heavy unbroken swell. That was the tantalizing part of it. Any ordinary ship's boat, properly managed, could live in perfect safety in the open.

But the iron-toothed reef, with its tortuous channels and battling currents changing with every stage of the tide, surrounded the pillar with an apparently impassable barrier, whilst the lighthouse itself offered as frowning a front as any of the black rocks which reared their weed-covered crests at low water.

Signals were being exchanged between the gallery and the Trinity tender. Brand seemed to be very emphatic in his answers to the communications made to him by Stanhope.

"No, no," he muttered aloud, whilst the anxious man near him wondered why he was so impatient.

"It is utterly impossible!" he said again. "No boat can do it — some one should stop him. It means certain loss of life!"

At last, becoming aware that his companions could not understand what was going on, he turned to them with passionate explanation.

"That brave fellow Stanhope says that, with two others at the oars, he intends to row near enough to the rock at half flood to endeavor to spring onto the ladder. I cannot persuade him that no man has ever yet succeeded in such a mad project. Look below, and see how each wave climbs around eighteen or twenty feet of the base. The thing is wildly impracticable. He will be swept off

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and smashed to pieces before our eyes, even if the boat escapes."

"If the boat can come near enough for that purpose, couldn't we heave a line aboard her?" asked one of the ship's officers.

"We can try. I shall signal them to that effect. Anything is better than to sanction an attempt which is foredoomed to failure, and must result in the death of the man who tries it."

Thereupon more energetic flag-waving took place. Finally Brand desisted in sheer exasperation.

"I cannot convince him," he cried. "He has made up his mind. May the Lord preserve him from a peril which I consider to be a mortal one."

"Has he put forward any theory?" asked Pyne. "He was doing a lot of talking."

"Yes," explained Brand. "He believes that a strong boat, rowed to the verge of the broken water, might watch her opportunity and dart in close to the ladder on the backwash of a big wave, allowing its successor to lift her high enough for an active man to jump onto the rungs. The rowers must pull for their lives the instant the wave breaks and leave him clinging to the ladder as best he can. There is more chance of success in that way, he thinks, than in trying to make fast a line thrown by us, even if it fell over the boat. It is all a question of time, he argues, and I have failed to convince him that not only he but his companions will be lost."

"Is there no chance?" inquired the second officer.

"Look below," repeated Brand hopelessly, and in-

deed, when they obeyed him, craning their necks over the rail to examine the seething cauldron from which the granite tower tapered up to them, no man could say that the lighthouse-keeper deplored Stanhope's decision without good reason.

They understood matters a little better, perhaps, when, one by one, they re-entered the lantern, the *Falcon* having flitted away to make her final preparations. Brand asked them not to make known the nature of the pending undertaking.

"If I thought it would do any good to the suffering people I would gladly see them enlivened by the news," he said. "I confess, however, I expect nothing but disastrous failure — and — gentlemen — Lieutenant Stanhope is practically engaged to be married to one of my daughters."

What was to be said? They quitted him in the silence that was the dominant note of their lives just then. Pyne alone remained. He wondered why one man should be called on to endure so much.

Though each of those present on the gallery was loyal to Brand's sorrowful request, it was impossible to prevent others from seeing that something of exceptional interest was in progress afloat and on the rock.

Brand did not know that the officials of the Trinity House had only agreed to help Stanhope's hazardous project under compulsion. The sailor informed them that he was determined to carry out his scheme, with or without their assistance. So, when the *Falcon*, the tender, and a strong tug hired by Mr. Traill, rounded

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the distant Carn du headland at eleven o'clock, the lighthouse-keeper felt that further protest was unavailing. It behooved him to take all possible measures to help the men who were about to dare so much to help him.

In the first place, he caused a rope to be swung from the gallery to the doorway. If any doubt were entertained as to the grave risk attending Stanhope's enterprise it was promptly dispelled by the extreme difficulty met with in accomplishing this comparatively simple task. Even a heavy piece of wood, slung to the end of the ninety odd feet of cord necessary, did not prevent the wind from lashing the weighted end in furious plunges seaward. At last a sailor caught the swinging block with a boat-hook. The man would have been carried away by a climbing wave had not his mates perceived his danger and held him. Then two life-buoys were attached to other ropes, in case there might be some slight chance of using them. The tackle which the unfortunate captain of the *Chinook* had cast adrift was utilized to construct safety lines in the entrance way. Loops were fastened to them, in which six of the strongest men available were secured against the chance of being swept through the door to instant death.

Meanwhile, the three vessels had steamed close to the mooring buoy, which, it will be remembered, lay in full view of the kitchen window. Constance gave them a casual glance. Being versed in the ways of the sea, she instantly discovered that some unusual event was astir.

She called her sister's attention to the maneuvers of

the steamers; one, the Trinity tender, lay broadside on to the incoming tide.

"They are lowering a boat, I do declare," she announced, after they had watched the proceedings for a little while with growing curiosity. At the distance, nearly six hundred yards, it was difficult to discern exactly what was taking place.

"No boat can live if it comes near the rock," cried Enid. And then a wild thought brought her heart to her mouth.

"Oh, Connie!" she cried in a sudden access of terror, "I feel sure that Jack is doing something desperate to save us. Dad knows. They all know, but they would not tell us. That is why Mr. Pyne has not been near us for hours."

"It cannot be. No one would permit it. Father would never give his sanction. Enid, my dear one, why do you say such things? You frighten me!"

But Constance's lips were bloodless, and her eyes dilated with the fear which she, too, would fain deny.

They were perched so high above the sea that the dancing hillocks of green water could not wholly obscure the stoutly built craft which bobbed into startling prominence round the stern of the tender.

"It is, it is!" shrieked Enid. "Look, Connie! There is Jack kneeling in the bow. Oh, dear! oh, dear! Is he mad? Why don't they stop him? I cannot bear to look. Connie, tell me — shall I see him drowned before my eyes?"

The girl was distraught, and her sister was in little

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better plight. Fascinated, speechless, clinging to each other like panic-stricken children, they followed the leaping boat with the glassy stare of those who gaze, open-eyed, at remorseless death.

They scarce understood what was toward.

As the boat, a strong craft, yet such a mere speck of stanch life in the tumbling seas, was steadily impelled nearer, they saw the tug lurch ahead of the other vessels until a line was thrown and caught by Stanhope, who instantly fastened it round his waist. The rowers wore cork jackets, but he was quite unprotected. Bare-headed, with his well-knit limbs shielded only by a jersey, loose-fitting trousers and canvas shoes, he had declined to hamper his freedom of movement with the cumbrous equipment so essential for anyone who might be cast adrift in that dreadful sea.

The girls, even in their dumb agony, were dully conscious of a scurry of feet up and down the stairs. What did it matter? They paid heed to naught save the advancing boat, now deep in the trough of a wave, now perched precariously on a lofty crest. Whoever the rowers were, they trusted wholly to the instructions given by the gallant youth who peered so boldly into the wilderness ahead. The flying foam and high-tossed spray gave to the lighthouse the semblance of alternately lifting and lowering its huge frame amidst the furious torrents that encircled it. Nerves of steel, strong hearts and true, were needed by those who would voluntarily enter that watery inferno.

Yet the men at the oars did not falter nor turn their

heads. They pulled evenly and well, with the short, deep-sunken stroke of the fisherman, and Stanhope, now that they were almost in the vortex where the waves lost their regularity, produced a paddle wherewith to twist the boat's head to meet each turn and swirl.

Stealthily the powerful tug-boat crept in the wake of the smaller craft, until it became clear to the girls' strained vision that watchful helpers, lashed in the vessel's bows, were manipulating another rope as a drag, thus helping the sailors' efforts to prevent his frail argosy from being swamped by a breaking sea.

Then a miracle did happen, a miracle of science. When the boat was yet two hundred yards away, Brand, looking out from the gallery in stony despair, suddenly behaved as one possessed of a fiend.

"Follow me!" he roared. "Come, every man!"

He rushed into the lantern. As if he wanted wings rather than limbs, he swung himself by his hands to the floor of the service-room.

Galvanized into activity, those who were with him on the ledge raced after him. They knew not what had happened. Their leader had spoken, and they obeyed.

Down, down, they pelted, taking the steep stairs with break-neck speed, until they reached the oil-room, with its thousands of gallons stored in great tanks.

Big empty tins stood there, awaiting the next visit of the tender, and Brand wrenched the cover off the nearest cistern. He scooped up a tinful of the oil.

"Bring all you can carry," he shouted, and was off

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again with an energy that was wonderful in a man who had endured the privations and hardships of so many hours.

They understood. Why had none of them thought of it earlier? In its cold granite depths the lighthouse carried that which had the power to subdue the roaring fury of the reef.

The first man to reach the gallery after Brand was Pyne, who chanced to be nearest to him when the hubbub arose. He found the other man flinging handfuls of the oil as far to windward as the thick fluid would travel.

"Quick!" gasped Brand. "Don't pour it out! It must be scattered."

So the colza fell in little patches of smooth tranquillity into the white void beneath, and, before Stanhope had piloted his boat half the remaining distance, the wave-currents surging about the rock ceased to toss their yellow manes so high, and the high-pitched masses of foam vanished completely.

The seamen stationed in the entrance were astonished by the rapidity of the change. In less than a minute they found they were no longer blinded by the spindrift cast by each upward rush right into the interior of the lighthouse. The two nearest to the door looked out in wonderment. What devilment was the reef hatching now, that its claws should relax their clutch on the pillar and its icy spray be withheld?

Each wave, as it struck to westward of the column, divided itself into two roaring streams which met ex-

actly where the iron rungs ran down the wall. There was a mighty clash of the opposing forces and a further upward rearing of shattered torrents before the reunited mass fell away to give place to its successor.

Full twenty feet of the granite layers were thus submerged and exposed whenever a big comber traveled sheer over the reef.

But these straight-forward attacks were spasmodic. Often the eddies created by the rocks came tumbling pellmell from the north. Sometimes they would combine with the incoming tide, and then the water seemed to cling tenaciously to the side of the lighthouse until it rose to a great height, swamping the entrance, and dropping back with a tremendous crash. There were times when the northerly ally disdained to merge with its rival. Then it leaped into the hollow created by the receding wave, and all about the lighthouse warred a level whirlpool.

Stanhope's plan was to rush the boat in when one of these comparatively less dangerous opportunities offered. He would spring for the ladder, run up if possible, but, if caught by a vaulting breaker, lock himself with hands and feet on the iron rungs and endeavor to withstand the stifling embrace of the oncoming sea. He was sure he could hold out against that furious onslaught, once at least. He was an expert swimmer and diver, and he believed that by clinging limpet-like to the face of the rock, he had the requisite strength of lungs and sinews to resist one if not more of those watery avalanches.

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The rope around his waist was held from the tug. The instant he made his leap, the men with him were to back water, the crew at the drag to haul for all they were worth, and consequently pull the boat clear of the next wave 'ere it broke. That is why he selected a handy craft in place of the life-boat offered to him as soon as his resolve was whispered ashore. It was on rapidity, quick judgment, the utilization of seconds, that he depended. The unwieldly bulk of the life-boat not only detracted from these all-important considerations, but made it more than probable that she would be capsized or touch the reef.

For the same reason he timed his approach on the rising tide. He could venture nearer to the lighthouse itself, and the boat could be rowed and dragged more speedily into safety. With him, too, were men who knew every inch of the Gulf Rock. He knew he could trust them to the end.

Although he had mapped out his programme to the last detail, Brand's inspiration in using the oil created a fresh and utterly unforeseen set of conditions.

Mountainous ridges still danced fantastically up and down the smooth granite slopes, but they no longer broke, and it is broken water, not tumultuously heaving seas, that an open boat must fear.

With the intuition of a born sailor, ready to seize any advantage given by human enemy or angry ocean, Stanhope decided, in the very jaws of opportunity, to abandon his original design totally, and shout to the men he saw standing in the entrance to heave him a

rope. He would have preferred the danger of the jump. He almost longed to endure the fierce struggle which must ensue before he reached those waiting hands. He thought he would have his reward in the tense joy of the fight, in bringing salvation to Enid and those with her, in seeing her sweet face again after these days and nights of vigil.

But the paramount need was to succeed. The extraordinary and, to him, quite inexplicable, change in conditions which he had studied during tortured hours passed on the bridge of the *Falcon* or the Trinity tender, made it possible to remain longer in the vicinity of the rock than he had dared to hope. Therefore he knew it was advisable to adopt the certain means of communication of the thrown rope in preference to the uncertainty of his own power to reach and climb the ladder.

Flinging out his right arm, he motioned to the men in the lighthouse to be ready to heave a coil. The wind was the chief trouble now, but he must chance that.

"'Vast pulling," he yelled over his shoulder as a monstrous wave pranced over the reef and enveloped the column.

"Ay, ay," sang out his crew.

Up went the boat on the crest and a fearsome cavern spread before his eyes, revealing the seaweed that clung to the lowest tier of masonry. In the same instant he caught a fleeting glimpse of a lofty billow rearing back from the rocks on the north.

Down sank the boat until the door of the lighthouse

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seemed to be an awful distance away. She rose again, and Stanhope stood upright, his knees wedged against the wooden ribs. One piercing glance in front and another to the right showed that the antagonism of the two volumes of water gave the expected lull.

"Pull!"

The boat shot onward. Once, twice, three times, the oars dipped with precision. These rowers, who went with their backs turned to what might be instant death, were brave and stanch as he who looked it unflinchingly in the face.

"Heave!" roared Stanhope to the white-visaged second officer standing in the doorway far above him.

The rope whirred through the air, the boat rose still higher to meet it, and the coil struck Stanhope in the face, lashing him savagely in the final spite of the baffled gale which puny man had conquered.

Never was blow taken with such Christian charity.

"Back!" he cried, and the oarsmen, not knowing what had happened, bent against the tough blades. The tug's sailors at the drag, though the engines grinding at half speed were keeping them grandly against the race not more than a hundred and fifty yards in the rear, failed for an instant to understand what was going on. But their captain had seen the cast and read its significance.

"Haul away!" he bellowed in a voice of thunder, and, to cheer them on, added other words which showed that he was no landsman.

Stanhope deftly knotted the lighthouse line to the

loop taken off his waist. He cast the joined cords overboard.

"Thank God!" he said, and he looked up at the great pillar already growing less in the distance.

Now, from the kitchen, owing to its height above sea level and the thickness of the wall pierced by the window, as soon as the boat came within fifty yards or so of the lighthouse, the girls could see it no longer.

When it dropped out of sight for the last time Constance could not endure the strain. Though her dry tongue clicked in her mouth she forced a despairing cry.

"Enid," she screamed, "lean out through the window. It is your place."

"I cannot! Indeed, I cannot! He will be killed! Oh, save him, kind Providence, and take my life in his stead!"

Constance lifted the frenzied girl in her strong arms. This was no moment for puling fear.

"If I loved a man," she cried, "and he were about to die for my sake, I should count it a glory to see him die."

The brave words gave Enid some measure of comprehension. Yes, that was it. She would watch her lover whilst he faced death, even though her heart stopped beating when the end came.

Helped by her sister, she opened the window and thrust her head out. To her half-dazed brain came the consciousness that the sea had lost its venom. She saw the boat come on, pause, leap forward, the rope thrown and the knot made.

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As the boat retreated she caught Stanhope's joyous glance. He saw her, and waved his hand. Something he said caused the two rowers, for the first time, to give one quick glance backward, for they were now scudding rapidly away from the danger zone. She knew them; she managed to send a frantic recognition of all three.

Then, in an almost overpowering reaction, she drew back from the window and tears of divine relief streamed from her eyes.

"Constance," she sobbed, "he has saved us! Look out. You will see him. I cannot."

Yet, all tremulous and breathless, she brushed away the tears and strove to distinguish the boat once more. It appeared, a vague blot in the mist that enshrouded her.

