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THE LIGHT KEEPERS

A Story of the United States
Light-House Service



by
James Otis

Forgotten Books



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States Light-House Service

by

James Otis

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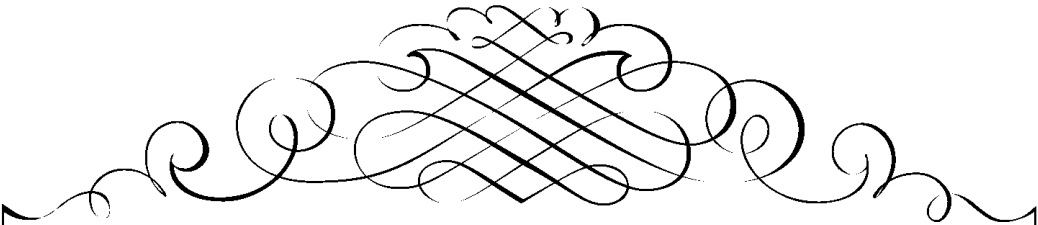
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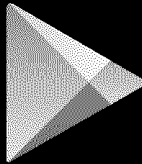
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THE LIGHT KEEPERS

A STORY OF THE UNITED STATES
LIGHT-HOUSE SERVICE

BY

JAMES OTIS

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE SAVERS," ETC.



NEW YORK
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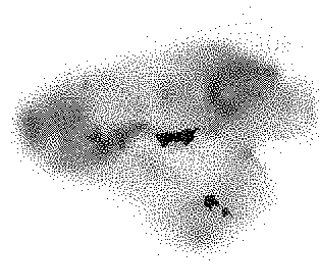
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PROPERTY OF THE
CITY OF NEW YORK.

THE LIGHT KEEPERS.

CHAPTER I:

AN INVOLUNTARY VISITOR.

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

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

light, under the command of his old comrade-in-arms, Captain Ephraim Downs.

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

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

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

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

A single glance over the heaving waters, which

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

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

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

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

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

"I reckon that'll stir him up a bit," Mr. Peters said with a chuckle as of satisfaction. "Uncle Zenas claims there isn't anything in the rules an'

regerlations that says he shall be interfered with while he's cookin'."

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

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

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

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

The rumbling sound from below increased in volume until, after considerable difficulty, the head and shoulders of a very fat man were literally forced

through the aperture in the floor of the lantern, and the upper portion of the “whipper-snapper” was revealed to view.

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

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

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

Uncle Zenas raised his hands above his head as if despairing of finding words of sufficient intensity to do justice to the occasion, and then, noting the fact that Captain Eph and Mr. Peters were gazing sea-

ward intently, he apparently forgot the peril of the fish-cakes as, after considerable difficulty, he pulled his entire body through the narrow opening which gave entrance to the lantern.

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

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

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

“I say it’s a boat,” Mr. Peters replied, “an’ if I’m right, it stands to reason that there may be somebody aboard of her. Now——”

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

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

“It’s some fisherman, I reckon, what lost himself

in the fog," Uncle Zenas said, as if he no longer had any interest in the matter, and Mr. Peters cried excitedly:

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

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

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

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

"I'd have been willin' to staid there, an' it was what I wanted to do," Uncle Zenas replied breathlessly, as he tried unsuccessfully to lower his huge body through the narrow aperture. "If the crew of this 'ere light hadn't been so desperately lazy that they couldn't come down after a little pair of

glasses, we wouldn't be losin' the best mess of fish-cakes that was ever put together on Carys' Ledge."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“I reckon it wouldn’t hurt very much if we broke the regerlations a little bit, when perhaps there are lives to be saved,” Mr. Peters muttered as the

keeper, raising the trap-door carefully, descended the narrow, winding staircase, but the first assistant made no attempt to follow his superior officer, because of knowing full well, from past experience, that any such disobedience of orders would be followed by a reprimand not pleasant to receive.

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

Down another flight, and the keeper was in a third circular room, where were two beds. Another flight brought him to his own apartment, and below that the kitchen, over which Uncle Zenas presided as cook and second assistant light keeper, where everything was wondrously neat and clean, and where every inch of space was economized for the better keeping of the food, cooking utensils, and such articles as are ordinarily found in similar apartments on shore.

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

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

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

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

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

“But what is she doin’ out there ? ”

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

“Where are you goin’ now ? ” the cook asked as he set about preparing more fish-cakes.

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

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

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

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

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

"It don't stand to reason he could hold his course long enough to hit this 'ere ledge; but I reckon it's my duty as a Christian man an' a light keeper to do what I can toward lendin' a hand. If he don't come ashore here, the chances are mightily agin his

strikin' land while the breath is left in his body, for this 'ere smother is enough to mix up anybody except an old shellback like me. Hello-o-o-o! Hello-o-o-o !”

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

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

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

“Uncle Zenas ! Uncle Zenas !”

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

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

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

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

“Are you on an island ?”

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

“No better than I did before. Am I headin’ right ?”

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

“Yes, sir.”

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

“Ay, ay !” came from somewhere near the tower.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The lad sprang forward to seize the rope ; but at that instant the boat was flung against the rocks, throwing him headlong, and but for the first assist-

ant keeper he must have been carried out of the little cove by the receding waves.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In a twinkling Uncle Zenas had a cup of hot coffee

to the little fellow's mouth, and he was forced to drink, for the cook, in his eagerness to take some part in the rescue, was literally pouring it down his throat.

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

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

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

“Last night, and yesterday, and all the night before that,” the lad said with a sigh, and then, as his

eyes filled with tears, Captain Eph gathered him in his arms, saying to Uncle Zenas as he began to ascend the staircase:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“But ’cordin’ to the way I look at it, we’re goin’ clean agin the regerlations when we make a boardin’ or a lodgin’ house out ’er this ’ere tower before gettin’ the special authority,” Mr. Peters said with the air

of one who has studied the subject thoroughly, and Captain Eph turned upon his first assistant suddenly, still holding the cup of coffee in his hand:

“ I’m the keeper of this ’ere light, ain’t I ? ”

“ You are for a fact,” Mr. Peters replied meekly.

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

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

CHAPTER II.

SIDNEY HARLOW.

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

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

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

"It strikes me, Sammy," the keeper began when he had eaten the last morsel of johnny-cake, and washed it down with the last mouthful of coffee, "that instead of loafin' around this 'ere kitchen, you'd better be in the lantern, else the inspector may

get it into his head that the good of the service demands that a new assistant keeper be appointed for Carys' Ledge."

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

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

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

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

Then Uncle Zenas began to bustle around, as if every moment was precious and he seemingly filled

the little kitchen so full, as he moved his ponderous body from one side to another, that there was really no room for any other person in the little apartment.

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

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

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

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

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

“I reckon there’s no question but that he went hungry, Sammy.”

“In which case he’s needin’ food as much as sleep,” Mr. Peters said thoughtfully, “an’ I’m

askin' if it ain't our duty to rouse him up after a while, so's to shove somethin' inter his stomach."

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

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

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

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

Having said this, Captain Eph, forgetting that, according to the "regerlations," he should remain in the lantern until everything there had been put to rights, descended the outside ladder leading to the

rocks below, and made his way to where the lad's boat had been left.

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

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

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

The keeper brought down from the tiny boat-house of cement, a rope, which was attached to a small

windlass or winch, and, making one end fast to the bow of the disabled craft, hauled her up the incline until she was in some slight degree sheltered by the little building. Then he carefully covered the motor with a spare sail belonging to his own boat.

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

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

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

“ What is it you’ve made ? ”

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

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

“ I reckon you’re right about his needin’ it, though it does seem too bad to waken the little shaver while

he's bottlin' up so much sleep. But have your own way. How are you goin' to do the job ? ”

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

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

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

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

“ What is it ? What do you men want ? Where am I ? ”

“ You're safe and sound in Carys' Ledge light, Sonny, an' we've come up to give you somethin' to

eat," Captain Eph replied, as he pressed the lad closely to him. "You've been havin' a hard time, an' are needin' what we've brought. Drink it down like a little man, an' then you may go to sleep agin."

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Bless your dear heart, you shall do as you want to in this 'ere light !" Captain Eph cried. "Only

don't forget that you've been havin' a hard time, an' need sleep as much as food."

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

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

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

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

"We went out to look at what seemed to be a lot of wreckage; it was so calm that the *West Wind* hardly moved through the water, and father said I might go with Mr. Sawyer, because I know how to run the motor and steer. Then, before we'd got to the wreckage, the fog shut in, and we couldn't see the

schooner. I believe I could have gone straight to her at first, but after Mr. Sawyer fell overboard, I turned the boat around so many times trying to pick him up, that I couldn't tell where the *West Wind* might be."

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

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

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

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

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

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

aboard, soaking me with water. My name is Sidney, if you please, sir."

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

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

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

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

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

"I sang a little, sir, and cried a good deal; but the most of the time I prayed, and once when I fell asleep without knowing it, I thought I saw my

mother, who went to Heaven when I was only a little shaver."

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

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

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

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

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

"I reckon it's the truth all right," Mr. Peters

replied in what he intended should be a jovial tone, and on the instant the keeper was aroused to anger.

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

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

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

“Now see here, Uncle Zenas,” Captain Eph said sharply. “I’ve sat under the droppin’ of your cookin’ quite a spell, an’ so has Sammy. We’ve never had any fault to find, an’ as long as there’s breath

left in my body I'll maintain that you can hold your own with the cook of any craft that sails."

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

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

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

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

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

"It don't seem jest the thing to wait a great while for some craft to come within hail, for it stands to reason the poor man is jest about crazy thinkin' the lad's knockin' around in that boat, starvin' to

death," and the keeper rubbed his chin vigorously, as if by so doing it might be possible to more readily solve the problem which was before them.

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

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

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

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

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

"Wa'al, you've got the report of the Board in your room, an' all the facts are certain to be put down in that, since we've adopted the place so to

“speak,” Mr. Peters suggested, and Captain Eph’s face brightened at once, as he cried:

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

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

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

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

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

“Did you get the report ?” Mr. Peters asked impatiently.

