

*The Pillar of Light*

"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

### *The Pillar of Light*

*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

### *The Way They Have in The Navy*

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. So 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."

### *The Pillar of Light*

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 Way They Have in The Navy*

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

### *The Pillar of Light*

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-

### *The Way They Have in The Navy*

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

### *The Pillar of Light*

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 Way They Have in The Navy*

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

### *The Pillar of Light*

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

### *The Way They Have in The Navy*

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

### *The Pillar of Light*

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-

### *The Way They Have in The Navy*

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 pell-mell 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.

### *The Pillar of Light*

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 unwieldy 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

### *The Way They Have in The Navy*

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



### *The Pillar of Light*

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

### *The Way They Have in The Navy*

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.

### *The Pillar of Light*

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.