"Connie," she said again, "tell me that all is well."

"Yes, dear. Indeed, indeed, he is safe."

"And do you know who came with him? I saw their faces — Ben Pollard and Jim Spence — in the *Daisy*. Yes, it is true. And Jack planned it with them. They have escaped; and we, too, will be rescued. It is God's own doing. I could thank him on my knees for the rest of my life."

CHAPTER XV

ENID'S NEW NAME

THE twisted strands of tough hemp might have been an electric cable of utmost conductivity if its powers were judged by results. When willing hands had carefully hauled in the rope until the knot could be unfastened, and the end secured to the cord connecting the gallery with the entrance, a man was despatched to warn Brand that all was in readiness for the next step.

The rough sailor was the messenger of the gods to those who waited on each story. As he ran upwards, climbing the steep stairs with the nimbleness of a monkey, he bellowed the great news to each crowded doorway. Seeing the girls in the kitchen, though already his breath was scant, he blurted out:

"It's all right, ladies! He's done the trick!"

On the next landing pallid women's faces gleamed at him.

"Rope aboard!" he gasped. "They're tyin' on legs o' mutton now."

Yet again he was waylaid on the floor above. Hard pressed for wind, he wheezed forth consolation.

"Just goin' to haul the bottled beer aboard," he grunted.

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It would never to do pass the hospital without a word.

"Beef-tea an' port wine swimmin' here," he panted.

Brand was peering through the lantern door, awaiting this unwashed Mercury, who caught sight of the lighthouse-keeper 'ere his shaggy head had emerged from the well.

The man stopped, almost spent. He gave an off-handed sailor's salute.

"Haul away, sir!" he yelled, and his voice cracked with excitement. Indeed, they who remained quite coherent on the Gulf Rock, on the ships, and even on the cliffs nine miles away, were few in number and to be pitied exceedingly. There are times when a man must cheer and a woman's eyes glisten with joyous tears, else they are flabby creatures, human jellyfish. The steamboats snorted with raucous siren-blasts, and although the hoarse shouting of men and the whistling of steam were swept into space by the north wind in its rage, those on shore could read the riddle through their glasses of the retreating boat and the white vapor-puffs.

The first to grasp Stanhope's hand when he swung himself onto the deck of the tender was Mr. Cyrus J. Traill.

"Well done, my lad!" he cried, brokenly. "I thought it was all up with you. Did you see her?"

"Yes, but only for a second."

"You thought it best not to join them?"

"You know that I would gladly go now and attempt it. But I dared not refuse the better way. I can't tell

you what happened. Something stilled the sea like magic. Look at it now."

Assuredly the waves were breaking again around the pillar with all their wonted ferocity, but one among the Trinity House officers noticed a smooth, oily patch floating past the vessel.

"By Jove!" he shouted, "Brand helped you at the right moment. He threw some gallons of colza overboard."

Traill, a bronzed, spare, elderly man, tall and straight, with eyes set deep beneath heavy eyebrows, went to Jim Spence and Ben Pollard where they were helping to sling the *Daisy* up to the davits.

"I said five hundred between you," he briefly announced. "If the rope holds, and the three people I am interested in reach the shore alive, I will make it five hundred apiece."

Ben Pollard's mahogany face became several inches wider, and remained so permanently his friends thought, but Jim Spence only grinned.

"You don't know the cap'n, sir. He'll save every mother's son — an' daughter, too — now he has a line aboard."

Then the ex-sailor, chosen with Ben from among dozens of volunteers owing to his close acquaintance with the reef, bethought him.

"You're treatin' Ben an' me magnificent, sir," he said, "but the chief credit is due to Mr. Stanhope. We on'y obeyed orders."

The millionaire laughed like a boy.

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"I have not forgotten Mr. Stanhope," he said. "I am sure your confidence in Mr. Brand will be justified. You watch me smile when I ante up your share."

On board the tug, and on the gallery of the lighthouse, there was no time for talk. The vessel, with the most skilful handling, might remain where she was for about four hours. She was already more than a hundred fathoms within the dangerous area marked by the buoy, and there was much to be done in the time.

The strongest rope, the best wire hawser, has its well-defined limit of strain, and the greater the length the greater the tension. From the buoy itself naught save a chain cable would hold in such a sea. The tug must operate from the nearer base. She was pitching and tossing in a manner calculated to daunt anyone but a sailor, and the slightest mistake made by the skipper, the burly oil-skinned man balancing himself on the bridge with his hand on the engine-room telegraph, would snap any line ever twisted.

So, briefly, this was the procedure adopted. A stout rope was bent onto that carried to the rock by Stanhope. With this was sent a whip, thus establishing a to-and-fro communication. The rope itself, when it had reached the rock, was attached to a buoy and anchored. Thus, it could be picked up easily if the thin wire hawser next despatched should happen to break.

A few words may cover a vast amount of exertion. Before the second line, with its running gear, was safely stayed around the body of the lantern — even the

iron railing might give way — a precious hour had elapsed, and Stanhope was impatiently stamping about the bridge of the tender, though none knew better than he that not an unnecessary moment was being lost.

At last a signaler stationed on the tug was able to ask:

"What shall we send first?"

And the answer came back:

"Water, milk, bread."

All night tinsmiths had labored to enclose food and clothing in water-tight cylinders ready for transport, and the shining packages now began their voyaging from the tug's trawl-beam to the lofty gallery, three-fourths of the journey being through the sea. When the first consignment reached the rock, another lusty cheer boomed from the watching vessels.

Stanhope, at least, could picture the scene in progress behind the grim granite walls — Constance and Enid, with others whom he did not know, serving out generous draughts to thirsty and famished women and men, helping themselves last, and hardly able to empty the eight-gallon supply of fresh water before they were called on to distribute a similar quantity of milk.

And then, the bread, the cooked meat all cut in slices, the tinned soups and meat extracts, the wines — for Traill had taken charge of the catering and his arrangements were lavish — what a feast for people almost on the verge of starvation!

The hours flew until the tug signaled that she must cast loose and back away from the reef. The tide was

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running westward now. Soon the danger would be active, and in any case, the Gulf Rock was saved from the possibility of famine during the next forty-eight hours. So the hawser, in its turn, was buoyed, and Brand's parting instruction was not to attempt to re-open communication during the dark hours of the morning tide.

The wisdom of his advice was manifest. With farewell trumpetings the vessels scurried off to Penzance, and the telegraph-office was kept open all night transmitting the word-pictures of newspaper correspondents to thrill the world with full descriptions of the way in which the Gulf Rock's famished denizens had been relieved.

The two last packages ferried to the lighthouse contained, not only warm woolen wraps for the women and children, but a big bundle of letters and telegrams.

Pyne was the postman. There were at least twenty notes addressed to the girls, and several to Brand, from friends ashore.

Mr. Traill, of course, wrote to his nephew and Mrs. Vansittart. Naturally, Pyne carried his own missive to the kitchen, where he found that Constance and Enid had managed to wash in distilled water.

They were cutting sandwiches and endeavoring to read their letters at the same instant. He bowed with sarcastic politeness.

"I see you are ready for the party," he said.

Certainly he offered a deplorable contrast to them. His face was encrusted with salt and blackened with

dirt and perspiration. His hands were like those of a sweep, but smeared with oil, which shone on his coat sleeves up to both elbows. His clothes were torn and soiled, his linen collar and cuffs limp as rags, and his waistcoat was ripped open, having remained in that condition since it caught in a block as he descended the mast.

"Oh, you poor fellow!" cried Constance. "How you must envy us. Here is a kettleful of hot water. I can't say much for the towel, but the soap is excellent."

Refreshed, Pyne opened his uncle's letter. The girls were keeping up a running commentary of gossip.

"Mousie (Mrs. Sheppard) says she hasn't slept for three nights."

"Edith Taylor-Smith says she envies us."

"That letter you are reading now is from Lady Margaret. What does she say?"

"She sends all sorts of love, and — that kind of thing," cried the blushing Enid, who had just learnt from Jack's mother that Stanhope had appropriated her as his intended wife without ever a proposal.

"Is that all — in four closely written pages?"

"Well — she hopes soon to see me — to see both of us —"

Constance was too kindly to quiz her sister; maybe she saw something in Enid's eye which threatened speedy retaliation.

"Here's a note from the vicar. They have held a special service of intercession at St. Mary's."

"And Hettie Morris writes — Good gracious, Mr. Pyne! Have you had any bad news?"

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Enid's wondering cry was evoked by the extraordinary way in which the young American was looking at her. Some intensely exciting knowledge had mastered stoicism. His eyes were distended, his lips quivering. He leaned with one hand on the kitchen table; in the other he had clenched his uncle's letter.

Constance stood near to him. That he, of all the men she had ever met, should yield to an overpowering emotion, startled her greatly.

She caught his arm.

"Mr. Pyne," she said softly, "if — it is any ill tidings — you have received — we are, indeed, sorry for you."

He pulled himself straight, and gave Constance such a glance that she hastily withdrew her hand. It seemed to her that he would clasp her in his arms forthwith without spoken word. Her action served to steady him, and he laughed, so softly and pleasantly that their fear was banished.

"Girls," he said slowly, "I have been parachuting through space for a minute or so. I'm all right. Everybody is all right. But my head swims a bit. If I come back forgetting my name and the place where I last resided, remember that once I loved you."

He left them. He could not trust himself to say more.

"That letter was from his uncle, I suppose," said Enid, awe-stricken.

"It must be something very dramatic which would make him act so strangely. Why has he run away? Was he afraid to trust us with his news?"

There was a sharp vehemence in Constance's voice which did not escape her sister's sharp ears.

"Connie," said Enid, quietly, "as sure as Jack loves me, that man is in love with you."

"Enid —"

But the other girl laughed, with a touch of her saucy humor.

"Why did he look at you in that way just now? Didn't you think he was going to embrace you on the spot? Confess!"

"It was at you he was looking."

"Not in the way I mean. He gazed at me as if I were a spirit. But when you touched him he awoke. He might have been asleep and suddenly seen you near him. I wonder he didn't say, 'Kiss me, dearest, and then I will be sure it is not a dream.'"

Constance discovered that she must defend herself.

"Mr. Pyne hardly conveyed such unutterable things to me," she said, conscious that a clean face betrays a flush which smudges may hide. "Have you had a letter from Jack that you can interpret other people's thoughts so sweetly?"

"No, dear. Jack has not written. I have found out the cause. His mother expresses the hope that he will be the first to convey her good wishes. So I think he meant to try and bring the rope himself. Dad knew it and Mr. Pyne. That is why they did not tell us."

Constance gathered her letters into a heap. The tiny pang of jealousy which thrilled her had gone.

"Eighty-one hungry mouths expect to be filled to

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repletion tonight," she said. "No more gossip. What curious creatures women are! Our own affairs are sufficiently engrossing without endeavoring to pry into Mr. Pyne's."

"Connie, don't press your lips so tightly. You are just dying to know what upset him. But, mark my words, it had nothing to do with any other woman."

Wherein Enid was completely mistaken: she would never commit a greater error of judgment during the rest of her days.

When Pyne quitted the kitchen his intent was to reach Brand without delay. As he passed Mrs. Vansittart's bedroom he paused. Something had delighted him immeasurably once the first shock of the intelligence had passed.

He seemed to be irresolute in his mind, for he waited some time on the landing before he knocked at the door and asked if Mrs. Vansittart would come and speak to him.

"Are you alone?" she demanded, remaining invisible.

"Yes," he said.

Then she appeared, with that borrowed shawl still closely wrapped over head and face.

"What is it?" she said wearily.

"You have had a letter from my uncle?"

"Yes, a charming letter, but I cannot understand it. He says that some very important and amazing event will detain him in Penzance after we reach the place. He goes on — but I will read it to you. I am quite bewildered."

She took a letter from her pocket and searched through its contents until she found a paragraph. She was about to read it aloud when someone came down the stairs. It was one of the officers, yet Mrs. Vansittart was so flurried that she dropped the sheet of paper and bent to pick it up before Pyne could intervene.

"Oh, bother!" she cried. "I am dreadfully nervous, even now that we are in no further peril. This is what I wish you to hear."

And she read:

"Nothing but the most amazing and unlooked-for circumstances would cause me to ask you to postpone the date of our marriage for at least a month after you reach shore. This is not the time, nor are your present surroundings the place for telling you why I make this request. Suffice it to say that I think, indeed, I am sure, a great happiness has come into my life, a happiness which you, as my wife soon to be, will share."

The American, whilst Mrs. Vansittart was intent on her excerpts from his uncle's letter, studied all that was visible of her face. That which he saw there puzzled him. She had suffered no more than others, so he wondered why she wore such an air of settled melancholy. Throughout the lighthouse gloom was dispelled. The sick became well, the lethargic became lively. Even the tipplers of methylated spirits, deadly ill before, had worked like Trojans at the rope, as eager to rehabilitate their shattered character as to land the much-needed stores.

What trouble had befallen this woman, so gracious,

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so facile, so worshipful in her charm of manner and utterance during the years he had known her, that she remained listless when all about her was life and joyance, she, the cynosure of many eyes by her costumes and graceful carriage, cowering from recognition? Here was a mystery, though she had repudiated the word, and a mystery which, thus far, defeated his sub-conscious efforts at solution.

She lifted her eyes to his. Her expression was forlorn, compelling pity by its utter desolation.

"What does he mean?" she asked plaintively. "Why has he not spoken clearly? Can you tell me what it is, this great happiness, which has entered, so strangely, into his life and mine?"

"I have never met any man who knew exactly what he meant to say, and exactly how to say it, better than Cyrus J.," said Pyne.

"But he has written to you, surely. Does he give no hint?"

"His letter is a very short one. To be candid, I have hardly made myself acquainted with its contents as yet."

"You are fencing with me. You know, and you will not tell."

Her mood changed so rapidly that Pyne was not wholly prepared for the attack.

"It is a good rule," he said, "never to pretend you can handle another man's affairs better than he can handle them himself."

He met her kindling glance firmly. The anger that

scintillated in her eyes almost found utterance. But this clever woman of the world felt that nothing would be gained, perhaps a great deal lost, by any open display of temper.

She laughed scornfully.

"Mr. Traill is certainly the best judge of those worthy of his confidence. Excuse me if I spoke heatedly. Let matters remain where they were."

"Just a word, Mrs. Vansittart. My uncle has written you fairly and squarely. He has not denied you his confidence. If I understood you, he has promised it to the fullest extent."

"Yes, that is true."

"Then what are we quarreling about?"

He laughed in his careless way, to put her at her ease. She frowned meditatively. She, who could smile in such a dazzling fashion, had lost her art of late.

"You are right," she said slowly. "I am just a hysterical woman, starting at shadows, making mountains out of molehills. Forgive me."

As Pyne went on up the stairs his reflections took this shape:

"The old man shied at telling her outright. I wonder why. He is chock full of tact, the smoothest old boy I ever fell up against. He thinks there may have been little troubles here, perhaps. Well, I guess he's right."

In the service-room he found Brand cleaning a lamp calmly and methodically. All the stores had been carried downstairs, and the store-room key given over to the purser.

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"I am glad you have turned up," said the lighthouse-keeper. "Oblige me by opening that locker and taking back the articles I purloined recently. If the purser asks for an explanation, tell him the truth, and say I am willing to eat this stuff now for my sins."

Pyne noticed that Brand's own letters lay in a small pile on the writing-desk. With two exceptions, they were unopened. As a matter of fact, he had glanced at the superscriptions, saw that they were nearly all from strangers, and laid them aside until night fell and the lighting of the lamps would give him a spare moment.

"I'll do that with pleasure," said the American, "but there's one thing I want to discuss with you whilst there is a chance of being alone. My uncle says he has written to you."

"To me?"

"Yes. It deals with an important matter, too. It concerns Enid."

Mr. Traill has written to me about Enid?" repeated Brand, stopping his industrious polishing to see if Pyne were joking with him.