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

Captain Eph had not pored over the pages of the

report many minutes, before he looked up at his mates in dismay, as he said:

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

“If I was the keeper of this ’ere light I’d make an official report to the inspector, of how the lad came to the ledge, an’ ask the Government to hunt up the father,” Uncle Zenas said quietly. “I ain’t so certain that it’s the Government’s business to go ’round huntin’ for stray fathers; but it seems to me, seein’s how he landed on this ’ere ledge, an’ is stayin’ here, the least them as are at Washington could do would be to take one end of the job, if we’re willin’ to handle the other.”

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

“If you’re goin’ to settle down to a spell of writin’, an’ I’m allowin’ it won’t be any small job to put the thing together shipshape, I’ll see what can be done toward patchin’ up the boy’s boat,” Mr. Peters said as if making a suggestion. “If we get

any good weather, an' the motor is in fair shape, it mightn't be very much of a trip to run across."

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

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

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

"I'll be roasted if I didn't think you was a ghost !" he cried as, turning quickly, he saw Sidney

standing near the foot of the staircase. "Why didn't you stay in bed, lad, since that's where you belong for the next four an' twenty hours?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“No, the Board don’t know how much we might eat; but it takes it upon itself to say how much we *shall* eat, an’ here’s the list of what must last one man a full year,” Uncle Zenas said grimly as he

opened a large black book, the title of which was *Instructions to Light Keepers*.

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER III.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE.

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

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

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

“To the Inspector of Light-Houses,

“District No. 1.

“Honored Sir:

“Me and my assistants believe it is our duty, though not so laid down in the rules and regulations, to make a special report because this morning a small boy came on to the ledge in a motor boat that got

smashed up pretty considerable on the rocks while making a landing, said boy claiming to be the son of Captain Harlow of the five-masted schooner *West Wind* bound for Porto Rico, and he wishing to let his father hear that he ain't drowned. Not knowing how to send word to the said father that the boy is on this ledge safe and sound, with us feeding him out of our rations so that the Government won't come short of provisions, I hereby, being of sound mind and disposition, make report to you that the said father ought to be hunted up by your honorable and respected Board, so that he may be able to know that his son ain't yet drowned.

“Your respectfully obedient servant to command,

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

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

“Ephraim Downs, Keeper of Carys' Ledge Light.”

“That's great, Cap'n Eph, jest great!” Uncle Zenas cried as the keeper ceased reading and looked at him scrutinizingly. “There's no mistake but what you've got a big head on you, for it would have taken me more'n a week to get up a report like that,

an' then I shouldn't have thought of half the things you've said."

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

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

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

"I reckon the lad is right, Uncle Zenas," the keeper said gravely, "though it won't do any harm to have a little somethin' extra on hand, in case he should get here before we expect him. I'll run out an' see what Sammy thinks of the report, an' then we'll put our heads together for the purpose of seein' how we can rig our little shaver up agin it comes a cold spell, which we've a right to expect as soon as this fog burns off."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“ Got the report done as soon as this, Cap’n Eph ? ” Mr. Peters asked in surprise.

“ Of course I have, Sammy, else why would I be wantin’ you to read it ? ”

“ Does the boy know what’s in it ? ”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“ When this ’ere fog lifts, I reckon we shall see fishermen enough,” Mr. Peters replied as if sending a message to the mainland was something which could

be readily done, and, apparently dismissing from his mind the report and the possible consequences of making it, he called the keeper's attention once more to the boat in which Sidney had come ashore.

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

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

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

Mr. Peters explained in detail how he believed the work might be performed with the limited material at hand, and Sidney listened to the conversation intently,

for there was in his mind the belief that once the boat had been repaired, he might set out to find his father without awaiting the tardy movements of the letter.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Why bless your heart, lad, Carys’ Ledge ain’t to be compared with it, ’cording to what I’ve read. It’s just one big stone, so to speak, standin’ high out

of fifteen fathom of water, an' a full mile from the mainland. As I remember, it's located twenty miles south of the mouth of the Columbia River. It seems, 'cordin' to the printed story, that that 'ere rock was split in two, with a wide crack running east an' west, an' the top of it was about a hundred feet above the level of the sea. Nothin' larger than fifty foot square could be built on it, an' it was a mighty ticklish job for even sailormen to get a footin' there, even in the fairest of fair weather. Why, the foreman of the first crew that went off was drowned when the natives thereabouts allowed that the sea was calm. That put a damper, so to speak, on the work; but the Beard was bound to have a light there, an' when they get their minds set on a thing, it's pretty sure to be brought about.

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

and the spray but that 'ere square of canvas they had carried out."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“On one such day this cataract carried away the supply-house, and even endangered the quarters of the working party. For more than two weeks at this time it was impossible for the steam-tender which supplied their wants to cross the bar at the mouth of the Columbia River to go to their assistance; when, after sixteen days, communication was reopened, the party was found to be safe, but much in want of

fresh provisions. These were supplied by an endless line running between the mast of the supply-vessel and a ring-bolt driven into the top of the rock, in water-tight casks suspended from a traveler by slings, which was made to move along the line.

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

“The light is forty-eight feet above the base of the tower and 136 feet above sea-level. It was shown for the first time on February 1, 1881. If it had been finished a month earlier it would possibly have saved the English iron bark *Lupata* of 1,039 tons burden, which was dashed to pieces on the main shore, not a mile from the light-house, with a loss of the vessel, its freight, and every one of the twenty persons on board. The bark came so near the rock that the creaking of the blocks and the voices of the officers giving orders were distinctly heard, but the night

was so dark that nothing could be seen except her lights. The superintendent of construction had a bon-fire built on the rock as soon as possible, but the vessel was probably lost before the signal could be seen. It was on this night that the working party lost their supply-house and came so near losing their quarters, if not their lives."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the keeper has saved his light-house property and lost his own.

“An instance of heroism is that of the keepers of Sharp’s Island light-house, in Chesapeake Bay. It was lifted from its foundations, thrown over on its side, and carried away by ice early in February, 1881. The keeper and his assistant clung to the fallen house, and, although one of their boats remained uninjured, they were adrift in the bay sixteen and a half hours without fire or food, always in imminent danger, as the heavy floating ice often piled up against and threatened to swamp the house. It grounded, however, on an island shortly after midnight, at high tide, and was full of water.

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

“Meantime the keepers of another light-house, fearing the ice, had deserted their post, and gone on shore. The fact that no vessels could have needed their lights while the ice remained unbroken, and that they returned to their post when the danger had passed, did not avail them. So soon as the fact of

their desertion was determined they were dismissed the service, and the two keepers who had spent those terrible hours afloat in Sharp's Island light-house, and then saved its apparatus, were highly complimented by a letter direct from the Board itself, and then were appointed to the deserters' places.

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

“Although but one grade of keeper is recognized by law, usage has divided keepers into a number of grades, with different pay as well as different duties, and with promotion running through the various grades. At one light-house there may be but one keeper; at another, a principal keeper and an assistant; and there is a station where there is a principal keeper with four assistants, the fourth having the

lowest grade and the lowest pay, and the others having been appointed at that grade, and promoted as merit was shown and vacancies occurred; or they may have been transferred and promoted from another station.

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

“Keepers are forbidden to engage in any business which can interfere with their presence at their stations, or with the proper and timely performance of their light-house duties; but it is no unusual thing to find a keeper working at his station as a shoemaker, tailor, or in some similar capacity, and there are light keepers who fill a neighboring pulpit, who hold commissions as justice of the

place, and there are still others who do duty as school teachers without neglecting their light-houses.

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

“Now you can see that we keepers must have some backbone to us, else we couldn't get the ap-

pointment, or, getting one, wouldn't hold it very long," Captain Eph said in a tone of satisfaction when Sidney ceased reading, and the lad, at a loss for reply to such a remark, asked:

"Are you all sailormen here?"

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

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

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

"I suppose we ought to go down as soon as we can," Sidney suggested timidly, "for even if he is

mild, it sounds as if he was growing angry every minute."

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

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

CHAPTER IV.

REPAIRING THE MOTOR BOAT.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

had already arranged the details in his own mind.

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

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

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

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

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

“Of course I’m not quite so wild as that. Allow-in’ that we don’t hail anything before the fog lifts,

an' there ain't much chance we will. Then say there's nothin' in sight when the smother blows off? Wouldn't it be better to strike out for the post-office, instead of waitin' on the chance of sightin' a fisherman ? ”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

locomotive whistle, connected with some little tubes, which the inspector says make a piston-and cylinder movement, whatever that may be.

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

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

“An’ that’s only one little end of the expense,” Uncle Zenas added in a tone of solemnity. “When

you come to figger up the whole business it'll be easy to see how much responsibility we of Carys' Ledge carry on our shoulders, which reminds me that it's time you folks got up from the table an' let me have a chance to put the kitchen to rights."

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

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

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

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

"Gettin' sand in your eyes, eh ?" Captain Eph asked with a laugh, as he noted the expression on the boy's face. "Wa'al, I kind'er allowed you'd find

out before a great while that you hadn't staid in bed long enough, an' now, seein's you've put in a tolerable hearty dinner, I'd recommend that you turn in for the night."

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

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

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

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

"But what are you to do?"

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

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

"You must leave me to run this 'ere light, lad, 'cordin' to my own ideas, seein's how the Government

put me in charge, an' I say that you're to use my room so long as you stay with us."

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Yes, it’ll be all of that,” Captain Eph replied thoughtfully.

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

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

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

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

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

“You can have anything I’ve got, Uncle Zenas,

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

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

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

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

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

A certain moisture in the old keeper's eyes prevented the cook from making any comment on what seemed like the sacrifice of a good garment, as he set about ripping it apart, and once more Mr. Peters detailed his plans for repairing the motor boat,

insisting every now and then that there was no reason why he should not be at work upon it, instead of idling the time away.

