

The Pillar of Light

“—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

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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 Lyonesse can usually shrug its comfortable shoulders at the deceitful vagaries of the Riviera.

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

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

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

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

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

“You think we will make the rock in good time?”

“We’m do our best, Miss Enid.”

She sat up suddenly.

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

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

“’Ee know the coast as well as most,” he said. “Further go, stronger blow, ’ee know.”

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

Thus disparaged, Pollard defended himself and his craft.

“Me an’ *Daisy* ’ll sail to Gulf Light quicker’n any

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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.

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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

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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 thickey tide if we'm stop here much longer," interrupted Ben.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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,