"That's so. See, here is his letter. It will tell its own story. Guess you'd better read it right away."

The young man picked up one of the sealed letters on the table and handed it to the other.

Setting aside a glass chimney and a wash-leather, Brand lost no time in reading Mr. Traill's communication.

Save that his lips tightened, and his face paled slightly, there was no outward indication of the tumult

the written words must have created in his soul, for this is what met his astonished vision:

"Dear Mr. Brand — I hope soon to make your acquaintance. It will be an honor to meet a man who has done so much for those near and dear to me, but there is one reason why I am anxious to grasp your hand which is so utterly beyond your present knowledge that I deem it a duty to tell you the facts, to prepare you, in a word.

"Circumstances have thrown me into the company of Lieutenant Stanhope. We had a kindred inspiration. He, I understand, is in effect, if not in actual recorded fact, the accepted suitor of your adopted daughter, known as Miss Enid Trevillion. I, although an older man, can share his feelings, because I am engaged to be married to Mrs. Vansittart, a lady whom you have, by God's help, rescued. Hence, Mr. Stanhope and I have almost lived together, ashore and afloat, during these troubled days. Naturally, he spoke of the girl he loves and told me something of her history. He described the brooch found on her clothing, and a Mr. Jones, retired from the lighthouse service, who was present when you saved the child from speedy death, informs me that her linen was marked 'E. T.'

"These facts, combined with the date and Mr. Jones's description of the damaged boat, lead me to believe that the girl is my own daughter, Edith Traill, whom you have mercifully preserved to gladden the eyes of a father who mourned her death, and the death of her mother, for nineteen years.

"I can say no more at present. I am not making inferences not justified in other ways. Nor am I setting up a father's claim to rob you of the affections of a beautiful and accomplished daughter. I will be con-

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tent, more than content, if she can give to me a tithe of the love she owes to you, for, indeed, in Mr. Stanhope, and in all others who know you, you have eloquent witnesses.

"Yours most sincerely,

"CYRUS J. TRAILL.

"P. S. Let me add, as an afterthought, that only my nephew and you have received this information. The agonized suspense which the ladies must have endured on the rock is a trial more than sufficient to tax their powers. If, as I expect, Mr. Stanhope meets you first, he will be guided wholly by your advice as to whether or not the matter shall be made known to your Enid — to my Edith — before she lands."

Brand dropped the letter and placed his hands over his face. He yielded for an instant to the stupor of the intelligence.

Pyne, as Constance had done, came near to him and said, with an odd despondency in his voice:

"Say, you feel bad about this. Guess you'll hate our family in future."

"Why should I hate anyone who brings rank and fortune to one of my little girls?"

"Well," went on Pyne anxiously, "she'll be Mrs. Stanhope, anyhow, before she's much older."

"That appears to be settled. All things have worked out for the best. Most certainly your excellent uncle and I shall not fall out about Enid. If it comes to that, we must share her as a daughter."

Pyne brightened considerably as he learnt how Brand had taken the blow.

"Oh, bully!" he cried. "That's a clear way out. Do you know, I was beginning to feel scared. I didn't count a little bit on my respected uncle setting up a title to Enid!"

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CHAPTER XVI

STEPHEN BRAND EXPLAINS

They were interrupted. Elsie, with her golden hair and big blue eyes, pink cheeks and parted lips, appeared on the stairs. All that was visible was her head. She looked like one of Murillo's angels.

"Please, can Mamie 'n' me see the man?" she asked, a trifle awed. She did not expect to encounter a stern-faced official in uniform.

"What man, dearie?" he said, and instantly the child gained confidence, with that prompt abandonment to a favorable first impression which marks the exceeding wisdom of children and dogs.

She directed an encouraging *sotto voce* down the stairs:

"Come right 'long, Mamie."

Then she answered, clasping the hand Pyne extended to her, but eying Brand the while:

"The man who brought the milk."

She wondered why they laughed, but the lighthouse-keeper caught her up in his arms.

"He has gone away, sweetheart," he said, "but when he comes in the morning I shall send for you and you

will see him. You are the little girl who was injured, eh? Are you getting better?"

Elsie, having seen Mamie safely extracted from the stair-way, became voluble.

"My elbow is stiff, but it doesn't hurt. I was feelin' pretty bad 'fore the milk came, but Mamie 'n' me had a lovely lot, an' some beautiful jelly. Fine, wasn't it, Mamie?"

"'Squizzit!" agreed Mamie.

"I think I'd like being here if there was more room," said the child. "An' why isn't there any washin'? Mamie 'n' me is always bein' washed 'cept when we're here."

"Surely you have not kept your face as clean as it is now ever since you left the ship?"

"Oh, no," put in Mamie. "We've just been rubbed with a hanky."

"And sent out to pay a call?"

"Not 'zactly," said truthful Mamie. "Mr. Pyne told us to wait near the door —"

"That's an old story now," intervened Pyne quickly. "Climb up on my shoulder and have a look at the sea. Perhaps there may be a ship, too."

"What did Mr. Pyne tell you?" whispered Brand, pretending to make a secret of it with Elsie.

"There didn't seem to be 'nuff to eat," she explained, seriously, "so Mr. Pyne kep' a bit of biscuit in his pocket, an' Mamie 'n' me had a chew every time we saw him."

"H'm," murmured the man, glancing up at his young

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friend as he walked around the trimming-stage with the delighted Mamie. "I suppose he asked you not to tell anybody?"

"We wasn't to tell Miss Constance or Miss Enid. An' they tole us we wasn't to tell him about the sweet stuff they put in our tea. That is all. Funny, isn't it?"

Brand knew that these little ones were motherless. His eyes dimmed somewhat. Like all self-contained men, he detested any exhibition of sentiment.

"I say," he cried huskily to Pyne, "you must escort your friends back to their quarters. No more idling, please."

"An' you will really send for us tomorrow to see the milkman?" said Elsie. Notwithstanding his sudden gruffness, she was not afraid of him. She looked longingly at the great lamp and the twinkling diamonds of the dioptric lens.

"Yes. I will not forget. Good-by, now, dearie."

The visit of the children had given him a timely reminder. As these two were now so had his own loved ones been in years that might not be recalled.

The nest would soon be empty, the young birds flown. He realized that he would not be many days ashore before the young American to whom he had taken such a liking would come to him and put forward a more enduring claim to Constance than Mr. Traill made with regard to Enid. Well, he must resign himself to these things, though no man ever lost two daughters under stranger conditions.

When Pyne returned, Brand was ready for him. The struggle was sharp, but it had ended.

"I would like you to read your uncle's letter," he said. "I am clear in my own mind as to the right course to adopt. If Mr. Traill wishes to win Enid's affections he will not take her by surprise. Indeed, he himself recognizes this element in the situation. You will not rush away from Penzance at once, I take it?"

"No, sir," said Pyne, with a delightful certainty of negation that caused a smile to brighten his hearer's face.

"I may not get clear of the rock for several days. There is much to place in order here. When the relief comes, I must help the men to make things ship-shape. Meanwhile, Stanhope — or Constance, whom you can take into your confidence — will smooth the way —"

"No, sir," interrupted Pyne, even more emphatically. "When you come to know my uncle you will find that he plays the game all the time. If Enid is to be given a new parent the old one will make the gift. And that's a fact."

Brand waived the point.

"The girls have plenty to endure here without having this surprise sprung on them," he said. "I will write to Mr. Traill, and leave events ashore in his hands."

So, for a night and the better part of a day, the pillar locked in its recesses some new doubts and cogitations. As between the two men a stronger bond of sympathy was created. Pyne, in those restless hours, was admirably tactful. He talked a great deal of his uncle.

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Soon, not only Brand, but the two girls, seemed to be well acquainted with a man they had never met.

With the morning tide the anarchy of the waves ceased. The children were brought to the lantern to witness a more majestic sight than the arrival of the "milkman." With the dawn the sun appeared, and the sea seemed to sink into long-deferred slumber under his potency.

The flood tide of the afternoon brought the unfailing tug, towing the Penzance life-boat. The crane was swung out and Jack Stanhope, as was his right, was first to be hoisted to the entrance and to exchange a hearty hand grip with Brand.

Behind the lighthouse-keeper were ranged many faces, but not that which the sailor sought.

"Where is Enid?" he asked, after the first words of congratulation were spoken. "Have you told her?"

"No. Here is Mr. Pyne. He will take you to the girls and tell you what we have decided."

The two young men looked at each other with frank friendliness.

"When we have a minute to spare you must take me to the gallery and explain just how you worked that trick," said Stanhope. "Brand's semaphore was to the point, but it omitted details."

"That is where I have the pull of you," responded Pyne with equal cordiality. "I don't require any telling about your work yesterday."

"Oh, people make such a fuss. What is there remarkable in guiding a boat through a rough sea?"

"I may be wrong, but it looks a heap harder than swarming up a pole."

In such wise did young Britain and young America pooh-pooh the idea that they had done aught heroic.

Indeed, their brief talk dealt next with Enid, and Lieutenant Stanhope, R. N., did not think he was outraging conventionality when he found Enid in the kitchen, and took her in his arms and kissed her.

Constance and Pyne discovered that the tug as seen through the window was a very interesting object.

"You don't feel at all lonesome?" he murmured to her.

"Not in the least."

"It must do a fellow a heap of good to meet his best girl under such circumstances."

"Mr. Stanhope and my sister have been the greatest of friends for years."

"Is it possible to catch up? The last few days on the rock ought to figure high in averages."

"Jack," cried Constance, finding this direct attack somewhat disconcerting, "did my father say that any arrangements were to be made for landing?"

"Yes, miss," interposed a sailor at the door. "The skipper's orders are: 'Women an' children to muster on the lower deck.'"

Then began a joyous yet strangely pathetic procession, headed by Elsie and Mamie, who were carried downstairs by the newly arrived lighthouse-men. The children cried and refused to be comforted until Pyne descended with them to the life-boat. The women fol-

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lowed, in terrible plight, notwithstanding the wraps sent them on the previous day. Each, as they passed Stephen Brand, bade him farewell and tearfully asked the Lord to bless him and his.

Among them came Mrs. Vansittart. Her features were veiled more closely than ever. Whilst she stood behind the others in the entrance, her glance was fixed immovably on Brand's face. No Sybilline prophetess could have striven more eagerly to wrest the secrets of his soul from its lineaments. Nevertheless, when he turned to her with his pleasant smile and parting words of comfort, she averted her eyes, uttered an incoherent phrase of thanks for his kindness, and seemed to be unduly terrified by the idea that she must be swung into the life-boat by the crane.

She held out her hand. It was cold and trembling.

"Don't be afraid," he said gently, patting her on the shoulder as one might reassure a timid child. "Sit down and hold the rope. The basket cannot possibly be overturned."

Pyne, helping to unload the tremulous passengers beneath, noted the lady's attitude, and added a fresh memorandum to the stock he had already accumulated.

"Who is that?" asked Brand from the purser, who stood beside him.

"Mrs. Vansittart."

Brand experienced a momentary surprise.

"She seemed to avoid me," he thought, but the incident did not linger in his mind.

The life-boat, rising and falling on the strong and

partly broken swell, required the most expert management if the weary people on the rock were to be taken off in safety.

When Constance and Enid, followed by Stanhope, reached the boat after giving Brand a farewell hug, there was no more room. The crew pulled off towards the waiting vessel, and here a specially prepared gangway rendered the work of transhipment easy.

Mr. Traill was leaning over the bulwark as the life-boat ranged alongside. He singled out Pyne at once, and gave him a cheery cry of recognition. At first he could not distinguish Mrs. Vansittart, and, indeed, it must be confessed that he was striving most earnestly to descry one face which had come back to him out of the distant years.

When his glance fell on Enid, his nephew, who was thinking how best to act under the circumstances, was assured that the father saw in the girl the living embodiment of her mother.

He thought it would be so. His own recollection of his aunt's portraits had already helped him to this conclusion, and how much more startling must a flesh and blood creation be than the effort of an artist to place on canvas the fugitive expression which constitutes the greatest charm of a mobile countenance.

Enid, having heard so much about Mr. Pyne's uncle, was innocently curious to meet him. At first she was vaguely bewildered. The sunken eyes were fixed on hers with an intensity that gave her a momentary sense of embarrassment. Luckily the exigencies of the hour

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offered slight scope to emotion. All things were unreal, out of drawing with previous experiences of her well-ordered life. The irregular swaying of the boat and the tug seemed to typify the new phase.

Pyne swung himself to the steamer's deck before the gangway was made fast, thereby provoking a loud outcry from the deserted children.

Grasping his uncle's hand he said:

"Wait until you read Brand's letter. No one else knows."

So, Mr. Traill, with fine self-control, greeted Mrs. Vansittart affectionately, and handed her over to a stewardess, who took her to a cabin specially prepared for her. Her low-spoken words were not quite what he expected.

"Don't kiss me," she murmured, "and please don't look at me. In my present condition I cannot bear it."

Relatives of the shipwrecked passengers and crew, many of whom were waiting in Penzance, were not allowed on board. This arrangement was made by Mr. Traill after consulting a local committee organized to help the unfortunates who needed help so greatly. The unanimous opinion was expressed that a few lady members of the committee, supplied with an abundance of clothing, etc., would afford prompt relief to the sufferers, whilst the painful scenes which must follow the meeting of survivors with their friends would cause confusion and delay on the vessel.

Pyne, watching all things, saw that Mrs. Vansittart did not meet his uncle with the eagerness of a woman

restored to the arms of the man she was about to marry.

She was distraught, aloof in her manner, apparently interested only in his eager assurance that she would find an assortment of new garments in the cabin.

The millionaire himself was too flustered to draw nice distinctions between the few words she spoke and what he expected her to say. When she quitted him he walked towards the group of young people. They were laughingly exchanging news and banter as if all that had gone before were the events of a lively picnic. At last, he met Enid.

Pyne introduced his uncle, and it was a trying experience for this man to stand face to face with his daughter. In each quick flash of her delighted eyes, in every tone of her sweet voice, in every winsome smile and graceful gesture, he caught and vivified long-dormant memories of his greatly loved wife of nineteen years ago.

Somehow he was glad Mrs. Vansittart had not lingered by his side. The discovery of Enid's identity involved considerations so complex and utterly unforeseen that he needed time and anxious thought to arrange his plans for the future.

The animated bustle on deck prevented anything in the nature of sustained conversation. Luckily, Mr. Traill himself, whose open-handed generosity had made matters easy for the reception committee, was in constant demand.

Mrs. Sheppard had sent a portmanteau for Constance

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and Enid, so they, too, soon scurried below with the others.

The life-boat returned to the rock, where the four lighthouse men sent to relieve Brand were now helping the sailors to carry the injured men downstairs and assisting the sick to reach the entrance.

As soon as this second batch was transferred to the tug, the vessel started for Penzance; the Trinity tender would land the others.

There was a scene of intense enthusiasm when the steamer reached the dock. The vociferous cheering of the townspeople smothered the deep agony of some who waited there, knowing all too well they would search in vain for their loved ones among these whom death had spared.

The two girls modestly escaped at the earliest moment from the shed used as a reception-room. All the inhabitants knew them personally or by sight; they attracted such attention that they gladly relinquished to other hands any further charge of the shipwrecked people. So, after a few words of farewell for the hour, Stanhope piloted them to a waiting carriage and drove away with them.

Mrs. Vansittart did not emerge from her cabin until the deck was deserted. She found Mr. Traill looking for her. In a neat black dress and feather hat she was rehabilitated.

"Why didn't you show up earlier?" he asked in good-humored surprise. "The breeze on deck was first-rate. It brought the color into many a pale cheek.

And the way in which the crowd let itself go was splendid. Look at these waiting thousands — quivering yet with excitement!"

"I am worn out," she said quietly; "take me to your hotel. You have engaged rooms there I suppose?"

"Of course."

"When do you purpose leaving Penzance?"