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

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

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

It was yet an hour before sunrise next morning, and Captain Eph was poring over the "rules and regulations" as he had done every night for many years, when he heard a slight rustling of garments at the head of the ladder, and, looking around in sur-

prise, saw Sidney, who stood as if asking permission to remain.

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

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

“So you concluded to come on watch, eh ?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It lacks nigh to ten minutes of sunrise," Captain Eph said as he consulted his watch after they were in

the lantern, "an' if it so be you're goin' to stand watch with me, it's time you knew somethin' about the rules. Here's number 123: 'Lights must be lighted punctually at sunset, and must be kept burning at full intensity until sunrise.' Do you get it, Sonny?"

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

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

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

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

It was quite like a game, Sidney thought, and he

was in high glee by the time Captain Eph was ready to read his rule 126.

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

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

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

muslin; then rub lightly with another skin, and finally with a third, which should be passed over the reflector in a light, quick manner with a circular motion. Leakage of gas from the pipe of the stove used in the watch-room should be carefully guarded against, as this gas will badly tarnish a reflector.' Now we'll turn off the light, stop the clock, an' get to work," and Captain Eph suited the motions to the words.

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

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

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

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

"Must I give up your apron, sir?"

"Bless you, no, lad, we've got spare ones in the

locker, an' I'll take one of them, for I reckon Cap'n Eph will want me to do my share of the work so long as I stay on the ledge."

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

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

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

"How many of you are goin' to work on the boat to-day?"

"That's Sammy's job, an' I reckon we'd better not interfere with him, for he always works harder when he's alone."

"Then what's to hinder your gettin' a mess of fish for dinner? We've eaten salt meat so long that

I'm afraid of drownin' myself through drinkin' so much water."

"You shall have all the fish you can cook, Uncle Zenas," Captain Eph replied, and, turning to Sidney, he asked, "Would you like to go out for a spell, Sonny? There ain't much sport to deep-sea fishin'; but it's a change after a man has hung 'round this 'ere ledge in a fog-storm."

It is hardly necessary to state that the lad accepted the invitation eagerly, and before he took his place at the table Uncle Zenas brought out his own oil-skins for the lad to wear, saying as he did so:

"This 'ere fog is about the same as rain, an' if the fish bite well Cap'n Eph is likely to stay a long spell, for it seems to me he reg'larly loses his head as soon as he gets a cod-line in his hand."

CHAPTER V.

A CLOSE SHAVE.

Although Sidney had been on the ledge but little more than twenty-four hours, and a goodly portion of this time had been spent in sleeping, he was already beginning to feel that sense of imprisonment which comes to those who, for the first time, are confined to any limited space, and the idea of being afloat once more was very pleasing.

“Are you going out fishing with us, Mr. Peters?” he asked when the meal was nearly at an end, and the first assistant replied promptly:

“Not a bit of it, lad. I reckon if one of this ’ere crew fools away a forenoon, it’s about as much nonsense as is allowed by the rules an’ regerlations. I’ll keep to work on your boat, an’ do my best to get her inter shape before an easterly gale puts an end to the job.”

“It doesn’t seem like nonsense, sir, to go after fish when you need them for food,” Sidney suggested timidly, and Mr. Peters replied, with an accusing glance at Captain Eph:

“If that was all you counted on, it might look

different to a hard-workin' man like me; but the keeper of this 'ere light never goes fishin' till he's hankerin' for what he calls sport, an' the food part of it is only an excuse for idlin'."

"Watch close when we get back with a good fare of cod, Sonny, an' you'll see Sammy put himself outside of four or five pounds jest as quick as if they'd been caught by right hard work that had no sport in it."

"Of course I'll eat the fish when they are caught," Mr. Peters exclaimed indignantly. "Do you suppose I'm that wasteful to let fresh cod spoil? I haven't got anything agin folks goin' fishin', only when you come to thinkin' that as soon as a storm springs up we'll be shut off from workin' on the motor boat, it seems a good deal like wastin' time, since we ain't really dyin' for need of that kind of food."

"Well, well, Sammy," Captain Eph said soothingly, "I allow that as much work will be done by you alone, as if all hands of us turned to and lent a hand, for you'd be desperately sorry if Uncle Zenas or I insisted on drivin' a single nail."

Then the keeper descended the ladder leading from the kitchen to the rocks, and Sidney would have followed immediately, but that Uncle Zenas insisted on dressing him in a suit of oil-skins before he went outside.

A comical appearance did the lad present when he was clad in oiled garments which had been made for the cook. It was necessary to turn back the sleeves of the coat until he had around his wrists huge rolls of the stiff fabric, causing Mr. Peters to remark that in case they "needed fenders for the boat it would only be necessary for Sonny to let his arms hang over the rail." The legs of the trousers were treated in the same manner as the sleeves, and when he was fully clad, the skirt of the coat dragged on the ground, while the waistband of the trousers was fastened under his arms.

"I don't know whether I could catch fish, even if I was properly dressed for it," Sidney said with a laugh as Uncle Zenas folded the coat around him, using a piece of rope as a belt; "but no matter how sharply they bite, it wouldn't be possible for me to pull one in while I am rigged up in this fashion."

"Better never catch a fish, than catch a cold," Uncle Zenas said soothingly. "This 'ere fog will wet a man through almost as soon as rain, an' you're likely to be out in the boat three or four hours, for Captain Eph always counts on goin' to the shoal near the whistlin' buoy, and that means a long pull from here."

By the time Sidney was ready for the voyage Captain Eph had launched the light-house boat until she

rested on the foot of the ways, with her stern just touching the water, and when the lad came up the keeper tossed him gently into the boat, jumping in after him as he shoved her off into the little cove.

“Sit right here in the stern-sheets, for I allow you wouldn’t cut any very great figure at handlin’ such oars as we use, seein’s how they are much too heavy an’ too long for your short arms.”

“Can’t I steer, Captain Eph ?”

“I don’t reckon you’d do yourself very proud by tryin’ anything of the kind, Sonny. In this ’ere smother it’s a case of goin’ by ear, an’ I’ll pull up to the sound of the whistle, so make yourself comfortable in the stern-sheets. The line you see there I laid out for you, an’ it wouldn’t be a bad idee, if you want to be at work on somethin’, to overhaul it. The bait is in this ’ere can amidships.”

Then Captain Eph settled down to the oars, pulling with a long, steady stroke that sent the light dory ahead at a smart rate of speed, and Sidney, who had never been in such a craft before, was surprised to find how buoyantly she rode the waves.

“Yes, a dory knocks a keel-boat all to pieces in a sea-way,” Captain Eph replied when the lad spoke of their craft. “Providin’ you can keep her head to the wind, she’ll live through a gale that would swamp an ordinary schooner.”

Then the keeper began questioning the lad regarding his past, and before they were come to the fishing grounds, Sidney had told all the story of his short life.

“I reckon we’ll anchor, for we’re in the shoalest part of the water,” Captain Eph said, as if it had been possible for him to see distinctly, instead of being enveloped in dense fog as they were, and a moment later, when the dory had come up on the cable, he announced that they were directly over the shoal.

“I don’t understand how you could find just this spot when it’s impossible to see anything,” Sidney said wonderingly, and Captain Eph replied in a tone of satisfaction:

“I reckon comin’ out from the ledge has become what you might call second nature with me, seein’s how I’ve been knockin’ about here so long; but there ain’t anything very astonishin’ in findin’ a shoal that stands close by a buoy, for a man’s ears ought to be as good as his eyes. Howsomever, we’re here, an’ now it’s our business to catch as many fish as we can. I’ll bait your hook, Sonny, an’ you’re to let it down until you feel that the lead strikes bottom, then pull her up four or five feet an’ wait till you get a good, strong jerk. After that it’s a case of landin’ your fish, or losin’ it, cordin’ to the amount of common sense you bring into play.”

In less than five minutes Sidney had caught his first fish, and as he hauled it over the rail after considerable labor, during which Captain Eph watched him keenly, but without giving any advice, he decided that deep-sea fishing went ahead of any sport in which he had ever indulged.

“ You’re a born fisherman, an’ no mistake, Sonny,” Captain Eph said as he took the fish from the hook, and put on fresh bait. “ Uncle Zenas couldn’t have done any better, an’ he kind’er prides himself on bein’ a master hand at handlin’ a hook. You’ve taken the first fish, an’ I’m lookin’ to see you come out high-line on this ’ere voyage.”

After this, but little conversation was indulged in during the half hour which followed. The fish bit well, and it seemed to Sidney that they had taken all the light-house crew could eat in a month, when he saw Captain Eph raise his head suddenly as he peered into the fog.

“ What is it ? ” he asked.

“ Don’t you hear anythin,’ Sonny ? ”

“ If you mean that pounding, I’ve been hearing it quite a while, and it sounds louder every minute.”

“ It’s the paddle-wheel of a steamer, lad, an’ what a craft of that kind is doin’ ’round here beats me. She’s comin’ straight for us, countin’ to leave the buoy to starboard, I reckon, an’ if we only had my

report here, what a great chance this would be to send it ashore ! ”

Now that he knew the cause of the thud-thud-thud which came across the waters, Sidney wondered why he had been so dull in recognizing it. He had often heard similar sounds when on the deck of his father’s vessel, but then they were not so distinct or threatening as now, when he was nearer the surface of the sea.

He had been hoping it might be possible for him to catch more fish than did his companion, and he gave all his attention to the line once more, until he noted the fact that an expression of anxiety had come over the keeper’s face.

“ Is anything gone wrong, sir ? ” he asked with mild curiosity.

“ I wish I knew, Sonny, an’ that’s a fact. I can’t make out why a side-wheel steamer should be comin’ so near the ledge, an’ then agin, why don’t she shift her course ? It ain’t as if they couldn’t hear the whistle.”

Even then Sidney failed to understand that they might be in any danger, until Captain Eph began shouting at the full strength of his lungs as he hauled up the anchor hurriedly, and again the lad asked :

“ Is there any danger, sir ? ”

“ I can’t make out why the idjuts don’t shift their

course ! Unless they take a turn at the wheel mighty soon, they'll not only run us down, but stand a precious good show of pilin' up high an' dry on Carys' Ledge ! Sing out, Sonny, an' make all the noise you can ! ”

Sidney obeyed instantly, for now the churning noise sounded so near at hand that he almost began to believe he could distinguish the bow of the steamer amid the thick gray mist, and both he and Captain Eph screamed at the full force of their lungs, the keeper shouting now and then :

“ Port ! Port your hel'um, or you'll be on the ledge ! ”

Nearer and nearer the noise came until it seemed as if the stranger was directly upon them, and Captain Eph had thrown off his coat and boots ready for the worst, when there was an answering toot from the steam whistle.

“ Port ! Port, you lubbers ! You're close afoul of Carys' Ledge ! ”

Another answer from the whistle, and the bow of the recklessly-steered craft came from out the fog not thirty feet away, while Captain Eph sprang to the oars, pulling the little dory for dear life out of the track of the steamer.

He worked with a will, and as the huge hull passed, disappearing almost immediately in the vapor, the

dory was hardly more than ten yards from the mighty paddles, which would, despite the fact that the course had been shifted, have crushed the little boat into splinters, but for the old keeper's exertions.

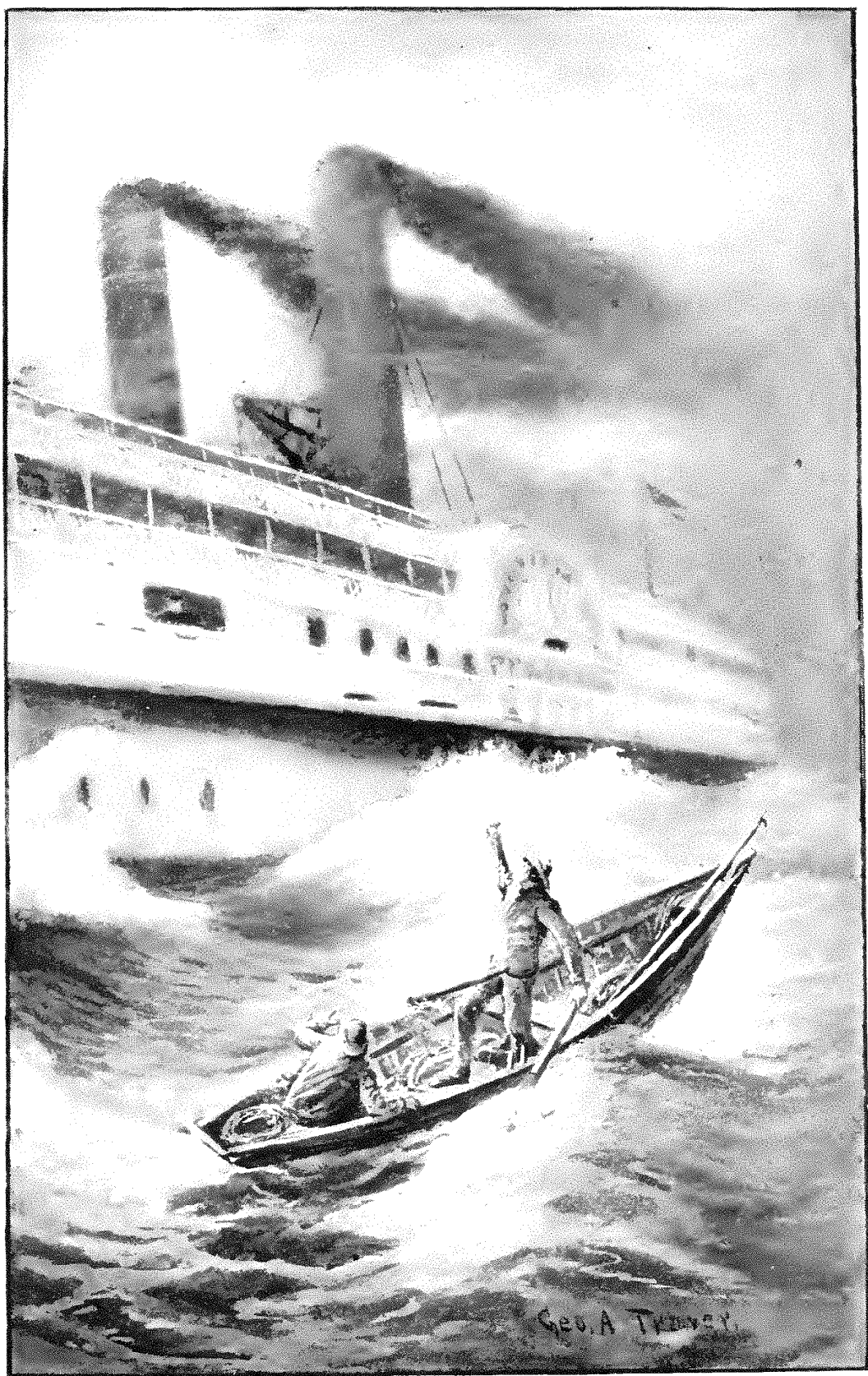
"You lubbers !" Captain Eph screamed as he leaped to his feet and shook his fist in the direction where the steamer had disappeared. "Get a scow the next time you go out sailin', for you ain't fit to run anything that goes by steam !"

It is not probable the words were heard by those on the wildly steered craft; but the speaking of them seemed to do the old keeper a world of good, although he was very nearly thrown overboard by the violent tossing of the dory on the swell raised by the wheels.

"I've been knockin' about at sea, man an' boy, pretty much all my life, except for the spell I was in the army, an' that's the closest shave I ever had !" Captain Eph cried as he pulled in the oars to wipe the perspiration from his face. "We jest squeaked out of it, an' that's about all you can say, holdin' to the truth !"

"Did you make out what steamer it was ?" Sidney asked, raising the question not so much because he was eager for information, as to hide the terror which he feared might be read on his face.

"If I had, I'd pull this 'ere dory all the way to the mainland for the sake of reportin' 'em as a crew



"YOU LUBBERS!" CAPTAIN EPH SCREAMED.

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of lunatics what ought'er be locked up before they drown themselves ! It was some pleasure craft, manned by a lot of idjuts who most likely think they are sailormen because of once havin' sailed a toy boat in a wash-tub," and Captain Eph took up the oars again. "I reckon we'll let that put an end to our fishin' for this day."

Sidney was by no means sorry to go back to the ledge; he had begun to realize what deadly dangers might lurk behind that dense, gray vapor, and was eager to be in the comparative security of the lighthouse once more.

Captain Eph did not cease scolding at the "imitation sailors," as he called them, until the bow of the dory was run into the narrow channel between the rocks, where Mr. Peters could be dimly seen at work on the motor boat.

"Did you find out what steamer that was which went past here a little while ago ?" Mr. Peters asked without raising his head, and the old keeper remained silent, as if he had cause for complaint against the first assistant.

Then Captain Eph proceeded to haul the dory up into the cement boat-house, by the aid of the windlass, Sidney assisting to the best of his ability, and Mr. Peters repeated the question.

Not until the fish had been laid out on the rocks

ready for cleaning, and the boat properly cared for, did the keeper speak, and then he told the whole story to his assistant, concluding by saying:

“The master of that ’ere craft ought’er lose his certificate, an’ spend the rest of his nat’ral life in jail, to prevent him from doin’ mischief. The idee of cruisin’ ’round here without knowin’ where this light was !”

“Most like he got mixed up by the fog, an’ was goin’ it blind,” Mr. Peters suggested so calmly that Captain Eph really lost his temper, and cried angrily:

“If you don’t hold your tongue, Sammy, I shall begin to think you’re almost as big a fool as the cap’n of that ’ere steamer !” and having thus apparently relieved his mind, the keeper marched stiffly toward the tower.

“Chafin’ under the collar, eh, lad ?” Mr. Peters said with a smile, to Sidney. “I allow he’s had reason to get riled, an’ it did him a whole lot of good to blow off on me. Wa’al, I’m glad I gave him the chance, for it didn’t hurt a little bit, an’ he’ll feel a heap better.”

Then Mr. Peters turned his attention once more to the work in hand, and Sidney was doubtful as to whether he should follow the keeper, or remain where

he was, until Uncle Zenas came out of the tower, saying as he approached the lad:

“That ’ere fool steamer has riled Cap’n Eph so bad that I don’t reckon there’s any chance he’ll raise his hand towards cleanin’ these fish, an’ the whole brunt of the work falls on me, as it allers does. Come with me, Sonny, if you’ve got nothin’ better to do, an’ I don’t reckon you have, ’cause there’s precious little goin’ on ’round here, ’cept when the inspector comes.”

“How often does he visit you?” Sidney asked, thinking it necessary to do something toward starting a conversation.

“He makes a reg’lar inspection of every blessed thing four times a year, an’ sometimes the tender comes oftener to pay us off; but we can’t really count on that last.”

“Don’t you ever go to the mainland on a vacation?”

“Oh, bless you, yes, every once in a while. I was off three years ago last July, an’ the year before that Cap’n Eph went; but Sammy sticks here pretty close. He allows that it makes a man flighty to go gallivantin’ ’round as much as I do, but I tell him he’s so flighty already that he couldn’t well be any worse.”

“Could you go oftener if you wanted to?”

“ Bless you, lad, yes, so long as two were left behind to look after the light; but ’cordin’ to my idee we’re away as much as is good for us.”

“ Don’t you ever get lonesome, especially in the winter, when no one can land on the ledge ? ” Sidney asked, and Uncle Zenas replied as if in surprise.

“ Why should we ? Ain’t three of us enough for company ? When all hands get to loafin’ ’round the kitchen I think it’s reg’larly crowded. The fact of the matter is, Sonny, we don’t really have time for anything of that kind. What with keepin’ the place cleaned ’cordin’ to the rules an’ regerlations, an’ doin’ the odd chores, about all the time is so took up we couldn’t be lonesome if we wanted to; but we don’t.”