"Well — er — that is part of the explanation I promised you."

"We can talk matters over in the hotel. Where is your nephew?"

For the first time he marked her air of constraint.

"Believe me, Etta," he said hurriedly, "that what I have to tell you will come as a great surprise, but it should be a very pleasant one."

"Anything that gratifies you will be welcomed by me," she said simply. "You have not said where Charlie is."

"Hiding in that shed. He refused Mr. Stanhope's offer of a rig-out on board. In his present disguise he passes as a stoker, and everybody wants to see the man who saved all of you."

"Have you a closed carriage here?"

"Yes."

"Let us go. Charlie can come with us."

Again he was conscious of a barrier between them, but he attributed her mood to the strain she had undergone.

In the shed they found Pyne; with him were the orphaned children; there was none to meet them. Kind

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offers were made to care for them until their relations should be forthcoming, but the man to whom they clung would not listen to any such proposal.

"I guess they're happy with me," he said. "I will see them through their present trouble."

Childlike, they had eyes and ears only for the prevalent excitement. At last Elsie asked him:

"Where's mamma? You said she was sick. But the men haven't carried her off the ship, an' she wasn't in the boat."

"Don't you worry, Elsie," he said. "I'm going to take you to a big house where you will find everything fixed just right."

His uncle and Mrs. Vansittart approached. The lady's face was no longer hidden.

"What are you going to do with those children?" she inquired.

"There's none here to claim them," he said. "I can't let them leave me in that haphazard way."

"Let me help you. It is a woman's privilege."

She stooped towards the tiny mites.

"You dear little babes," she said softly, "I can take mother's place for a time."

They knew her quite well, of course, and she seemed to be so much kinder and nicer now in her smart clothes than she was in the crowded disorder of the bedroom.

Mamie looked at Elsie, and the self-reliant Elsie said valiantly:

"Mamie 'n' me 'll be glad, if Mr. Pyne comes too."

Mr. Traill, who had never before seen tears in Mrs.

Vansittart's eyes, found a ready excuse for her womanly sympathy.

"It seems to me," he said genially, "we are all of one mind. Come this way, Etta. And mind you stick close to us, Charlie, or the hall porter will throw you out if you attempt to enter the hotel in that costume."

He rattled on cheerfully, telling them how clothiers and milliners, and all the store-keepers in the town if they were needed, would wait on them at the hotel.

"In a couple of hours," he said, "you both can obtain sufficient things to render you presentable for a day or two. Don't forget we dine at eight. We ought to be a jolly party. I have asked Stanhope and his mother and those two girls to join us."

"Oh," cried Mrs. Vansittart faintly, "you must excuse me. I —"

"Now, Etta, my dear, you will not desert us tonight. Why, it seemed to me to be the only way in which we could all come together at once. I am only too sorry that Mr. Brand cannot be present. Surely he might have been spared from further duty at the lighthouse after what he has endured."

"They offered to relieve him at once, but he declined," said Pyne.

He looked out of the window of the carriage in which they were driving to the hotel. Constance had told him of the dinner arrangement, but he wished to ascertain if the definite absence of the lighthouse-keeper would tend to reassure Mrs. Vansittart.

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He was not mistaken. She did not reply at once. When she spoke it was with a sigh of relief.

"I will not be very entertaining, I fear, but the young people will have plenty to tell you."

"For goodness sake, Etta, don't class yourself among the old fogies," cried Mr. Traill. "Look at me, fifty-five and lively as a grasshopper."

"Please, is Mamie 'n' me 'vited, too?" whispered Elsie to Pyne.

"You two chicks will be curled up among the feathers at eight o'clock," he told her. "Don't you go and worry 'bout any dinner-parties. The sooner you go to sleep, the quicker you'll wake up in the morning, and then we're going out to hunt — for what, do you think?"

"Candies," said Mamie.

"Toys," cried Elsie, going one better.

"We're just going to find two of the loveliest and frilliest and pinkiest-cheeked dolls you ever saw. They'll have blue eyes as big as yours, Elsie, and their lips will be as red and round as yours, Mamie. They'll talk and say — and say all sorts of things when you pinch their little waists. So you two hurry up after you've had your supper, say your prayers and close your eyes, and when you open them you'll be able to yell for me to find that doll-store mighty sharp."

"Say, Charlie," cried his uncle, "I never heard you reel off a screw like that before. Now, if I didn't know you were a confirmed young bachelor, I would begin to have suspicions. Anyhow, here's the hotel."

Two hours later, when uncle and nephew met in the private sitting-room where busy waiters were making preparations for dinner, Traill drew the younger man to the privacy of a window recess.

"Charlie," he confided, "affairs are in a tangle. Do you realize that my marriage was fixed for today?"

"That's so," was the laconic answer.

"Of course the wedding was postponed by fate, and, to add to my perplexities, there is a new attitude on Mrs. Vansittart's part. It puzzles me. We have been friends for some years, as you know. It seemed to be a perfectly natural outcome of our mutual liking for each other that we should agree to pass our declining years together. She is a very beautiful and accomplished woman, but she makes no secret of her age, and the match was a suitable one in every respect."

"You can see as far through a stone wall as most people."

Pyne knew that his uncle's sharp eyes were regarding him steadily, but he continued to gaze into the street.

There was a moment's hesitation before Mr. Traill growled:

"You young dog, you have seen it too. Mrs. Vansittart avoids me. Something has happened. She has changed her mind. Do you think she has heard about Edith?"

"Edith! Oh, of course — Enid must be christened afresh. No; that isn't it. It would not be fair to you to say that I think you are mistaken. But, from

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what I know of the lady, I feel sure she will meet you fairly when the time comes."

"Ah, you agree with me, then?"

"In admitting a doubt — in advising the delay you have already suggested — yes."

"She told you what I had written?"

"More than that, she asked me if I was aware of its explanation."

"And you said?"

"Exactly what I said to you. You are both sensible people. I can hardly imagine that any misunderstanding can exist after an hour's talk."

Mr. Traill looked at his watch. A carriage stopped at the hotel.

"Here's Stanhope, and his mother," cried Pyne; so his uncle hurried off to receive his guests.

Lady Margaret was a well-preserved woman of aristocratic pose. But her serenity was disturbed. Although the land was ringing with the fame of her son's exploit, and her mother's heart was throbbing with pride, there had been tearful hours of vigil for her. Not without a struggle had she abandoned her hope that he would make a well-endowed match.

When Constance and Enid arrived she was very stately and dignified, scrutinizing, with all a mother's incredulity, the girl who had caused her to capitulate.

But Enid scored a prompt success. She swept aside the almost unconscious reserve with which Jack's mother greeted her.

"You knew," she murmured wistfully. "We did

not. They would not tell us. How you must have suffered until the news came that he had escaped."

Lady Margaret drew the timid girl nearer and kissed her.

"My dear," she whispered, "I am beginning to understand why Jack loves you. He is my only son, but you are worthy of him."

Mrs. Vansittart's appearance created a timely diversion. She had obtained a black lace dress. It accentuated the settled pallor of her face, but she was perfectly self-possessed, and uttered a nice womanly compliment to the two girls, who wore white demi-toilette costumes.

"You look delightful," she said. "When all is said and done, we women should never despise our wardrobe. That marvelous lighthouse had one grave defect in my eyes. It was dreadfully callous to feminine requirements."

Here was a woman rejuvenated, restored to her natural surroundings. They accounted for the subtle change in her by the fact that they had seen her hitherto under unfavorable conditions. Even Pyne, not wholly pleased with her in the past, found his critical judgment yielding when she apologized sweetly to Lady Margaret for her tardiness.

"There were two children saved from the wreck. Poor little mites, how they revelled in a hot bath! I could not leave them until they were asleep."

"I needed two hot baths," said Pyne. "No. 1 dug

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me out of the shell, and No. 2 helped me to recognize myself."

During dinner there was much to tell and to hear. Mrs. Vansittart said little, save to interpose a word now and then when Constance or Enid would have skimmed too lightly the record of their own services.

They did not hurry over the meal. All were in the best possible spirits, and the miseries of the Gulf Rock might never have existed for this lively company were it not that four among them bore clear tokens of the deprivations they had endured.

A waiter interrupted their joyous chatter at its highest. He bent over Mr. Traill and discreetly conveyed some communication.

"I am delighted," cried the millionaire heartily. "Show him in at once."

He rose from his chair to do honor to an unexpected guest.

"You will all be pleased to hear," he explained, "that Mr. Brand is ashore, and has come to see us."

Mrs. Vansittart stifled the cry on her lips. The slight color which had crept into her pale cheeks yielded to a deathly hue. It chanced that the others were looking expectantly towards the door and did not notice her.

Brand entered. In acknowledging Mr. Traill's cordial welcome he smilingly explained his presence.

"My superiors sent me emphatic orders to clear out," he said, "so I had no option but to obey. I conveyed Mr. Emmett to suitable quarters and hastened home,

but found that the girls were playing truant. My housekeeper insisted that I should eat, else she would not be satisfied that I still lived, but I came here as quickly as possible."

At that instant his glance, traveling from one to another of those present, fell on Mrs. Vansittart.

He stood as one petrified. The kindly words of his host, the outspoken glee of the girls at his appearance, died away in his ears in hollow echoes. His eyes, frowning beneath wrinkled brows, seemed to ask if he were not the victim of some unnerving hallucination. They were fixed on Mrs. Vansittart's face with an all-absorbing intensity, and his set lips and clenched hands showed how utterly irresistible was the knowledge that, indeed, he was not deceived — that he was gazing at a living, breathing personality, and not at some phantom product of a surcharged brain.

She, too, yielding before the suddenness of an ordeal she had striven to avoid, betrayed by her laboring bosom that she was under the spell of some excitement of overwhelming power.

She managed to gain her feet. The consciousness that Constance, Enid, Lady Margaret even, were looking at her and at Brand with amazed anxiety, served to strengthen her for a supreme effort.

"Mr. Stephen Brand — and I — are old acquaintances," she gasped. "He may misunderstand — my presence here — tonight. Indeed — in this instance — I am not to blame. I could not — help myself. I am

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always — trying to explain — but somehow — I never succeed. Oh!"

With an agonized sigh she swayed listlessly and would have fallen had not Pyne caught her.

But she was desperately determined not to faint — there. This was her world, the world of society. She would not yield in its presence.

Her eyes wandered vaguely, helplessly, from the face of the man towards the others. Constance had hastened to her assistance, and the knowledge that this was so seemed to stimulate her to a higher degree. With fine courage she grasped the back of a chair and summoned a wan smile to her aid.

"You will forgive me — if I leave you," she murmured. "I am so tired — so very tired."

She walked resolutely towards the door. Brand drew aside that she might pass. He looked at her no more. His wondering daughter saw that big drops of perspiration stood on his forehead.

Mr. Traill, no less astonished than the rest, offered to conduct Mrs. Vansittart to her room.

"No," she said, "I will go alone. I am used to it now, after so many years."

There was a ring of heartfelt bitterness in her voice which appealed to more than one of the silent listeners.

As the door closed behind her, Brand seemed to recover his senses.

"I must ask your pardon, Mr. Traill," he said quietly. "I assume that the lady who has just left us did not expect to see me here tonight. It would be idle to deny

that the meeting was a shock to both of us. It revived painful memories."

Mr. Traill, scarce knowing what he said, so taken aback was he, exclaimed hastily:

"Mrs. Vansittart claimed you as an old acquaintance. The odd thing is that you, at any rate, did not discover that fact earlier."

The lighthouse-keeper looked round the table. He saw pain in many eyes, but in Pyne's steady gaze there was encouragement.

"Mrs. Vansittart!" he said slowly. "Is that her name? I did not know. How should I, the recluse, hear of her? And in your first message to the rock you called her Etta. When *I* knew her her name was Nanette, for the lady who calls herself Mrs. Vansittart was my wife, is yet for aught I know to the contrary."

"Father!" Constance clung to him in utmost agitation. "Do you mean that she is my mother?"

"Yes, dear one, she is. But let us go now. I fear my home-coming has brought misery in its train. I am sorry indeed. It was wholly unexpected. Poor Nanette! She ever deceived herself. I suppose she hoped to avoid me, as if fate forgot the tears in the comedy of life."

"Can I not go to her?" asked Constance, white-faced and trembling.

"No, my child, you cannot. Has she claimed you? She cast you off once. I might have forgiven her many things — never that. Come, Enid! What need for

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your tears? We faced worse troubles together three days ago, and you, at any rate, can look foward to happiness. Good-by, Lady Margaret, and you, too, Mr. Traill. I will see you tomorrow, I hope. Forgive me for my unconscious share in this night's suffering."

CHAPTER XVII

MRS. VANSITTART GOES HOME

Stephen Brand and the two girls passed silently down the broad stairs of the hotel unaccompanied by any of the others. There was nothing incomprehensible in this, nor any savor of discourtesy.

In the first place, Mr. Traill was so profoundly shocked by the lighthouse-keeper's revelation that he collapsed into a chair and remained there, bowed and wordless, for many minutes. Both Pyne and Stanhope did move towards the door, but Enid, watchful, self-sacrificing, eager to save those she loved from further pain, telegraphed an emphatic order to Stanhope to remain where he was, and Pyne murmured to him:

"Guess she's right, anyhow. We'll all feel a heap better in the morning."

The person who exhibited the clearest signs of distress was Lady Margaret. Her position was one of extraordinary difficulty. Three of the actors in the breathless scene which had been sprung on her with the suddenness of an explosion were absolute strangers in her life before that evening.

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Brand she knew, indeed, but only by sight. She had met Constance and Enid occasionally, at arm's length, so to speak, regarding them truly as dangerous young persons where marriageable sons were concerned. Enid had justified her suspicions, and her ladyship had yielded so far as to give her approval to an engagement she could not prevent.

Circumstances had conspired to force her hand. Stanhope, being an outspoken young man, had made no secret of his desperate resolve to rescue Enid, so the newspapers supplied the remainder of the romance, and even Lady Margaret herself had contributed to it under the magnetic influence of the hour.

It was one thing, however, to be thrilled with the adventures of the rock-bound people, but quite another to figure prominently in connection with a social scandal of the first magnitude. She knew Penzance too well to hope that the incident would sink into oblivion. Obviously, the matter could not rest in its present stage. She must expect disagreeable disclosures, significant head-shakings of those who knew little and wanted to know more. All the tea-table artillery of a small town would be focused on her defensive position were she loyal to the girl whom her son had chosen as his helpmate.

This same son, too, after he had recovered from the amazement of Mrs. Vansittart's dramatic departure and Brand's admission, betrayed a composure that was distinctly irritating.

"You won't mind if we smoke, mother," he said.

"The situation requires tobacco. Don't you feel like that, Pyne?"

"If Lady Margaret doesn't object, I admit that different sorts of poison might act as tonics," answered Pyne. "Here, uncle, try a brandy and soda. Lady Margaret, a glass of champagne. I've been expecting a disturbance, but didn't look for it tonight."

"Why do you say that, Charlie?" asked Mr. Traill, rising and stretching his limbs as a man who tests his bones after a heavy fall.

"It was hanging around, just as one prophesies a storm after an electrical feeling in the air. Mrs. Vansittart recognized Brand, and made her calculations accordingly. Let us give her the credit due to her. As soon as she discovered him, the marriage project was off."

"I had that kind of impression myself. Glad I mentioned it to you, now."

"Of course you are. I'll bet any reasonable sum that Mrs. Vansittart intended to leave Penzance tomorrow as soon as she had made you understand that she could not, under any circumstances, become my aunt."

A ghost of a smile flitted across Mr. Traill's face. His nephew's way of putting things was delightfully unequivocal.

"What we are apt to lose sight of," continued Pyne, "is the manner in which Brand received what must have been a staggering blow. He met his wife tonight after a separation of more than twenty years. And how he

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took it! When he spoke, it was really in her behalf. The thing is too amazing. Of course, now that the thunder and lightning have started, the sky will clear all the sooner."