Uncle Zenas had been industriously cleaning the fish while talking, and the task was nearly finished when, after a long time of silence, Sidney asked timidly :

“ Had you just as soon tell me why all the crew call me ‘ Sonny,’ when my right name is Sidney ? ”

“ Wa’al, I can’t say, ’cept that Cap’n Eph is allers talkin’ ’bout his little Sonny, what died ever so many years ago, an’ when he gave the name to you, it come kind’er nat’ral for Sammy an’ me to use it.”

Sidney dimly understood that Captain Eph had done him a great favor by calling him Sonny, and from that moment, while he remained on Carys’

Ledge, he felt in a certain degree slighted when any other name was bestowed upon him.

Uncle Zenas explained that only a few of the fish would be cooked at once, while the remainder were to be put into pickle until the sun shone, when, spread out on the rocks, they could be cured.

“Then they’ll be somethin’ worth talkin’ about,” the cook said as Sidney helped him carry into the tower such of the morning’s catch as were to be served for dinner. “Folks ashore will eat most anything that looks like a salt fish, an’ think it’s jest what it ought’er be, the poor, ignorant things ! I’ll show you some with pork scraps that’ll make your eyes water, if you stay here long enough.”

At this point Captain Eph came down from the upper portion of the tower looking as calm and contented as before the experience on the shoal, and, noting the change, Uncle Zenas asked as he set about frying the fish:

“Feel better now ? ”

“Indeed I do,” the keeper replied emphatically. “I’ve writ down in the log all I know about the lubbers what came so near stavin’ in our dory, an’ if the Board don’t do somethin’ toward stoppin’ sich recklessness, it’ll be because they don’t care anything ’bout Government property an’ them as are hired to look out for it.”

“But how can anything be done when you don’t know the name of the steamer ?” Uncle Zenas asked in perplexity, and Captain Eph replied sharply:

“It ain’t for me to show the Government how things should be done. I’ve let the Board know how they came near to losin’ a light keeper, an’ it’s their business to put a stop to sich fool work as runnin’ full speed between the buoy an’ the ledge. Wa’al, Sonny,” and the keeper turned toward Sidney, “what’s your idee of deep-sea fishin’ ?”

“There’s lots of fun in it; but I believe that I’d rather not go out again while the fog is so thick.”

“The fog ain’t half so bad as imitation sailormen; but it isn’t likely we’ll need to go again very soon, because Uncle Zenas has got all the fish he can take care of for quite a spell. We’ll have fresh cod for dinner, corned cod for breakfast, an’ so on till there’s a chance for boiled salt cod with plenty of pork.”

When a lad is eager to be of assistance to those around him, there is always ample opportunity, and during the remainder of this day Sidney found something with which to occupy his time. More than once was he able to render valuable service in the work of repairing the boat; Uncle Zenas declared that the lad had “helped him out wonderfully,” and Captain Eph discovered that the visitor’s penmanship was very much more legible than his own, there-

fore the "report" to the Board relative to the coming of a boat belonging to the schooner *West Wind* was copied neatly, with much advantage, so far as the general appearance of the document was concerned.

At the supper table Mr. Peters announced that his task would be completed by noon of the next day, and proposed that Sidney try the motor to make certain it was in running order.

"Don't undertake to leave the cove, Sonny," Captain Eph said quickly, "unless it so be that this 'ere fog mull lifts, in which case I'll go with you."

"I'll undertake to run that boat to the mainland, fog or no fog!" Mr. Peters cried. "Do you mean to say, Cap'n Eph, that you allow to wait for clear weather before we take your report ashore?"

"If you can run the motor, Sammy, you're at liberty to make the trip any time you please; but I won't allow Sonny to take chances," the keeper said very decidedly.

"Perhaps you think I can't be trusted to steer for him even in fair weather?" Mr. Peters cried impatiently.

"So far as runnin' a boat from here to the mainland, I'd trust you, Sammy, in any weather, day or night, for there's nobody who could do it better; but for all that, when Sonny runs the motor, I shall be

at the helm every time, for I ain't takin' any chances."

"Do you mean to say I can't go ashore with him?"

"Not a bit of it, Sammy. In fair weather there's no reason why both of us shouldn't leave the light, so long as Uncle Zenas stays on duty; but Sonny don't go away from this ledge without me, until his own father comes after him, an' then all hands of us'll be sorry to part with the little shaver."

Captain Eph spoke in a tone which told his comrades that he would not listen to any argument, and Mr. Peters looked as if he was on the verge of a fit of the sulks, when Uncle Zenas said placidly, probably with the idea of restoring good humor:

"I think it would be a proper plan for both of you to go; by startin' in the mornin' after the lantern is cleaned, you should be back by noon, an' if two are ashore, we can get a lot of shoppin' done. There are a good many things I'm needin' that the Board don't furnish."

Captain Eph suggested that a list be made of the articles needed, and Sidney wrote as the others directed, until Mr. Peters forgot that he had been displeased at the idea of Captain Eph's making one

of the party, and laid so many plans for the "outing" that a full week would not have sufficed to carry them all into execution.

That night Sidney tried to persuade the keeper to sleep in his own room, and let him use one of the beds on the upper floor; but Captain Eph was so emphatic in his refusal that the lad could do no less than hold his peace.

He did not sleep very soundly on this night, however, because of being eager to go on watch with the keeper. It seemed as if he awakened every ten minutes, and strained his ears to detect any sound which betokened the changing of the watches, while twice he crept softly to the head of the stairs to make certain Captain Eph was yet in bed.

It seemed to the lad like a piece of rare good luck that he chanced to be awake when it was time for the keeper to go on duty, and then, dressing hurriedly, he crept up to the watch-room, enjoying it hugely when the old man started in surprise as his footstep sounded on the floor.

"Didn't think I could waken, did you?" he cried gleefully, and Captain Eph took him in his arms as he replied:

"I didn't allow you should, if I could help it, because there's no reason for you to turn out so early."

“But I had rather; it makes it seem as if I was of some use here, instead of being a loafer.”

“Bless your soul, Sonny, you’d be of use if you didn’t do more than let us old shell-backs look at you,” and Captain Eph seated himself in the chair, rocking the lad as if he had been a baby. “You never can know how much good it has done us to have you here. If it wasn’t for the sore heart I know your father has this minute, I’d thank God you got lost in the fog, an’ pray that you might never find your way off this ’ere ledge so long as I lived.”

“You’re mighty good to me,” Sidney said, at a loss for words.

“It’s me who’s gettin’ all the good out of it,” Captain Eph replied with a vain attempt to speak in a careless tone. “Say, you don’t mind if I rock you here on my knee while there’s nobody by to see us, do you, Sonny? You put me in mind of a little shaver who spent a good many hours in my lap an’ it kind’er makes me feel better to put my arms around you.”

“Mind it, of course I don’t, except that I’m glad to have you hold me,” Sidney cried, guessing something of that which was in the old man’s heart, and laying his head on the keeper’s shoulder.

The clock which regulated the flashing of the light ticked loudly; the boom of the surf against the black reef sounded like distant thunder; but Captain Eph

heard nothing save the soft breathing of the lad after he fell asleep, and saw nothing save the face of the “little shaver” against which he pressed his lips from time to time, while his eyelids glistened in the lamp-light as if they had been wet with dew.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VOYAGE.

Mr. Peters was not mistaken as to the time when he would finish the task of repairing the motor boat, and at the dinner-table on the day after Captain Eph and Sidney had had such a narrow escape from being run down in the fog, he announced that his work was at an end.

“She’s in as good a condition as I can ever put her, an’ outside of a reg’lar ship carpenter, I’d like to see the man who would do a neater job. When she’s had a coat of paint, it would puzzle a Quaker lawyer to make out to tell that she’d ever been stove.”

“There’s one thing I like about our Sammy,” Uncle Zenas said in a confidential tone to Sidney. “He’ll never be hung because of not blowin’ his own horn loud enough, an’ that’s really the fact.”

“On this ’ere ledge a man has got to speak for himself, else there’s danger of forgettin’ whether or no he’s alive,” Mr. Peters replied in a placid tone. “It ain’t often I get a chance for horn-blowin’, owin’ to the noise you an’ Cap’n Eph make about

yourselves. What do you say to havin' a try at the motor, Sonny ? ”

Sidney looked toward Captain Eph inquiringly, and the latter replied.

“ I can't see as there's anything to hinder, per-vidin' you don't run outside the cove. All you want to know is whether it's in workin' order, an' that shouldn't take many minutes. If it so be that we do run over to the mainland, it's my opinion that the voyage can be begun within the next twenty-four hours, for this 'ere fog storm is about at an end, 'cordin' to the looks of things.”

Therefore it was that as soon as Sidney had eaten dinner he went to the narrow opening in the rocks where the motor boat was moored at such a distance from the foot of the ways that there could be no danger the waves would dash her against the timbers.

Mr. Peters hauled the little craft in so that the lad could leap aboard from the rocks, and while he examined the motor according to the instructions of the *West Wind's* engineer, Captain Eph and Uncle Zenas came down on the reef as spectators.

It was not necessary to spend many minutes in order to learn if the machinery was in working order. When Sidney applied the spark which ignites the gas, the screw immediately began to revolve, and

he had no difficulty in sending her ahead or astern at will.

“I reckon there’s nō great need of your spendin’ very much time over that end of the business,” the keeper said in a tone of satisfaction. “You an’ Sammy had better give the engine a thorough clean-in’, an’ when that has been done I’ll try to answer the questions you asked this mornin’ about the light, if you come up into the lantern.”

Then Captain Eph went back to the tower, and when the two were busily engaged obeying orders, Mr. Peters asked curiously:

“What did the cap’n mean, Sonny, about answer-in’ your questions?”

“I wanted to know about the lens,” Sidney replied. “I can’t understand why it is any better to have all those glass rings around the light, which make so much work for the cleaners, than it would be if it was one solid globe.”

“So Cap’n Eph thinks he can explain all that, does he?” Mr. Peters said with a queer gurgle in his throat, much as if he were choking. “Wa’al, all I can say is, if he does, it’ll be a good deal more’n I’ve ever heard of his doin’ yet. He’ll spin a lot of stuff ’bout bendin’ the rays, an’ after he gets through you won’t know quite as much as you did before.”

Because he did not understand the meaning of Mr. Peters' remark, Sidney remained silent, and shortly after, the motor having been cleaned thoroughly, he went into the lantern, where he found the keeper awaiting him.

Captain Eph had before him several open books, as if he had been refreshing his memory on the subject of lenses, and immediately Sidney appeared, he said, in an apologetic tone:

"I don't count on bein' able to give you the idee as to the work of the lenses sich as a man ought'er; but I'll try my best, an' if I fail you won't be any worse off than you are now. In the first place this 'ere is what is known as a light of the first order, meanin' the most powerful in the service, an' the lens alone cost about eight thousand dollars. The middle part of the lens is made up of what's known as 'refractors,' which, 'cordin' to my way of tellin' it, are rings of glass makin' a hollow cylinder six feet in diameter, an' thirty inches high. Below it, as is printed here," and Captain Eph pointed with his thumb to one of the open books, "are six triangular rings of glass, ranged in a cylindrical form, an' above it, a crown of thirteen rings of glass, formin' by their union a hollow cage composed of polished glass, ten feet high, an' six feet in diameter, like this 'ere," and Captain Eph waved his hand toward the

brilliant apparatus before them, a picture of which is given here.

“ But what is the need of making it out of so many pieces ? ” Sidney asked. “ Why wouldn’t it be just as well to cover the lamp with a globe, such as is on a house-lamp ? ”

“ That, Sonny, is the hard part of explainin’ the business, because I don’t know so much about it as I ought’er; but I’ve heard the inspector talk some-thin’ like this: The flame of the lamp sends its rays in all directions—up, down, an’ sideways; an’ what’s wanted is to get the light streamin’ out in a straight line all around, so the top an’ bottom of this ’ere glass cage is put on to bend the rays till they go in the same direction as those in the middle of the flame. ’Cordin’ to the inspector, when a ray of light strikes a prism of glass, it turns toward the base, as you’ll see in this—wa’al, I don’t hardly know what to call it—that I’ve been drawin’ so’s you’ll understand what the inspector means by bendin’ the rays. You’ll notice that, except in the middle, the prisms are each set at a different angle, an’ with a space between ’em, which allows of catchin’ every ray from the lamp—”

“ Are you ever comin’ down to your supper, or do you count on lettin’ all this ’ere food, that’s taken me so long to shape up, go to waste jest because you want’er talk ’bout what you don’t understand ? ”

was the cry from the kitchen, and Captain Eph said hurriedly as he gathered up the books:

“I reckon we’ll have to finish this ’ere talk some other time, for Uncle Zenas does surely seem to be gettin’ nervous. He’s a mighty handy man ’round a light-house; but I do wish he’d get over bein’ so dreadful particular about all hands settin’ down to the table the very instant a meal is ready. There are times, like this, when I’d rather linger a little; but I don’t dare to on account of his bein’ so particular.”

Although Captain Eph and Sidney made all possible haste to descend, the cook called out twice more before they could get into the kitchen, and the keeper said soothingly:

“Now, now, Uncle Zenas, you must give a man time to come down-stairs, an’ Sonny an’ me couldn’t have got here any sooner unless we’d tumbled down, which wouldn’t have been convenient or comfortable.”

“I like to have folks at the table when things are ready,” Uncle Zenas replied tartly, and Captain Eph said with a wink at Sidney:

“Then you ought’er give us a little warnin’. Sing out when you begin to put things on the table, an’ you’ll find us here an’ waitin’, the same as Sammy is now.”

Uncle Zenas made no reply to this remark, and it surely seemed as if the incident was closed when

Captain Eph asked that the food might be blessed to them.

“I’m lookin’ for clear weather to-morrow,” Mr. Peters said as if he expected to be contradicted, and much to his surprise the keeper said promptly:

“So am I. ‘Cordin’ to the way I figger it out, the wind’ll haul to the west’ard when the tide turns, an’ this smother will be well out to sea by sunrise.”

“An’ s’posin’ it all turns out as you predict, what about our goin’ ashore?” Mr. Peters asked.

“I’ll agree to it if it so be Uncle Zenas is willin’ to keep ship alone,” the keeper replied. “If the wind *does* haul ’round, it won’t be any great hardship if you an’ the cook turn out an hour earlier than usual, so’s we can get the lantern put to rights early.”

“You can call all hands at three o’clock, so far as I’m concerned,” Uncle Zenas interrupted, “an’ then I’ll be so far along with my end of the work that I can give you a lift in the lantern.”

“I don’t reckon there’s any great need of turnin’ out quite so early as that; but Sammy might wake me an hour sooner than usual, so’s he could get somethin’ of a nap, an’ we’ll make it all hands ’bout four o’clock.”

And thus it was arranged when Sidney went to bed, hoping most fervently that he might waken in

time to share the watch with Captain Eph; but it so chanced that he did not open his eyes until nearly three o'clock next morning, much to the disappointment.

He hurried into the watch-room as soon as possible, however, and there found the keeper studying over the drawing he had made for the purpose of showing how the rays of light were "bent."

"What are you doing, sir?" Sidney asked laughingly.

"Tryin' to figger this thing out so's to understand it myself," the captain replied grimly. "I put it to you same's I'd heard the inspector talk, but what puzzles me is why the light should go toward the thick end of the prism any quicker than the other way."

Captain Eph had before him all the books of the library which might aid in the work, and Sidney found the problem so interesting that it seemed as if he had no more than begun before Uncle Zenas' voice was heard from the room below, as he said petulantly:

"It strikes me if I was standin' watch I'd know when it was four o'clock. How do you ever expect to get off on your voyage early, Ephraim Downs, if you can't keep better run of the time than this?"

"All right, Uncle Zenas, all right! If you'll

call Sammy we'll get our odd chores done up before sunrise," the keeper cried, and the cook replied:

"He'd ought'er be awake by this time; I've turned him clean over twice, an' count on pullin' him out bodily if he don't make some kind of a move before I count five."

The sound of a heavy body striking the floor below told that Mr. Peters had "moved," and Sidney cried in surprise:

"If you'll believe it, I'd almost forgotten that we might go ashore this morning. Has the fog cleared away?"

"Every blessed drop of it went to sea when the tide turned, jest as I allowed; but I got so mixed up about the lens that it went straight out'er my mind. Now it's a case of gettin' things inter shape with a hustle."

Sidney went into the kitchen, believing he could be of more service there than anywhere else, and, thanks to the will with which the crew worked, the start was made in considerably less than an hour after sunrise.

"Lay in all the stores that you've got on the list, for there's no knowin' when you'll have another chance. Uncle Zenas cried as, the voyagers having taken their places, he pushed the bow of the boat out from the rocks.

Sidney reversed the screw until the little craft was clear by the ledge, and then sent her ahead at a fair rate of speed, Captain Eph acting as helmsman.

“There’s some sense in goin’ ashore this fashion,” Mr. Peters said as he lay back in the bow, resting his head on his hands. “If we had a craft like this, I’d feel like takin’ a day off every once in a while; but when a man is obleeged to pull a lumberin’ old dory a dozen miles or more, it don’t seem like takin’ much of a rest.”

“You go ashore as much as is good for you, Sammy,” Captain Eph said gravely. “I don’t approve of gallivantin’ ’round very much, an’ it ain’t sich a great spell since you was off duty three whole days.”

“That was more’n two years ago,” Mr. Peters replied in an injured tone.

“Wa’al, I’ll agree it was, an’ what do you want? To go away every time the moon changes? If you do, it would be a good idee to look up a different job from tendin’ one of the most important lights on this ’ere coast.”

Sidney, fearing lest the keeper and his assistant might come to sharp words on the subject of vacations, put an end to the dispute by proposing to show how fast the boat could run when all the power was

applied; but Captain Eph had no desire to try experiments.

“Fair an’ softly, Sonny, is the best. I’ve never had much to do with this kind of a craft, an’ shouldn’t feel overly easy to know you was tryin’ to shove her, for nobody can tell what may happen. Let her go along easy-like, ’cause we’ve got time enough an’ to spare ’twixt this an’ sunset.”

Therefore it was that the boat was kept down to two-thirds the speed which could readily have been maintained, and at the end of two hours she had arrived at a little settlement which to Sidney looked very small and mean; but to Captain Eph and Mr. Peters was almost a metropolis.

When the boat had been made fast to the dock, and the first assistant had clambered ashore, the keeper whispered in Sidney’s ear:

“I reckon, Sonny, you’ll see a good many things you’d like to have, an’, comin’ away from the schooner as you did, it ain’t likely you’ve got any great amount of money with you. Now jest take this, an’ then you can hold your end up with Sammy, for I expect he’ll try to make a terrible big showin’ when we go into the shops.”

“I don’t want a thing, sir, indeed I don’t,” Sidney replied as he squeezed the old keeper’s hand, but without taking the silver pieces which were in it.

“Mr. Peters can make all the showing of money he likes, and it won’t make me feel queer.”

“But I’d rather you was kind of independent, Sonny, an’ it would do me a heap of good if you took it.”

Sidney began to understand that Captain Eph would consider it a privilege to supply him with money, and he compromised the matter by saying:

“There isn’t a thing that I would be likely to want, sir; but if I should see anything, I’ll ask you to buy it for me.”

“Will you really an’ truly, Sonny?”

“Indeed I will, sir,” the lad replied, and then the two joined Mr. Peters on the wharf.

The first assistant led the way up through the one street of the settlement as if he believed the new uniform he wore would cause a great deal of excitement, and he was, in fact, the center of attraction while he remained on shore, for even the children of the village had heard of the three old cronies who kept the light on Carys’ Ledge, holding to their duties so closely as to visit the mainland no oftener than once in two or three years.