"Unhappily such affairs do not arrange themselves so readily," snapped Lady Margaret. She was becoming more angry with each wave of reflection. "Young men like you do not realize the effect of such — such unpleasant exposures on family life. How will the early history of her parents affect the future of Constance Brand? As for the other girl —"

Her ladyship threw up her hands in helpless abandonment. To her mind, the adoption of poor Enid, the sea-waif, assumed a darker appearance now that Brand's matrimonial adventures revealed sinister features.

Jack Stanhope caught her by the shoulder.

"Mother," he cried, "before you say another word let me tell you something you ought to know. Enid is Mr. Traill's daughter!"

Now this good woman loved her son dearly. All her thoughts were of him and for him. Her look of blank incredulity yielded to the confirmation she saw writ on all three faces.

She burst into tears.

"Apparently I am the last person to be taken into anybody's confidence," she sobbed.

"Madam," said Mr. Traill, bending over her, "in this instance, at least, you have no cause to feel aggrieved. Neither the girl herself, nor her sister by

adoption, nor Mrs. Vansittart, to whom, until the past half-hour, I considered myself to be engaged, is aware of the undoubted fact which your son has just told you. Let me say that I, as her father, am proud to think she has won the affections of such a man as Stanhope. There is no reason why you, his mother, should not be equally satisfied with the pedigree and prospects of my daughter."

His calm assumption of a rank equal if not superior to her own was convincing to a woman of her temperament. Assuredly that evening was a memorable one to her ladyship. The repose of Vere de Vere was rudely shocked for once. Nevertheless, the knowledge that her lifelong ambition had been realized in a way little dreamed of by any of those most concerned was in itself consoling. Mr. Traill, quite unconsciously, loomed large in the social eye of Penzance, and the widowed lady had not been so long withdrawn from the wealth-worshiping world of London as to be wholly unleavened with the worship of the golden calf.

So it was with quickened interest that she set herself to listen to the story of Enid's parentage, and, if her fear of local gossip-mongers shrank as her perception of Enid's real social position increased, much may be forgiven to the motherly sentiment that no wife can be too good for an excellent son.

Meanwhile Brand and the sorrow-laden girls, ushered by obsequious servants to the entrance hall, were constrained to comfort themselves with true British phlegm in view of the interest caused by their appearance.

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The hour was not late, about half past nine. Even whilst the hall porter was summoning a cab the news spread, within and without, that the lighthouse-keeper and his daughters, whose exploits filled the minds of all men, were standing near the door.

Several people, complete strangers, came to them and offered warm congratulations. A smart journalist pressed forward and wove his own complimentary utterances into an interview. A crowd gathered quickly on the pavement. Policemen, those marshals of every English demonstration, cleared a path for them through the throng. So, with smiling words on their lips and anguish in their hearts, they made a triumphal exit. How little could the friendly enthusiasts who cheered them realize that these three had been atrophied by the deadly malevolence of fate in the very hour when a great achievement had ended happily.

Enid suffered almost as keenly as Brand and his daughter. Their joys and sorrows were hers. The startling nature of Brand's avowal rendered it difficult for either Enid or Constance to piece together certain fragmentary memories of Mrs. Vansittart's odd behavior during her enforced sojourn on the rock. So thoroughly had she shattered those dimly outlined impressions by the quietly vivacious charm of her manner at dinner that they both experienced a jumble of sensations. A terrified woman, in wet and torn clothing, cowering in the gaunt interior of a storm-girt lighthouse, is a very different being when attired in expensive garments and surrounded by the luxuries of a first-class hotel.

It was a relief to drive to their cottage in silence, yet, so easily moulded is our human clay, it was a greater relief when the tension of the noisy rattle of the cab was relaxed. It cost some effort to assure Mrs. Sheppard, a buxom, motherly soul of sixty or thereabouts, that they could not possibly eat any supper. The effort was forthcoming. They pleaded weariness, and at last they were alone.

Constance knelt by her father's side when he dropped listlessly into the armchair placed in his accustomed corner.

"Now, dad," she said, bravely unemotional, "there will be no more tears. Tell me all that I ought to know."

Enid drew a hassock to his feet and seated herself there, clasping her hands about her knees.

"Whatever she did I am sorry for her," said the girl decisively. "And she cannot have been a really bad woman, dad, or *you* would not have loved her once."

Brand sighed deeply. His strong will had deserted him for a little while. He shrank from the ordeal before him. Why should he be called on to sully the mirror of his daughter's innocence by revealing to her the disgrace of her mother?

Constance caught something of the dread in his soul.

"Don't tell me if it hurts you, dad. I am content to bear more than I have borne tonight if it lessens your sufferings," she whispered.

He placed an arm around each of them.

"It is God's will," he said, "that I should have to

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face many trials at a period when I expected nothing but some few years of quiet happiness."

"Nothing in this world can part us from you," said Constance.

"Oh, nothing," agreed Enid solemnly, nestling closer. Her earnestness was helpful. He smiled wistfully.

"You forget, Enid, that there is a grave chance of you, at any rate, leaving me for another," he said.

She blushed.

"That is the worst of girls getting married," she protested. "They are supposed to be delighted because they are going to live with strange people. Girls who are of that mind cannot be happy at home. If I thought that being married to Jack implied separation from you and Constance —"

"You would give him up, and weep your eyes out." He pressed her pouting lips together as he went on: "Now, my dear ones, I wish both of you to be prepared for very unexpected changes. Two most important events in your lives have taken place within a few hours. Constance, if you saw your mother tonight, Enid also saw her father. I have known for two days that Enid's father is Mr. Traill."

For an instant, it must be confessed, Constance and Enid alike feared that the mental and physical strain he had undergone had temporarily deranged him. It was not sheer incredulity but real terror he saw in their eyes. Somehow, their self-effacement in his behalf touched him more keenly than anything else had done during this troubled period.

He bowed his head. A strong man in agony cannot endure the scrutiny of loving eyes.

"Enid," he said brokenly, "my words to you must be few. Good fortune needs but slight explanation. The proofs of my statement I do not possess, but Mr. Traill's letter to me could not have been written by such a man if he were not sure of his facts. Here it is. Read it aloud."

He handed her her father's plain-spoken communication. Constance, incapable of deeper depths of amazement than those now probed, looked over her sister's shoulder. Together they deciphered the somewhat difficult handwriting of a man whose chief task for years had been to sign his name.

This drawback was good in its result. They persevered steadily to the end. Then Enid, the comforter, broke down herself.

"It cannot be true, dad," she cried. "I have been one of your daughters all my life. Why should I be taken from you now?"

"I believe it is quite true," said Brand quietly, and the need there was to console her was beneficial to himself. "Mr. Traill speaks of proofs. You have met him. I exchanged barely a word, a glance, with him, but it is not believable that he would make these solemn statements without the most undeniable testimony."

"Indeed, Enid," murmured Constance, "it sounds like the truth, else he would never have spoken so definitely of my father's first claim on your affections."

Brand stroked the weeping girl's hair.

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"One does not cry, little one, when one is suddenly endowed with a wealthy and distinguished relative. Now, I did not spring this revelation on you without a motive. If a cleavage has to come let us, at least, face every consideration. Providence, by inscrutable decree, ordained that my wife and I should meet after twenty-one years. That cannot have been a purposeless meeting. In my careless youth, when I assigned all things their scientific place, I have scoffed at presentiments and vague portents of coming evils. I retract the immature judgment then formed. During the height of the hurricane, when I feared the very lantern would be hurled into the sea, I was vouchsafed a spiritual warning. I could not read its import. These things baffle a man, especially one whose mind leans towards materialism. Nevertheless, I knew, though not in ordered comprehension, that my life was tending towards a supreme crisis. As the storm died, so I became normal, and I attributed a glimpse of the unseen to mere physical facts. I was wrong. The coming of that ill-fated vessel was heralded to me. I lacked the key of the hidden message. Now I possess it. On board that ship, Constance, was your mother. How strange that her advent should be bound up also with the mystery of Enid's parentage!"

"Father, dear, if you can bear it, tell me of my mother. She knew me, and that is why she asked me to kiss her."

"She asked you to kiss her?" Each word was a crescendo of surprise.

"Yes. One night she came to me. Oh, I remember. She wished Mr. Pyne to telegraph to his uncle. When he quitted us to take the message she, too — how weird it all seems now — admitted that she experienced something of the intuitive knowledge of the future you have just spoken of."

"I am not surprised. Poor Nanette! She was always a dreamer, in a sense. Never content, she longed for higher flights. She was a woman in ambition 'ere she ceased to be a child. When I married her, she was only eighteen. I was ten years older. My thought was to educate her to a somewhat higher ideal of life than the frivolities of a fashionable world. It was a mistake. If a girl harbors delusions before marriage the experience of married life is not a cure but an incentive. A less tolerant man would have made her a safer husband."

Constance would listen to nothing which would disparage him.

"I hate to be unjust to her even in my thoughts, but where could she have found a better husband than you, dad?"

"Millionaire indeed!" protested Enid, breaking in with her own tumultuous thoughts. "I would not exchange you for twenty millionaires."

"My methods cannot have been so ill-considered if they have brought me two such daughters," he said, with a mournful smile. "But there! I am only deluding myself into a postponement of a painful duty. My secret must out — to you, at any rate. When I married

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your mother, Constance, I was an attaché at the British Embassy in Paris. Her maiden name was Madeleine Nanette de Courtray. Her family, notwithstanding the French sound of her name, was almost wholly English. They were Jersey people, recruited from British stock, but two generations of English husbands were compelled to assume the style de Courtray owing to entailed estates on the island. There is something quaint in the idea, as it worked out. The place was only a small farm. When we were married the stipulation lapsed, because it was more advisable for me to retain my own name. I was then the heir to a title I can now claim. I am legally and lawfully Sir Stephen Brand, ninth baronet, of Lesser Hambledon, in Northumberland."

"And you became a lighthouse-keeper!"

It was Enid who found breath for the exclamation. Constance braced herself for that which was to come. That Stephen Brand was a well-born man was not a new thing in their intelligence.

"Yes, a cleaner of lamps and transmitter of ship's signals. Have we been less happy?" A most vehement "No!" was the answer.

"Don't run away with the idea that I was, therefore, endowed with ample means. There are baronets poorer than some crossing-sweepers. The estate was encumbered. During my father's life, during my own until five years ago, it yielded only a thousand a year. Even now, after fifteen years of retrenchment — you both forget that whilst I was stationed at Flamborough

Head I was absent for a few days to attend my father's funeral — it produces only a little over three thousand. Enough for us, eh, to enjoy life on? Enough to satisfy Lady Margaret's scruples, Enid, as to her son's absurd notion of matrimony? Enough, too, Constance, to mate you to the man of your choice, whatever his position?"

"Dad," murmured Constance, "is there no hope of the old days coming back again?"

"Who can tell? These things are not in mortal ken. I need hardly say that my allowance of one third of the family revenues was barely sufficient to maintain a junior in the diplomatic service. Yet I married, Heaven help me, in the pursuance of an ideal, only to find my ideal realized, after much suffering, on lonely rocks and bleak headlands. With strict economy, we existed happily until you were born. My wife, at first, was sufficiently delighted to exchange Jersey society for Paris and the distinguished circle in which we moved there. But you were not many months old until a change came. A Frenchman, a rich fop, began to pay her attentions which turned her head. I do not think she meant any harm. People never do mean harm who accomplish it most fatally. I did that which a man who respects himself loathes to do — I protested. There was a scene, tears, and wild reproaches. Next day the crash came. She endeavored to mislead me as to an appointment. God knows I only wished to save her, but it was too much to ask me to pass over in silence the schemes of a libertine, though he, too, was

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infatuated by her beauty. I discovered them in a clandestine meeting, and — and — my blood was hot and the country was France. We fought next morning, and I killed him."

Constance bent her head and kissed his right hand. Here, at least, was a lineal descendant of nine generations of border raiders, who held their swords of greater worth than musty laws.

Brand's eyes kindled. His voice became more vehement. The girl's impulsive action seemed to sanctify the deed.

"I did not regret, I have never regretted, the outcome of the duel. He was mortally wounded, and was carried to his house to die. I fled from Paris to escape arrest, but the woman in whose defence I encountered him behaved most cruelly. She deserted me, and went to him. Ask Mrs. Sheppard. She was your English nurse at the time, Constance. It was she who brought you to England. I never met my wife again. I believe, on my soul, that she was innocent of the greater offence. I think she rebelled against the thought that I had slain one who said he worshiped her. Anyhow, she had her price. She remained with him, in sheer defiance of me, until his death, and her reward was his wealth. Were it not for this we might have come together again and striven to forget the past in mutual toleration. The knowledge that she was enriched with that man's gold maddened me. I could not forget that. I loathed all that money could give, the diamonds, the dresses, the insane devices of society to pour out treas-

ure on the vanities of the hour. By idle chance I was drawn to the lighthouse service. It was the mere whim of a friend into whose sympathetic ears I gave my sorrows. It is true I did not intend to devote my life to my present occupation. But its vast silences, its isolation, its seclusion from the petty, sordid, money-grabbing life ashore, attracted me. I found quiet joys, peaceful days, and dreamless nights in its comparative dangers and privations. Excepting my loyal servant and friend, Mrs. Sheppard, and the agent and solicitors of my estate, none knew of my whereabouts. I was a lost man, and, as I imagined, a fortunate one. Now, in the last week of my service — for I would have retired in a few days and it was my intention to tell you something, not all, of my history, largely on account of your love-making, Enid — the debacle has come, and with it my wife."

"Father," asked Constance, "is my mother still your wife by law?"

"She cannot be otherwise."

"I wonder if you are right. I am too young to judge these things, but she spoke of her approaching marriage with Mr. Traill in a way that suggested she would not do him a grievous wrong. She does not love him, as I understand love. She regards him as a man admirable in many ways, but she impressed me with the idea that she believed she was doing that which was right, though she feared some unforeseen difficulty."

Brand looked at her with troubled eyes. It is always amazing to a parent to find unexpected powers of

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divination in a child. Constance was still a little girl in his heart. What had conferred this insight into a complex nature like her mother's?

"There is something to be said for that view," he admitted. "I recollect now that Pyne told me she had lived some years in the Western States. But he said, too, that her husband, the man whose name she bears, died there. My poor girls, I do, indeed, pity you if all this story of miserable intrigue, this squalid romance of the law-courts, is to be dragged into the light in a town where you are honored. Enid, you see now how doubly fortunate you are in being restored to a father's arms—"

"Oh, no, no!" wailed Enid. "Do not say that. It seems to cut us apart. What have you done that you should dread the worst than can be said? And why should there be any scandal at all? I cannot bear you to say such things."

"I think I understand you, dad," said Constance, her burning glance striving to read his hidden thought. "Matters cannot rest where they are. You will not allow — my mother — to go away — a second time — without a clear statement as to the future and an equally honest explanation of the past."

This was precisely the question he dreaded. It had forced its unwelcome presence upon him in the first moment of the meeting with his wife. But he was a man of order, of discipline. The habits of years might not be flung aside so readily. It was absurd, he held, to inflict the self-torture of useless imaginings on the

first night of their home-coming after the severe trials of their precarious life on the rock.

Above all else it was necessary to reassure Constance, whose strength only concealed the raging fire beneath, and Enid, whose highly strung temperament was on the borderland of hysteria.

He was still the arbiter of their lives, the one to whom they looked for guidance. He rebelled against the prospect of a night of sleepless misery for these two, and it needed his emphatic dominance to direct their thoughts into a more peaceful channel.

So he assumed the settled purpose he was far from feeling and summoned a kindly smile to his aid.