Captain Eph, with the list of wants in his hand, stopped at the shop in which was the post-office, where he mailed the report with strict injunctions to the postmaster to “see that it left town the first

thing in the mornin’,” and then began purchasing the supplies, stopping every now and then to ask Sidney in a whisper if he “hadn’t seen something he wanted.”

Mr. Peters had a little list of his own, much to the surprise of the keeper, who had supposed that all the purchases were to be made from the common purse, and it was not until nearly noon that the business was finished.

The postmaster gave the three customers an urgent invitation to take dinner with him; but Captain Eph pleaded that it was of the utmost importance they get back to the ledge before dark, and at once began to carry his stores to the wharf.

The motor boat was well loaded when the last package had been put on board, and Mr. Peters, who seemed bent on keeping his goods separate from the others, said as he stowed them snugly in the bow:

“I reckon it’s well we didn’t buy anything more, else we’d had to make two trips in order to carry ’em all. Uncle Zenas will keep himself busy for the next two months cookin’ up fancy dishes, ’cordin’ to the stuff he ordered. I thought one spell you was goin’ to clean the shop out.”

“I bought what we agreed on yesterday, an’ reckoned that made up the lot; but it seems you wasn’t satisfied,” Captain Eph said, much as if he was

accusing the first assistant of some misdemeanor.

“Oh yes I was; everything you had on the list hit me to a T, for I’m willin’ to stand my part of the expense if Uncle Zenas wants to spread himself as a cook, ’cause I can eat my full share three times every day,” and Mr. Peters indulged in a gurgling spell, such as always caused Sidney considerable alarm.

“Then what did you need that the rest of us mustn’t know anything about?” Captain Eph asked sternly. “When Sonny an’ me saw that you wanted to be so terrible private over what you was buyin’, we went out on the sidewalk, so’s to let you have your fling.”

“Yes, I noticed that,” Mr. Peters replied, as he continued to stow his goods in the bow with the utmost caution, as if they might be injured in case the motor boat shipped a little water; but he did not make any explanations.

“When you get through fiddlin’ with your—whatever it is you bought—we’ll get under way,” and Captain Eph spoke sharply, as if he was irritated, whereupon Sidney took his station in front of the motor, ready to start the screw when the word should be given; but before the first assistant could reply, even if he had been intending to do so, the postmaster came down on the wharf, moving at a rapid pace as if his business was urgent.

“ I reckon you wanted that letter to go in the next mail, eh ? ”

“ Sure, an’ there mustn’t be any mistake about it, for it’s my official report, an’ nobody knows what might happen to the Light-House Board if it didn’t get to the inspector on time.”

“ When you was at the store I forgot to ask if anythin’ had gone wrong over on the ledge. It kind’er seemed as if there was somethin’ out’er the reg’lar, else you wouldn’t be in sich a pinch to send a report,” and the postmaster looked inquiringly from one to the other.

“ Nothin’ wrong as I knows of,” Captain Eph replied, much as if he was making a great mental effort to recall to mind anything of an alarming nature that had taken place on the ledge.

“ Let me see,” and the postmaster rubbed his chin thoughtfully. “ It must be quite a spell since any of you folks came ashore, ain’t it ? ”

“ The first assistant was here a leetle more’n two years ago.”

“ Yes, yes, I knew it was as long ago as that. Let me see, he didn’t have that boy with him then, did he ? ”

“ I reckon not ; leastways, not to my knowledge,” and Sidney understood that Captain Eph was growing impatient.

“ I didn’t know but he had jest joined your crew, an’ then agin I said to myself, seein’s you was in sich a stir about gettin’ the report off, it might be there’s been a wreck out that way lately, though we haven’t been havin’ any bad weather since the light-house tender was there last.”

Captain Eph made no reply, and Mr. Peters began to re-stow his packages, working so industriously that no one could have expected him to join in the conversation.

“ That must be a new boat you’ve got ? ” the postmaster continued in a questioning tone. “ Does the Government furnish motor boats nowadays ? ”

“ This ’ere ain’t a Government craft,” Captain Eph said curtly, and then he asked Mr. Peters, “ Ain’t you ready yet, Sammy ? ”

“ Everything is stowed, an’ what ain’t I can look after while we’re runnin’.”

The keeper cast off the hawser, and took his seat in the stern-sheets, while the postmaster walked slowly along the dock as the boat swung out with the current, when he said inquiringly:

“ Then there ain’t nothin’ gone wrong at the ledge ? An’ I reckon you’ve taken the boy on to kind’er help you out in the work, eh ? ”

“ Carys’ Ledge lays jest where it did when I first took charge of the light, an’ if anything had gone

wrong you wouldn't see us here, 'cause we'd be there tryin' to put it to rights," Captain Eph said more sharply than before, and he nodded to Sidney as if ordering him to start the engine.

The lad believed he understood the mute command, and an instant later the little craft was moving swiftly away, but not at such a pace as to prevent them from hearing the postmaster cry:

"If anything has gone wrong, an' I can do you a good turn, let me know, for I'm only too glad to oblige my neighbors."

Captain Eph shut his mouth tightly as if to keep back angry words, and when the little craft was a mile or more from the wharf, he said to Mr. Peters:

"I hope, Sammy, you'll let this be a lesson to you. Now you can get an idee of how it sounds when a man tries to pry into other folks' affairs."

"What do you mean by that?" and the first assistant looked up quickly from the survey of his private stores. "Do you mean to hint that I go 'round pryin' into your business?"

"You most generally want to know what's goin' on, an' I've noticed that you contrive to find out."

"Perhaps you didn't do any pryin' when you was so keen to see what I'd been buyin'," Mr. Peters re-

torted, and in the hope of keeping peace between these two old friends by changing the subject of the conversation, Sidney asked:

“Why wasn’t you willing the postmaster should know what had happened at the ledge, sir ?”

“Because, Sonny, I wouldn’t encourage sich pry-in’,” Captain Eph replied gravely. “The man ought’er had sense enough to know that the keeper of a first order light don’t run ’round tellin’ everything he knows. Perhaps if he’d come right out an’ asked who you was, I might have told him; but when he beat about the bush, guessin’ this and guessin’ that, I made up my mind he shouldn’t know the least little thing about what was goin’ on at the ledge.”

“The amount of it is that we go ashore so seldom folks think nothin’ less’n an earthquake would fetch us out, an’ that’s why they’re so terribly curious,” Mr. Peters said in a thoughtful tone, and Captain Eph asked sharply:

“Is it in your mind that you don’t have enough furloughs ?”

“Not a bit of it,” and Mr. Peters spoke emphatically. “I never go to town that I don’t wonder how people can manage to live there, ’cause it’s so dreadfully lonesome. Out on the ledge we have somethin’ to do, an’ can see more or less, ’cept when

the fog shuts down, but ashore all they have to look at are the houses, an' I can't ngger out why folks will stay there."

Having thus given good evidence that Carys' Ledge was to him an ideal place in which to live, Mr. Peters turned all his attention to the re-stowing of his purchases, and Captain Eph watched him suspiciously, until Sidney asked:

"How long do you suppose it will be, sir, before my father hears where I am?"

"It's all owin' to when a letter can get there, Sonny. You may make up your mind that the Board will send word the quickest way possible, an' we've done the wisest thing by sendin' off the report, for we might wait six months—perhaps more—before we could speak a craft bound to Porto Rico."

"What's the matter with the inspector's telegraphin' to Sonny's father?" Mr. Peters asked suddenly, and the keeper started in surprise as this possibility was suggested.

"Now you can see how thick-headed I am!" he exclaimed. "Here is Sammy, who couldn't be expected to look ahead so far as that, comes up with the very idee. Of course the inspector will telegraph, 'cause I don't s'pose it would cost him anythin', an' the chances are your father'll know the whole story inside of the next eight an' forty hours."

“I hope that may be so,” Sidney said half to himself, and Captain Eph cried jealously:

“Are you so anxious as all that to get away from us, Sonny ?”

“Indeed I’d be only too glad if I could stay at the light all winter,” Sidney said earnestly; “but I can’t bear to think that father is feeling very, very bad believing I may be drowned.”

“Of course you’d look at it in that light, Sonny, an’ it shows your heart is in the right place. I am an old fool for sayin’ anything; but the trouble is I’ve been gettin’ it inter my head that you wouldn’t go away very soon.”

“How can he ?” Mr. Peters asked as he gave way to one of those alarming gurgles he sometimes indulged in. “S’posen he knew this very minute where Sonny was, how’s he goin’ to get at him till his schooner goes to Porto Rico, unloads, takes on another cargo, an’ comes back ? I don’t reckon that voyage can be made in any two or three days !”

“Sammy, you do say the brightest things now an’ then, for a man who hasn’t got a very big head, that I ever heard of,” Captain Eph cried as if a great load had been taken from his mind. “That’s the second time you’ve made me feel mighty good by jumpin’ inter the conversation when I didn’t s’pose you’d know what to say !”

CHAPTER VII.

A LESSON ON BUOYS.

Before Mr. Peters could make any reply to the rather equivocal remark of the keeper, Sidney, glancing over his shoulder carelessly, was startled into a cry of surprise, for they were close aboard the ledge, and, as if waiting for them, Uncle Zenas stood at the head of the little cove.

“What’s the matter, Sonny ?” Captain Eph asked solicitously.

“Nothing serious, sir. I was surprised at seeing that we were so near the light. The boat has made better time than when we went over, and yet I didn’t know I was running the motor any faster.”

“Very likely you kept the same pace with the machine; but this ’ere wind has been pushin’ us along a good two miles an hour,” the keeper replied as he waved his hand in greeting to Uncle Zenas.

“Ahoy on the boat !” the cook shouted as if he was hailing a ship half a mile distant, and Mr. Peters took it upon himself to reply :

“Hello ! What seems to be creepin’ over you ?”

“Did I put bakin’ powder on that ’ere list ?”

“That you did, an’ the cap’n has brought what’ll last six months, even if you sit up nights tryin’ to work it inter somethin’ that we’re bound to eat ’cause we can’t get anything else.”