"Surely we have discussed our difficulties sufficiently tonight," he said. "In the morning, Constance, I will meet Mr. Traill. He is a gentleman and a man of the world. I think, too, that his nephew will be resourceful and wise in counsel beyond his years. Now we are all going to obtain some much-needed rest. Neither you nor I will yield to sleepless hours of brooding. Neither of you knows that, not forty-eight hours ago, I made myself a thief in the determination to save your lives and mine. It was a needless burglary. I persuaded myself that it was necessary in the interests of the Trinity Brethren, those grave gentlemen in velvet cloaks, Enid, who would be horrified by the mere suggestion. I refuse to place myself on the moral rack another time. In the old days, when I was a boy, the drama was wont to be followed by a more lively scene. I forbid further discussion. Come, kiss me, both of

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you. I think that a stiff glass of hot punch will not do me any harm, nor you, unless you imbibed freely of that champagne I saw nestling in the ice-pail."

They rose obediently. Although they knew he was acting a part on their account they were sensible that he was adopting a sane course.

Enid tried to contribute to the new note. She bobbed in the approved style of the country domestic.

"Please, Sir Stephen," she said, "would you like some lemon in the toddy?"

Constance placed a little copper kettle on the fire. Their gloom had given way to a not wholly forced cheerfulness — for in that pleasant cottage sorrow was an unwelcome guest — when they were surprised to hear a sharp knock on the outer door.

At another time the incident, though unusual at a late hour, would not have disturbed them. But the emotions of the night were too recent, their subsidence too artificially achieved, that they should not dread the possibilities which lay beyond that imperative summons.

Mrs. Sheppard and the servant had retired to rest, worn out with the anxious uncertainties of events reported from the lighthouse.

So Brand went to the door, and the girls listened in nervous foreboding.

They heard their father say:

"Hello, Jenkins, what is the matter now?"

Jenkins was a sergeant of police whom they knew.

"Sorry to trouble you, Mr. Brand, but an odd thing has happened. A lady, a stranger, met me ten minutes

ago, and asked me to direct her to your house. I did so. She appeared to be in great trouble, so I strolled slowly after her. I was surprised to see her looking in through the window of your sitting-room. As far as I could make out, she was crying fit to break her heart, and I imagined she meant to knock at the door, but was afraid."

"Where is she? What has become of her?"

Brand stepped out into the moonlight. The girls, white and trembling, followed.

"Well, she ran off down the garden path and tumbled in a dead faint near the gate. I was too late to save her. I picked her up and placed her on a seat. She is there now. I thought it best, before carrying her here — to tell you —"

Before Brand moved, Constance ran out, followed by Enid. In a whirl of pain, the lighthouse-keeper strode after them. He saw Constance stooping over a motionless figure lying prone on the garden seat. To those strong young arms the slight, graceful form offered an easy task.

Brand heard Enid's whisper:

"Oh, Connie, it is she!"

But the daughter, clasping her mother to her breast, said quietly:

"Dad, she has come home, and she may be dying. We must take her in."

He made no direct answer. What could he say? The girl's fearless words admitted of neither "Yes" nor "No."

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He turned to the policeman.

"I am much obliged to you, Jenkins," he said; "we know the lady. Unless — unless there are serious consequences, will you oblige me by saying nothing about her? But stay. When you pass the Mount's Bay Hotel, please call and say that Mrs. Vansittart has been seized with sudden illness and is being cared for at my house."

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant, saluting.

As he walked away down the garden path he wondered who Mrs. Vansittart could be, and why Miss Brand said she had "come home."

Then he glanced back at the house, into which the others had vanished. He laughed.

"Just fancy it," he said; "I treated him as if he was a bloomin' lord. And I suppose my position is a better one than his. Anyhow he is a splendid chap. I'm glad now I did it, for his sake and the sake of those two girls. How nicely they were dressed. It has always been a puzzle to me how they can afford to live in that style on the pay of a lighthouse-keeper. Well, it's none of my business."

CHAPTER XVIII

ENID WEARS AN OLD ORNAMENT

Lady Margaret took her departure from the hotel at an early hour. Her son went with her. Their house was situated on the outskirts of the town, and, although Stanhope would gladly have remained with the two men to discuss the events of this night of surprises, he felt that his mother demanded his present attention.

Indeed, her ladyship had much to say to him. She, like the others, had been impressed by Mrs. Vansittart's appearance, even under the extraordinarily difficult circumstances of the occasion. The feminine mind judges its peers with the utmost precision. Its analytical methods are pitilessly simple. It calculates with mathematical nicety those details of toilette, those delicate *nuances* of manner, which distinguish the woman habituated to refinement and good society from the interloper or mere copyist.

It had always been a matter of mild wonder in Penzance how Constance Brand had acquired her French trick of wearing her clothes. Some women are not properly dressed after they have been an hour posing in front of a full-length mirror; others can give

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one glance at a costume, twist and pull it into the one correct position, and walk out, perfectly gowned, with a happy consciousness that all is well.

Every Parisienne, some Americans, a few English women, possess this gift. Constance had it, and Lady Margaret knew now that it was a lineal acquisition from her mother. The discovery enhanced the belief, always prevalent locally, that Brand was a gentleman born, and her ladyship was now eager for her son's assistance in looking up the "Landed Gentry" and other works of reference which define and glorify the upper ten thousand of the United Kingdom. Perhaps, that way, light would be vouchsafed.

Being a little narrow-minded, the excellent creature believed that a scandal among "good" people was not half so scandalous as an affair in which the principals were tradesmen, "or worse."

She confided something of this to her son as they drove homewards, and was very wroth with him when he treated the idea with unbecoming levity.

"My dear boy," she cried vehemently, "you don't understand the value of such credentials. You always speak and act as if you were on board one of your hectoring warships, where the best metal and the heaviest guns are all-important. It is not so in society, even the society of a small Cornish town. Although I am an earl's daughter I cannot afford to be quietly sneered at by some who would dispute my social supremacy."

As each complaisant sentence rolled forth he laughed quietly in the darkness.

"Mother," said he suddenly, "Mr. Traill and I have had a lot of talk about Enid during the past two days. I have not seen you until this evening before dinner, so I have had no opportunity to tell you all that has occurred."

"Some new embroglio, I suppose," she said, not at all appeased by his seeming carelessness as to what the Dowager Lady Tregarthen or Mrs. Taylor-Smith might say when gossip started.

"Well, it is, in a sense," he admitted. "You see, we are jolly hard up. It is a squeeze for you to double my pay, and, as I happened to inform Mr. Traill that I was going to marry Enid, long before he knew she was his daughter, it came as a bit of a shock afterwards to hear that he intends to endow her with two hundred thousand pounds on her wedding-day. Now the question to be discussed is not whether the adopted daughter of a poor lighthouse-keeper who may be Lord This-and-That in disguise is a good match for me, but whether an impecunious lieutenant in the Royal Navy is such a tremendous catch for a girl with a great fortune."

Lady Margaret was stunned. She began to breathe quickly. Her utmost expectations were surpassed. Before she could utter a word her son pretended to misunderstand her agitation.

"Of course it was fortunate that Enid and I had jolly well made up our minds somewhat in advance, but it was a near thing, a matter of flag signals — otherwise I should have been compelled to consider myself

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ruled out of the game. Therefore, during your tea-table tactics, if the Dowager, or that old spit-fire, Mrs. Taylor-Smith, says a word to you about Brand, just give 'em a rib-roaster with Enid's two hundred thou', will you? Whilst they are reeling under the blow throw out a gentle hint that Constance may ensnare Traill's nephew. 'Ensnare' is the right word, isn't it? The best of it is, I know they have been worrying you for months about my friendship with 'girls of their class.' Oh, the joy of the encounter! It must be like blowing up a battle-ship with a tuppenny hapenny torpedo-boat."

So her ladyship — not without pondering over certain entries in the Books of the Proudly-born, which recorded the birth and marriage of Sir Stephen Brand, ninth baronet, "present whereabouts unknown" — went to bed, but not to sleep, whereas Jack Stanhope never afterwards remembered undressing, so thoroughly tired was he, and so absurdly happy, notwithstanding the awkward situation divulged at the dinner.

Pyne, left with his uncle, set himself to divert the other man's thoughts from the embarrassing topic of Mrs. Vansittart.

He knew that Brand was not likely to leave them in any dubiety as to the past. Discussion now was useless, a mere idle guessing at probabilities, so he boldly plunged into the mystery as yet surrounding Enid's first year of existence.

Mr. Traill, glad enough to discuss a more congenial subject, marshalled the ascertained facts. It was easy to see that here, at least, he stood on firm ground.

"Your father, as you know, was a noted yachtsman, Charlie," he said. "Indeed, he was one of the first men to cross the Atlantic in his own boat under steam and sail. Twenty years ago, in this very month, he took my wife and me, with your mother, you, and our little Edith, then six months' old, on a delightful trip along the Florida coast and the Gulf of Mexico. It was then arranged that we should pass the summer among the Norwegian fiords, but the two ladies were nervous about the ocean voyage east in April, so your father brought the *Esmeralda* across, and we followed by mail steamer. During the last week of May and the whole of June we cruised from Christiania almost to the North Cape. The fine keen air restored my wife's somewhat delicate health, and you and Edith throve amazingly. Do you remember the voyage?"

"It is a dim memory, helped a good deal, I imagine, by what I have heard since."

"Well, on the fourth of July, putting into Hardanger to celebrate the day with some fellow-countrymen, I received a cable which rendered my presence in New York absolutely imperative. There was a big development scheme just being engineered in connection with our property. In fact, the event which had such a tragic sequel practically quadrupled your fortune and mine. By that time, the ladies were so enthusiastic about the sea-going qualities of the yacht that they would have sailed round the world in her, and poor Pyne had no difficulty in persuading them to take the leisurely way home, whilst I raced off via Newcastle

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and Liverpool to the other side. I received my last cable from them dated Southampton, July 20th, and they were due in New York somewhere about August 5th or 6th, allowing for ordinary winds and weather. During the night of July 21st, when midway between the Scilly Isles and the Fastnet, they ran into a dense fog. Within five minutes, without the least warning, the *Esmeralda* was struck amidships by a big Nova Scotian barque. The little vessel sank almost like a stone. Nevertheless, your father, backed by his skipper and a splendid crew, lowered two boats, and all hands were saved, for the moment. It was Pyne's boast that his boats were always stored with food and water against any kind of emergency, but, of course, they made every effort to reach the ship which had sunk them, rather than endeavor to sail back to this coast. As the *Esmeralda* was under steam at the time, her boilers exploded as she went down, and this undoubtedly caused the second catastrophe. The captain noticed that the strange ship went off close hauled to the wind, which blew steadily from the west, so he, in the leading boat, with your father and mother, you and my wife and child, followed in that direction. He shouted to four men in the second boat to keep close, as the fog was terrific. The barque, the *John S.*, hearing the noise of the bursting boilers, promptly swung round, and in the effort to render assistance caused the second and far more serious catastrophe. The captain's boat encountered her just as the two crafts were getting way on them. Someone in the boat shouted, they heard an

answering hail, and instantly crashed into the barque's bows. The sail became entangled in the martingale of the bowsprit, the boat was driven under and filled, and the second boat crashed into her. All the occupants of the captain's boat were thrown into the sea. You were grasped by a negro, a powerful swimmer. He, with yourself and two sailors, were rescued, and that was all. Your father was a strong man and he could swim well. He must have been stunned or injured in some way. The two sailors jumped from the second boat and clung to the barque's bobstays. The whole thing was over in a few seconds."

Mr. Traill rose and paced slowly to the window. Pyne stared into the fire. There was no need for either of them to conjure up the heart-rending scene as the sharp prow of the sailing-ship cleft through the seas and spurned the despairing hands clutching at her black walls.

Too often had the older man pictured that horrific vision. It had darkened many hours, blurred many a forgetful moment of pleasure with a quick rush of pain.

Even now, as he looked out into the still street, he fancied he could see Enid's mother smiling at him from a luminous mist.

He passed a hand over his eyes and gazed again at the moonlit roadway. From the black shadows opposite a policeman crossed towards the hotel, and he heard a bell ring. These trivial tidings restored his wandering thoughts. How the discovery of his lost child had brought back a flood of buried memories!

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"It is easy to understand that I should be fanciful tonight," he said, returning to the cheery glow of the fire and the brightness of the room. "The whole story of the disaster centered in the narratives of the sailors and the negro. They all declared that both boats went down. The crew of the barque, who ran to starboard, as the leading boat was swamped and sank on that side, imagined they heard cries to port. But though they lowered a boat, and cruised about the locality for hours, they found nothing but wreckage. You, Charlie, when I went to St. John's five weeks later, could only tell me that you had felt very cold and wet. That is all I ever knew of the fate of the *Esmeralda* until, in God's good time, I met Stanhope on board the *Falcon*."

"Then the manner of Enid's rescue is conjectural?"

"Absolutely. But Stanhope, who is a sailor, and two men named Spence and Jones, who were Brand's colleagues on the Gulf Rock at that time, have helped me in building up a complete theory. It is quite clear that the second boat did not sink, as was reported by the captain of the *John S*. She was damaged, and had her mast broken, by the collision. In the darkness and confusion she would be readily carried past the barque, which was probably traveling four knots an hour. The two sailors, in springing from her gunwale into the bobstays, would certainly cant her considerable, and at that instant my poor wife either threw her child into the boat with a last frenzied effort, or someone caught the baby from her as she sank. The boat was seen by Brand floating in with the tide on the morning of the

30th of July. She had been nine days at sea. Some survivor must have given the little one nourishment in that time, as a twelve-months-old child could not possibly have lived. In all likelihood, the bank of fog clung to the surface of the sea and followed the tides, as there was little or no wind on the days following the loss of the yacht. Again, there were provisions in the boat, but no water. Why? Either the water-casks had started their staves when the smash took place, or a careless steward had failed to fill them. The next thing is the identity of the boat. By the stupidity of a sailor, one of the *Esmeralda's* life-boats was burnt to the water's edge in Norway. He upset a tin of petroleum whilst he was opening it, and a lighted match did the remainder. Indeed, he and another man at the oars narrowly escaped death. A boat was purchased, but accident or mischance prevented the *Esmeralda's* name being painted on it. There was a Norwegian port number on the stern-board, and this was smashed away by the falling mast. As the sail was trailing in the water when the boat was found by Brand, it is assumed that the survivor or survivors, who paid some heed to the child, suffered from injuries which prevented him or them from hauling it in. One man's body was found on board and he had been dead many days. Finally, we have the evidence of the child's clothing."

"The girls told me something of the story on the rock," said Pyne. "Gee whiz! I little dreamed that Enid, or Edith, I mean, was my first cousin."

"You know that her garments were marked E. T.,

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and that a little shawl was pinned about her with a gold brooch set with emeralds arranged as a four-leafed shamrock?"

"No. I fancy that they were hindered in their yarn. Believe me, there was always enough to do in that wonderful place. Besides, I knew about the brooch. Had they mentioned it, I guess the gray matter at the back of my head would have become agitated by thought."

"Yes, of course. I am talking to you as if you were hearing this sad history for the first time."

"It is new enough. It has a fresh point of view, which is everything. Now, about that brooch?"

"I bought it in Bergen. I remember your poor father laughing about it. It was odd to find an Irish emblem in that out-of-the-way little town. I have not seen it yet, but it is ludicrous to think that so many coincidences can affect two different children cast adrift about the same time in open boats at the junction of the St. George's Channel and the North Atlantic."

"It's the kind of thing that doesn't occur with monotonous regularity," agreed Pyne. "By the way, I have just made an interesting discovery on my own account."

"What is it?"

"It might easily have happened that not Enid — sorry — I mean Edith — but I should have been the youngster cast adrift in that boat."

"Yes, that is so, of course."

"And I would have grown up as Constance's brother. Guess things have panned out all right as it is."

It was on the tip of his uncle's tongue to ask for some

explanation of the very gratified tone in which Master Charles made this remark, but the head waiter entered, solemnly, with the air of respectful and discreet decorum which only an English family butler or a head waiter can assume without burlesque.

"Beg pardon, gentlemen," he said, "but I thought you would like to know about the lady in No. 11, Mrs. Vansittart."

"Yes, what of her?" demanded Traill, whilst Pyne found himself imagining that which caused his heart to beat more rapidly than even the fight for life in the saloon of the *Chinook*.

"She went out, sir, about an hour ago, and —"

"Has she not returned?"

"No, sir. A policeman has just called to say that she was taken ill, and is now bein' cared for at Mr. Brand's house."

Uncle and nephew glared at each other as men do when they call the gods to witness that no madder words could be spoken. Before the waiter, they perforce restrained themselves.

But Pyne shouted:

"Where is the policeman?"

"He is down below, sir. Shall I bring him up?"

Sergeant Jenkins, however, was too loyal in his friendship to Brand to tell them exactly how it came about that Mrs. Vansittart was sheltered in Laburnum Cottage. He admitted that he directed the lady to the house in the first instance, and that Mr. Brand told him subsequently to convey the stated message to the hotel.

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Nevertheless, he was the richer for a sovereign as he went out.

Mr. Traill helped himself to a whiskey and soda.

"Here's to the reconciliation of Brand and his wife," he said, with a lighter tone and more cheerful manner than he would have deemed possible five minutes earlier.

Pyne followed his example.

"Say, uncle," he cried, "here's a queer item. When I first met Constance I spoke of Mrs. Vansittart, and I called her my prospective step-aunt."

"A d——d silly name, too."

"Constance seemed to think that, or its feminine equivalent. She corrected me, 'You mean your fiancée's aunt,' she said."

"Oh, did she?"

"Yes, and here's to her being my fiancée's mother."

* * * * * * *

With the morning came doubt. A maid, who was given charge of the two children, told Pyne that Mrs. Vansittart had been greatly upset the previous evening. The girl was sure that the lady had passed nearly an hour in tears kneeling by the side of her bed. Then, having regained control of herself to some extent, she rang for the maid and asked at what time the first train left for London next day. She ordered her breakfast at an hour which seemed to indicate her intention to depart by that train, said that she would leave instructions with Mr. Pyne concerning the children, and gave the maid two letters which she had written. These

were to be delivered at nine o'clock. It was now nine o'clock. What was to be done with the letters?

As they were addressed to Pyne and his uncle respectively, he soon settled that point.

His letter read:

"Dear Mr. Pyne—I am leaving for London quite early, so I will not see you again in Penzance. I have supplied the little girls with all the garments they will need during the next few days. If, on inquiry, you ascertain that they have no relatives anxious, not merely willing, to take charge of them, I shall be most pleased to assume that responsibility. In that event, kindly write to me, care of my bankers.

Yours very sincerely,
E. Vansittart."

The communication to his uncle was equally brief. Mr. Traill read it to him. It ran:

"Dear Mr. Traill—I cannot marry you. Please forgive me. I did not realize, when you honored me with your proposal, that an insuperable obstacle existed. That is all—a lame explanation—but complete so far as it goes. A woman who has wrecked her life finds it hard to choose her words.

Your sincere friend,
E. Vansittart."

They discussed these curt notes during breakfast.

"I do not like their tone," said Mr. Traill, gravely. "They impress me as the hurried resolutions of a woman driven to extremities. Were it not for her request about the children, I should think what *you*

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thought last night, Charlie, when that policeman turned up."

"I must have telephoned my ideas to you mighty quick," was the retort.

"My dear boy, even at this moment we don't know what she intended to do. Why did she go out? What is the nature of her sudden illness? How comes it that she is at Brand's house?"

"I may be mistaken, but I think we will be given answers to all your questions in due time. Nothing really serious can be amiss, or we should have heard of it from Brand himself. Now, will you remain on guard here whilst I go out with Elsie and Mamie? The one thing that matters in their little lives this morning is that I shall hurry up and go doll-hunting with them."

"I will hold the fort until you return. You will not be long?"

"Perhaps half an hour. Whilst I am out I will make some inquiries as to the condition of our other friends of the *Chinook*."

"By the way, many of them must be destitute. It is my desire, Charlie, to pay the expenses of any such to their destination, and equip them properly for the journey."

"You are a first-rater, uncle, but it'll make your arm tired if you O.K. the bill all the time. Now here's a fair offer. Let me go halves."

"Be off, you rascal. You are keeping two ladies waiting."

With seeming anxiety to atone for the excesses of the

week, the weather that morning justified the claim of Cornwall to be the summer land of England. The sun shone from a blue sky flecked with white clouds. The waters of Mount's Bay sparkled and danced in miniature wavelets. The air was so mild, the temperature so equable, that it was hard to credit sea and wind with the havoc of the preceding days.

The Gulf Rock disaster did not stand alone in the records of the hurricane. Even the day's papers contained belated accounts of casualties on the coasts of Normandy, Holland, and far-off Denmark. But nowhere else had there been such loss of life, whilst renewed interest was evoked by the final relief of all the survivors.

Pyne's appearance outside the sitting-room was hailed with a yell. Notwithstanding her own perplexities, Mrs. Vansittart had taken good care that the children were well provided for. They were beautifully dressed, and the smiling maid who freed them from control when the door opened said that they might go out without jackets, the day was so fine.

He descended the stairs, with a cigar in his mouth and a delighted youngster clinging to each hand.

In the hall he encountered a dozen journalists waiting to devour him. They had failed to penetrate the strategic screen interposed by the head waiter. Now the enemy was unmasked and they advanced to the attack.

Pyne was ready for them. He had already outlined his defence.

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"Will one of you gentlemen, representing all, kindly give me a word in private?" he asked.

This was readily agreed to.

"Now this is the deal I will make," he said, when the two were isolated. "I will meet you all here in an hour's time. I will be interviewed, sketched, snapshotted, give you locks of my hair, my autograph, my views on the Far East, the next Presidential election, and the fiscal question, if you bind yourself to one thing."

"And that is?"

"Among the passengers saved from the *Chinook* is a Mrs. Vansittart. She is very ill, and is being cared for by Mr. Brand and his daughters. Make no reference to her in any way whatever beyond including her name in the published lists. Promise that and I'll talk a page."

"I am sure I can agree without consulting my colleagues," said the surprised reporter.

"Come along, kids," said Pyne. "I am delivered bound to the torture."

He passed out into the street, when Elsie's sharp eyes, searching for a shop, suddenly caught sight of Enid hurrying towards the hotel.

The child ran to meet her, and Enid, flushed with excitement, began to explain that Mrs. Vansittart was in bed, suffering from collapse and in a feverish state. The doctor's verdict was that she was in some danger, but would recover if carefully tended and kept in absolute quiet.

"Is Constance with her?" asked Pyne.

"Yes."

"And where is Mr. Brand?"

"He will be here soon. He asked me to call — and tell you — and Mr. Traill — what had happened."

Enid's speech was not prone to trip. Pyne's eyes gleamed into hers.

"Mr. Brand asked you to see my uncle?" he said cautiously."

"Yes," she faltered.

"Did he say anything else?"

"Yes — cousin."

"Let me take you right in. I guess it would make a sensation if I — here, Mamie, just hug Miss Enid good and hard for me, will you?"

Whilst the children waited in the hall, he accompanied the girl up the stairs and threw open the door of the sitting-room.

"Here is somebody you want to see, uncle?" he cried, and rejoined the little ones.

"Hoo-roosh!" he yelped. "Now let's buy a toy-store."

Enid and her father faced each other for some seconds in silent bewilderment. Then Mr. Traill rose and came near to her. She did not know what to do or say. This tall, stately man was one who should be dearer to her than anyone else in the world. She was his daughter, yet they were strangers one to the other.

"I — I —" How could she utter conventional words in such a moment? Her lips quivered and tears

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trembled in her eyes. Then he knew. The lace around her white neck was fastened with a little gold brooch bearing a four-leafed shamrock in emeralds. He looked at her with a profound reverence, and caught her by the shoulders.

"My dear," he murmured, "you are very like your mother."

"I am glad," she said, and kissed him.

CHAPTER XIX

THE HOUSE THAT STOOD UPON A ROCK

A WEEK passed. In the fickle memory of the outer world the story of the Gulf Rock lighthouse was becoming mellow with age. Men now talked of war in Africa, of the Yellow Peril, of some baccarat squabble in a West-end club. But its vitality lingered in Penzance. There were side issues which Pyne's device had kept from the public ken, but which the town's folk pondered. Lady Margaret Stanhope, obeying her son's behests, tantalized her friends by smiling serenely and telling them nothing when they pestered her with questions. That is to say, she spoke not one word about the lady who was being nursed back to health in the lighthouse-keeper's cottage, but filled their souls with bitterness when she hinted at marvels concerning Constance and Enid.

In such a small place, where every man's affairs are canvassed by his neighbors, it was impossible to prevent an atmosphere of mystery from clinging to Mrs. Vansittart. Again, the gossips were greatly concerned about Enid. For a young woman "in her position"

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to be engaged to an officer in the Royal Navy and admitted to the sacred ranks of the aristocracy was a wonderful thing in itself. But that she should be on open terms of the greatest intimacy not alone with the elderly Mr. Traill, but with his good-looking nephew, even calling the latter "Charlie" and treating him as a near relative, was an amazing circumstance only surpassed by the complacency with which Lady Margaret and her son regarded it.

The actors in this comedy seemed to be sublimely indifferent to public opinion. That was the worst of it. Enid was escorted about the town by each and all of the men at all hours. Now she was at the hospital, cheering Bates and Jackson or the injured people from the wreck, now arranging for the departure of some of the poorer survivors when they were able to travel, now flitting over to Marazion to see Jim Spence, and once actually visiting Mr. Jones, the inn-keeper.

At last a part of the secret eked out. Enid went with her father to ask how Mr. Emmett, the sick chief officer, was getting on. They found him smoking in the front garden of the house in which Brand had lodged him.

He started when he saw them approaching, and his weather-beaten face wore the puzzled look with which he regarded Enid one night on the lighthouse stairs.

Traill noticed the sailor's covert glances at Enid, so he said:

"By the way, Mr. Emmett, you were on the *Britannic*

when my wife and I, her sister, and two children, came to England before the *Esmeralda* was lost?"

"Yes, sir." He paused.

During many an Atlantic crossing he and Mr. Traill had talked of that last joyous journey, when he, a boy who had just joined the service, sat at their table, as was the custom of junior officers in those years.

Mr. Traill smiled. He knew what was in the other man's mind.

"Do you see a likeness in this young lady to anyone you have ever known?" he asked.

"Well, sir, I hope it will not hurt your feelings, and it's a good many years ago now, but I could have sworn — well, I must out with it. She is the living image of your wife."

"Indeed, that cannot hurt my feelings, as she is her daughter."

"Her daughter! Your daughter!" gasped Emmett.

A small serving-maid, with the ears of a rabbit, was listening spell-bound at the open window. Here, indeed, was a choice tit-bit for the milkman, and the postman, and the butcher's and grocer's boys. From this lower current the stream of talk flowed upwards until it reached the august drawing-room of Mrs. Taylor-Smith.

She drove in frantic haste to Lady Margaret's villa, and fired questions broadside.

"Oh, yes," said Jack's mother, suavely. "It is quite true. Of course I have known it from the first. According to present arrangements the marriage will take

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place in the spring. Enid's marriage settlement will be nearly quarter of a million."

Like most women, she loved that word. A million, even in fractions, is so glib, yet so unattainable.

The only person who was slightly dissatisfied with the progress of events was Pyne. Constance never appeared. She shared with Mrs. Sheppard the care of her mother. Enid, blithe and guileless in the public eye, did the house-keeping and represented the household.

Brand, too, save for a couple of visits to the hotel, remained invisible. He did not mention Mrs. Vansittart's name. He was pale and worn, a man at war with himself. The young Philadelphian — for Pyne's family home was in the Quaker City, though his estate lay principally in New York — was not pleased by the slight signs perceptible behind the screen of Brand's reserve.

"Constance takes after her father," he told himself. "There may be trouble about her mother. In the scurry I may get left. I must think this out."

At last came a day of warm sunshine, when Enid announced that the invalid, by the doctor's orders, was carried downstairs.

"Has Mr. Brand seen her yet?" asked Pyne.

"No," replied Enid, with a little cloud on her fair face. "He never mentions her. And how we wish he would. He is suffering, but keeps silent, and neither Constance nor I can make any suggestion."

"But what will be the outcome?"

"How can I tell? That night — after we left the hotel — he told us the story of his married life. It did not seem to be utterly impossible to straighten matters, but we knew nothing of her career during so many years. Was she married again? I have asked my father. He believes she was, but is not certain."

"Father" was Mr. Traill; Brand remained "dad." Thus did Enid solve the difficulty.

"Is she aware that Constance knows she is her mother?"

"We think so. Indeed, we are sure. She has been so ill, and is yet so fragile, that we dare not excite her in the least degree. So Constance has been very careful, but every look, every syllable, shows that her mother is in no doubt on that point."

"It's a pretty hard nut to crack," said Pyne. He blew cigar smoke into rings. Seemingly the operation aided reflection.

"Say, Enid," he went on. "If the weather is fine tomorrow, do you think Connie would come out for a drive?"

"I don't know. Certainly she needs some fresh air. What between her anxiety and her mother's illness, they are beginning to look like sisters."

"Just mention to Connie, in her father's presence, that if the sun shines at eleven, I will be along in a dog-cart. Mrs. Vansittart will be downstairs by that time?"

"Yes."

"And if Connie comes out with me, you just find an

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errand in town. Rope Jack into the scheme, or any old dodge of that sort. Take care Mr. Brand knows of it. By the way, send Mrs. Sheppard out too."

"What in the world —"

"You're just too pretty to think hard, Enid. It causes wrinkles. Do as I ask, there's a good girl."

Enid was delighted to find that Brand strongly supported the suggestion that Constance should take the drive. Pyne, sharp on time, drew up a smart pony in front of the cottage, and did not twitch a muscle when Constance, veiled and gloved, ran down the pathway.

"Excuse me getting down," said Pyne. "I dispensed with a groom. I guess you know the roads round here."

She climbed to the seat beside him.

"It is very good of you to take this trouble," she said, and when he looked at her a slight color was visible through the veil.

"How is your mother?" he asked, abruptly.

He felt, rather than saw, her start of surprise.

She did not expect the relationship to be acknowledged with such sudden candor.

"She is much better," she assured him.

"That's all right," he announced, as if a load were off his mind. And then, somewhat to her mystification, he entertained her with the news.

Elsie and Mamie had quitted Penzance the previous evening, an aunt having traveled from Boston as soon as the first tidings of the wreck reached her.

"She was a young, nice-looking aunt, too," he said.

cheerfully. "And I was powerful fond of those two kiddies."

"The association of ideas might prove helpful," she suggested, with a touch of her old manner.

"That is what struck Elsie," he admitted. "She said she didn't know why I couldn't marry Aunt Louisa right off, and then we could all live together sociably."

"Oh! And what did the lady say?"

"She thought it was a great joke, until I said that unfortunately I had made other arrangements. Then she guessed her nieces had got a bit out of hand."

"Have you seen the poor fellow whose arm was broken? Enid has not had a moment to give me details of events since we landed."

From that point their conversation dealt with generalities. Soon the girl perceived his intent. His sole desire was to place her at her ease, to make her realize that no matter what troubles life held they could be vanquished if faced with a smile. She responded to his mood, and enlivened the drive with comments on the people they met and the houses and villages they passed. For two hours the world went well because it was forgotten.

Enid, the conspirator, waited until the pair in the dog-cart were out of sight. Then she went to the little room at the back of the cottage where Brand pretended to be busily engaged in compiling a scientific account of his auriscope.

"I am going out, dad," she said, trying to appear unconcerned.

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"All right," he answered, laying down his pipe.

"I only came to tell you because Mrs. Sheppard is out, too."

Obviously Enid was determined that if Pyne's calculations were worth anything they should have fair play.

"Oh," he commented sharply, "but the maid is in?"

"Yes. She is such a stupid girl in some things, If —if our guest rings you will hear her. Would you mind asking Mary what it is in case she gets muddled?"

He glanced at her. She was pulling on her gloves, and vastly bothered by a refractory button.

"If I hear the bell, I will inquire," he said, and she escaped, feeling quite wicked.

When he was alone, he did not resume his task. In the next room, separated from him only by a brick wall, was his wife. A wall! Why should there always be a wall between them? It was not of his building. Had she made it impassable during the long years? And what would be the outcome, now that Constance was in daily communion with her mother? The doctor, in kindly ignorance, had told him that Mrs. Vansittart was convalescent and would be able to travel in a few days. In response to a question, the doctor added that the lady herself asked when she might be moved.

What was her plan? Mr. Traill, that day, had written him a sympathetic letter, mentioning the fact that Mrs. Vansittart had voluntarily rescinded her promise to marry him, and, indeed, judged by the light of present knowledge, had determined on that course since she first knew that her former husband was living.

Suddenly Brand pushed back his chair from the desk at which he sat.

"The young dog!" he growled. He had in fact followed the exact mental process which Pyne mapped out for him. The letter, the drive, Mrs. Sheppard's absence, Enid's uneasy wriggling at the door, were all parts of an ordered plan. He was to be given an opportunity of seeing his wife and disentangling the twisted strands of twenty years. He rose impatiently, and paced the room, quietly withal, lest the woman in the next room should hear him. A decision had been forced on him. He could shirk it no longer.

"Pyne has contrived this," he muttered. "He thinks he can see more clearly into the future than a man twice his age. Enid is in the plot, too. And Connie! No, not Connie. Dear heart! She is worn with anxiety, yet she has never once mentioned her mother to me since she carried her into the house like an ailing child."

Back and forth he walked, wrestling with the problem. See his wife he must, and before she quitted Cornwall. Was it advisable, in her present state of health, to take her by surprise? Pyne evidently thought so. And the doctor! Good Heavens! was the doctor in the thing, too?

At last, he tugged at the bell.

"Mary," he said, "ask Mrs. Vansittart if she feels able to see Mr. Brand."

There; it was done.

Mary, rosy-cheeked and soft of speech, dreading only

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Mrs. Sheppard's matronly eye, knocked at the door of the sitting-room. He heard her deliver his message. There was no audible answer. He was lamenting his folly, hoping against hope that no ill results might be forthcoming to the invalid thus taken by surprise, when he caught Mary's formal "Yes'm," and the girl came to him.

"Please, sir," she said, "the lady says she is anxious to see you."

He walked firmly to the door, opened it and entered. He had made up his mind what to say and how to say it. It would be best to ask his wife to discuss matters in a friendly spirit, and, for their daughter's sake, agree to some arrangement whereby Constance should see her occasionally. There need be no tears, no recriminations, no painful raking through the dust-heaps of the vanished years. The passion, the agony, of the old days was dead. Their secret had been well kept. It was known only to those whom they could trust, and they might part without heart-burnings, whilst Constance would be spared the suffering of knowing that her mother and she were separated forever.

These things were well ordered in his brain when he looked at his wife. She was seated near the window, and her beautiful eyes, brilliant as ever, were fixed on his with harrowing intensity. They shone with the dumb pain of a wounded animal.

He walked towards her and held out his hand. Her illness had brought out certain resemblances to Constance. She looked younger, as some women do look

after illness. Surely he could not, even had he harbored the thought, use cruel words to this wan, stricken woman, the wife whom he had loved and for whom he had suffered.

"Nanette," he said, with utmost gentleness, "do not be distressed. Indeed, there is no reason why our meeting should be painful. It is better that we should have a quiet talk than that we should part again in anger and bitterness."

She caught his hand in both of hers. Still she said nothing. Her large eyes gazed up at him as if she sought to read in his face the thoughts he might not utter, the memories he might not recall. Her lips distended. He saw her mouth twitching at the corners.

"Nanette," he said again, though his voice was not well under control, and something rose in his throat and stifled him. "I appeal to you not to give way to — to emotion. You may — become ill again — and I would never forgive myself."

Still clinging to his hand, she sank on her knees by his side. But there was no wild burst of tears; her sorrow was too deep for such kindly aid.

"Stephen," she whispered faintly, "I cannot ask you to forget, but you have spoken of forgiveness. Can you forgive?"

He bent over her and would have raised her; she clung to him with such energy that he desisted.

"My poor wife!" he murmured, "who am I that I should deny that which I hope to obtain from my Creator."

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"But —" she panted, in that unnerving whisper — "I treated you so vilely. I left you to join the man you had fought to save me. I deserted my husband and my child for the sake of the money he bequeathed to me. In the lust of wealth I strove to crush you out of my heart. And now that God has humbled me I must humble myself. Stephen, I am not your wife. I obtained a divorce —"

"Nanette," he cried, "I cannot bear to see you kneeling at my feet. I ask no revelations. I forgive you any wrong you may have done me, fully and freely, as I hope to be forgiven."

She yielded to his pleading and allowed him to raise her. For an instant she was clasped to his breast.

"It would be happiness to die in your arms, Stephen," she said wildly. "I do not deserve it, I know, but Heaven is merciful."

The dreadful idea possessed him that in her weak state this passionate wish might be granted.

"Nanette!" he cried, "you must control yourself. If you will not promise to sit down and talk quietly I will leave you."

She obeyed him instantly.

"I don't care how much you scold me," she said, "but you must not go away. I meant to see you before I left Penzance. I came here that night. I looked through the window. I saw my daughter and her adopted sister listening to you and weeping because of a mother's shame. Then I must have lost my senses. I

ran away. I remember nothing else until I woke up to find Constance caring for me — in your house."

He tried to break in upon the trend of her thought. This was by no means the line he had intended to pursue. His hope was to soothe and calm her, to part from her in amity and without giving her cause to deplore a loss of dignity.

"I am only too pleased that when illness overtook you you were committed to my care and to Constance. Poor girl! She thought you were dead."

"Did you tell her that?"

"No, but I allowed it to be assumed, which is the same thing."

"When did she know the truth?"

"In the hotel — after you left the room. I had to say something. It was — better — for you — that I should say you were my wife."

"So, even in that trying moment, you strove to shield me from unjust suspicions. Stephen, how could I have acted towards you as I did?"

Again he endeavored to lead her to talk of the future rather than the past.

"There is one great surprise in store for you," he said. "But it is a pleasant one in every way. Enid is Mr. Traill's daughter."

"I am glad," she said simply. "I do not understand, but you must tell me another time. Just now, I can think only of you, and of myself. You *must* listen, Stephen. I will do all that you demand, hide myself anywhere, but you must know everything. When

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we parted, when I deserted you to nurse a dying man, I was foolish and wilful, but not wholly abandoned. Nor have I ever been. I was rich enough to gratify my whims, and, for a time, I lived in Paris, on the Riviera, in Florence and in Biarritz. But I was always meeting people who knew you, and, although my wealth, and perhaps my good looks, kept me in a certain set, I felt that our friends invariably took your side and despised me. That embittered me the more. At last your father died, and I saw some vague reference to your disappearance from society. I employed agents to trace you. They failed. Then I went to America and lived on a ranch in Nebraska, where I obtained a divorce from you on the ground of desertion. Desertion, Stephen! That was the plea I raised."

She gave a mocking little laugh. Brand, thinking it best to fall in with her mood, sat in silence on a chair which he had drawn close to the window. From his house he could see the wide sweep of Mount's Bay. The Trinity tender was steaming out from the harbor. It struck him as an extraordinary fact that this was the day of his relief had he served his full two months on the rock.

Today, by his own design, the second era of his checkered career would have come to a peaceful close. Within a little while he would have taken Constance, and Enid, if unmarried, on that long-contemplated Continental tour. But the hurricane came, when "the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm," and the pillar, the refuge of his distress, became the centre of influences destined to mold his life afresh.

What did it all mean? He bowed his face into his hands. He heard his wife's low, sweet voice continue:

"I lived there nearly six years. Then my manager died. He was an Englishman named Vansittart. Within a month his wife died. There was some fever about the place, and I became frightened. A longing for the old life seized me, and I went East, but not as Mrs. Brand, the name which I always bore in Nebraska. I had done with it and with you, as I thought — Constance never entered my mind save as a feeble memory — so I became Mrs. Etta Vansittart."

Brand raised his head and looked at her again. She was speaking now in a curiously subdued tone. She was giving evidence against herself, and giving it truly.

"In Newport, Saratoga, and the Adirondacks in summer, in New York during the winter, I lived in a drowsy content. People who take drugs must reach that state, but their condition is pitiable when they are aroused. Many men asked me to marry them. I laughed at the idea. At last I met Mr. Traill. We were friendly for quite five years. I came to Europe, to the Engadine, where I found that Mrs. Stephen Brand's troubled life was forgotten, but Mrs. Vansittart, the rich widow, was popular. There I saw Mr. Traill again. He offered me marriage, and I fancied it would be well to ally myself with a man so distinguished and widely known on both sides of the Atlantic. I did not love him. I respected and admired him — that was all. I accepted him, but stipulated that I should go back to the States and wind up my affairs there, returning to Paris for the

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wedding. That was necessary, if I would maintain my deception. So, Stephen, after a lifetime of vagary and wandering, this is the result. I am bespattered by the mud of my own acts; I see my forgotten daughter grown to beautiful womanhood; I meet my husband, whom I might have loved and honored, patiently following the path into which my neurotic impulses drove him. Stephen, do you think my punishment is completed?"

The bitter self-condemnation in her voice was not defiant but subdued. She had traveled far in spirit through the Vale of Tears since the Gulf Rock barred her onward progress.

Though she asked a question she seemed to expect no answer. Brand, thinking to render her task less trying, was still looking through the window and watching the steady churning of the tender towards Carn du and thence to the lighthouse.

At last he spoke:

"When I entered this room," he said, "I meant to avoid a scene which must have been as exhausting to you as it is painful to me. Yet as it happens, it is well for both of us that you have lifted the veil from what has gone before. Now it should be dropped—forever."

"Tell me what you wish me to do. I will obey."

"Don't you think it will be better if we defer a final settlement? You have already taxed your frail powers beyond their limit."

"No, Stephen. Speak now. I will not faint nor yield to weakness. I will live. Have no fear. Death

does not come as a skilful healer of the wounded conscience. It may be sought, and I have thought of that. But Constance would suffer, and, if it will spare her pain, I will endure to the end. Surely I owe her that reparation. I committed moral suicide once in my life. Let it suffice!"

The fixed plan of the study, with its carefully arranged phrases, was not so readily acceptable to the man now. What would become of his wife if he drove her forth, this time of his own accord, to live in mournful solitude, brooding over a wasted life and looking forward only to an occasional visit from her daughter?

A host of impossible ideas jostled in his brain. He strove desperately to find some easy way of suggesting the settlement which appealed to him as the fitting one, but his soul revolted from the notion of formulating a decree of banishment against this etherial, ghost-like creature who had been thrust back into his very keeping from out the heart of the storm.

He stood up and faced her, careless whether or not the stress of inward conflict in his eyes belied the calm gravity of his words.

"Perhaps you are stronger than I," he said. "We must meet again, tomorrow or next day. Some of the young people will be returning soon. If you wish it, I will not tell them I have seen you."

"It is for you to decide, Stephen."

She seemed to be quite hopeless, resigned to any twist or turn of fate. Here was a broken woman, indeed, and the spectacle was torturing. He had never under-

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stood her as a bright young girl and a bride of nineteen. He did not understand her now. A man of his oak-like qualities could not grasp the nature of a woman who bent as a reed before each puff of wind.

It was hard to utter even a commonplace farewell. She held him by her very helplessness. But the rapid trot of a horse caught his ears, and, whilst he stood irresolute, he saw Constance alighting from the dog-cart. His wife looked out, too. They heard their daughter laughingly regret that she could not ask Mr. Pyne to luncheon — meals were irregular events just then.

Brand felt a timid hand grasping his, and a choking sob proclaimed that Constance's mother was crying.

He stooped with a motion that was almost a caress.

"Don't cry," he said. "I cannot bear it."

"I can bear anything, Stephen," she sobbed, "if only you will let me stay with you forever."

"Do you mean that, Nanette?" he gasped, incredulously.

"I have prayed, yes, dared to pray, that it might be so ever since I saw my child. She has brought us together again. Let us not part, for her sake, and for mine, Stephen, if it is not too late."

So Constance, hastening up the garden path, could not believe her eyes when she saw her father lift her mother into his arms and kiss her.

Mary, the maid, never ceased wondering why every other member of her sex in Laburnum Cottage should be tearful yet ridiculously happy that afternoon. Mrs. Vansittart wept, and Miss Constance wept, and Miss

Enid wept when she came in, whilst Mrs. Sheppard was weeping at intervals all day.

Nevertheless they were all delighted in their woe, and Mrs. Sheppard, although she cooked a tremendous dinner, never scolded her once.

It was also a remarkable thing that the invalid lady should insist that she was strong enough to come downstairs that evening. She did not eat a great deal, poor thing, but she looked ever so much better, and seemed to find all her pleasure in gazing alternately at the master and Miss Constance, and in listening to every word they said.

In the garden, next night, the moon being now very brilliant indeed, Pyne said to Constance that the step-aunt idea having fizzled out he guessed that the lady who figured in that unclassified degree of relationship would pose more satisfactorily as a mother-in-law.

He said other things that have been said in many languages since men began to woo women, but the phrases are hackneyed save to those who listen, and need not be repeated here.

But why two marriages should take place after extraordinarily short engagements, no one in all Penzance knew save Lady Margaret Stanhope, and she, *mirabile dictu* (being a woman), kept her counsel. It created no end of a sensation when Constance was described in the London newspapers as "only daughter of Sir Stephen Brand, Bart, of Lesser Hambledon, Northumberland." Local gossip quickly exhausted itself, as both weddings took place in London, the only available items being

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the magnificence of the diamonds given to Enid and Constance by Mr. Traill, and the fact that, in Constance's case, "the bride's mother" was described as "looking charming in a silver-gray costume trimmed with point d'Alencon lace."

Even when confronted with this momentous statement by Mrs. Taylor-Smith, Lady Margaret only shrugged her shoulders and purred:

"A romance, my dear, a romance of real life."

On the day following the departure of two happy couples for the Continent — Mr. and Mrs. Pyne to Italy, Lieut. and Mrs. Stanhope to the Riviera, with intent to meet in Rome at Easter — a quieter and more sedate couple took train at Waterloo for Southampton, bound for the Far West.

Although a Nebraska decree of divorce does not hold good in English law, Lady Brand wished to be married again in the State which sanctioned her earlier folly. Her husband agreed readily. Everybody, including Mr. Traill and Lady Margaret, had arranged to turn up at the north-country mansion in May. Provided there were no hurricanes, Sir Stephen thought his wife's health would benefit by the double sea voyage, and he was personally delighted to see the New World for the first time in her company.

Their steamer sailed from Southampton at 11 A.M. After dinner that night they were abreast of the Gulf Rock, and Brand pointed out to his wife its occulting gleam from afar.

"It makes me feel very humble," she said, after they

had watched its radiance darting out over the tumbling seas for a long time in silence.

"Why, sweetheart?" he asked.

"It is so solemn, so intense in its energy, so splendidly devoted to its single purpose."

"Now, it is an odd thing," he replied, as watchful to check her occasional qualms of retrospect as he had been during many a long night to keep that same light at its normal state of clear-eyed brilliance, "but it does not appeal to me in that way. It is winking portentously, as much as to say 'You old humbug, there you are, leaving me after all these years, and running away with your own wife.'"

THE END.

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