“Way enough, Sonny !” Captain Eph cried at this moment, and Sidney shut off the supply of gas, thus bringing the screw gradually to a standstill.

A moment later Uncle Zenas seized the bow of the little craft, dragging it up on the ways, and the voyage had come to an end within six hours of its beginning.

“Hold on there !” Mr. Peters cried excitedly when Uncle Zenas would have taken from the boat the packages which had been stowed with such care. “Don’t touch anythin’ here; your stuff is ’mid-ships.”

“But what are these ?” and again Uncle Zenas made a movement as if he would have taken up one of the packages; but the first assistant was so frantic in his efforts to prevent him, that Sidney could not restrain his mirth, for the battle-scarred veteran looked much like an old hen defending her chickens.

“What in the name of goodness, Sammy, have you got there ?” Uncle Zenas asked in surprise, and he looked inquiringly at Captain Eph.

“I don’t know anything about it,” the keeper said

in reply to the mute question. "He's acted jest that way ever since we took the stuff aboard—wouldn't let Sonny or me so much as put our fingers on it."

"But you must have seen what he bought," the second assistant cried as he eyed the packages suspiciously.

"He was too sharp for us, an' when I saw that he was at some kind of underhanded work, I let him have full swing, by goin' out of the shop. Lend a hand with this 'ere stuff which we ain't ashamed to show, an' then we'll have a chance to stretch our legs a bit. I'm pretty well cramped up with sittin' still so long."

While Uncle Zenas obeyed this command, Mr. Peters carried his goods into the tower, giving no heed to his comrades, and by the time the motor boat had been run up on the ways to the door of the boat-house, he came out looking exceedingly well pleased with himself.

Uncle Zenas had prepared an unusually appetizing dinner for the voyagers, and while they were giving evidence of their appreciation of his efforts by eating heartily, Captain Eph said with a long-drawn sigh of content:

"I declare it does seem good to get home ! It'll be many a long day before I can be coaxed ashore

agin, unless it so be that Sonny has to go on business of his own.”

This remark reminded Uncle Zenas of the main object for which the voyage had been undertaken, and in answer to his questions the keeper explained what had been done.

“Then I s’pose we can look for his father almost any day?’ the cook said inquiringly, and Captain Eph explained why, as Mr. Peters had presented the matter, some considerable time must necessarily elapse before any information could be received concerning Captain Harlow’s movements.

“I’m allowin’, since Sammy put me right on the matter, that the first word we get will come from the inspector,” the keeper said as if to dismiss the subject, “an’ we can count on keepin’ about as we’re goin’ for some time yet.”

By this time the meal had come to an end, and when Uncle Zenas refused all offers of assistance in stowing away the goods which had been brought from the mainland, Captain Eph went into the watch-room, followed by Sidney, for Mr. Peters had slipped out of the tower as if afraid some one might take note of his movements.

“Well, Sonny,” the keeper said when he was alone with the lad, “what do you reckon you an’ I had better do jest now?”

“I was watching the buoys as we went into the harbor, and wondered how it was you knew so well on which side of them the channel was to be found.”

“I’ve been expectin’ you’d ask that same question jest as soon as you’d got well inter this ’ere light-house business, an’ it strikes me you’ll know more about it by readin’ somethin’ I’ve put by here, than if I spent the whole day tryin’ to tell it in my clumsy way,” the keeper said as he gave to Sidney an open book, from which the lad read that which follows:

“The buoy is to the seaman by day what the light is at night, and what the fog signal is in thick weather. It tells him by its size, form, color, and number how to avoid rocks and shoals, and shows the way in and out of harbor.

“The buoy service has its own code of laws, State and national, a fleet of small steamers for its maintenance, and a corps of contractors to attend to the buoyage of coves and inlets impracticable to the steamers. It has its depots for the storage of iron buoys, where they are painted and numbered, or repaired, and also where wooden buoys are made ready for service. It has its own directory printed yearly, in thirteen volumes, distributed gratuitously for the benefit of commerce, in which each one is mentioned by name, located by station, and described by size, color, number, and vicinity.

“Congress prescribed, by act of September 28, 1850, that red buoys, with even numbers, be placed on the right-hand side, and black buoys, with odd numbers, on the left-hand side of channels approached from seaward; that buoys placed on wrecks and other obstructions, having a channel on each side, be painted with red and black horizontal stripes; that those buoys placed in mid-channel, and which indicate that they must be passed close-to to avoid danger, be painted with white and black perpendicular stripes; and, finally, that perches, with balls, cages, etc., when placed on buoys, will indicate a turning-point, the color and number of the buoy showing the side on which they are to be passed.

“Iron buoys are hollow, with air-tight compartments, and are made of three shapes, called nun, can, and ice-buoys. The nun-buoys are almost conical in form; the can-buoy is in shape the frustum of a cone, nearly approaching a cylinder, and the ice-buoy is found much like a spar-buoy, of great length, slight thickness, and of the largest diameter near its middle. Each shape is classified by size, and diversified by color and number. They were once made of wooden staves, like barrels, but their rapid destruction by submarine worms caused the substitution of boiler-iron.

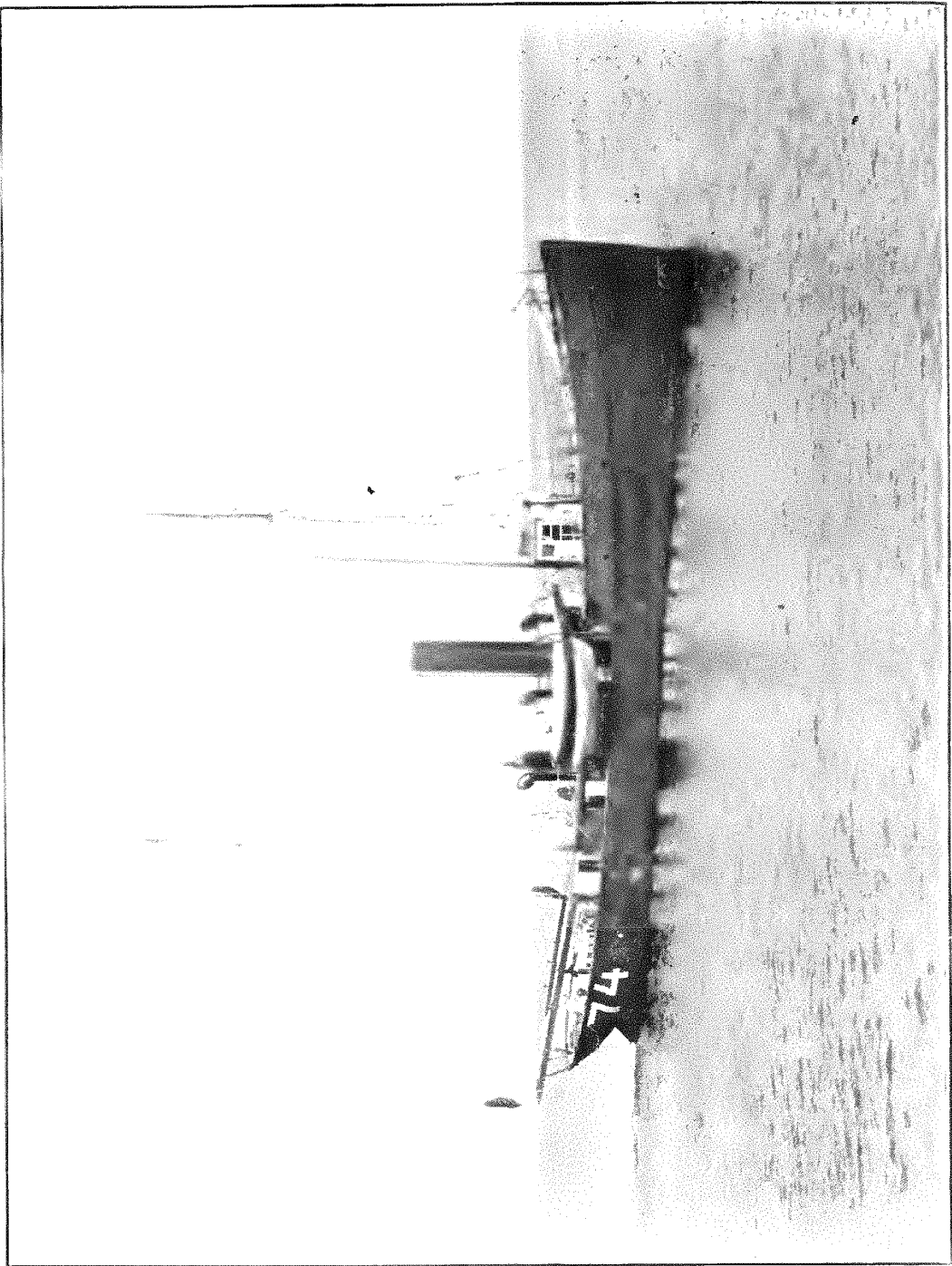
“The cost of these buoys varies with the price of iron, and they have been sold to the Government for

\$41.81 in the case of third-class buoys, up to \$150 for those of the first-class.

“Buoys are exposed to many dangers, not the least of which is that of being run down and ripped open by passing steamers. As the iron buoys are made with compartments, they are rarely sunk, but their line of floatation is often lowered, and their usefulness accordingly decreased.

“Spar-buoys frequently lose a portion of their length, which is cut off by strokes of colliding propeller-blades. Despite state and national statutes forbidding it, vessels will sometimes make fast to buoys, thus gradually dragging them off their bearings. A buoy has sometimes been set adrift that a reward might be obtained for its recovery; but this is not a profitable operation, as the reward paid is varied with the circumstances of each case.

“The buoy’s worst enemy, however, is ice, when moving in mass, and with a tide or current. A well-made, well-moored buoy at the mouth of a narrow river can create an ice-gorge; but usually, when the ice moves in force, the buoys met have their mooring-loops torn out, their mooring-chains broken, or their mooring-anchors weighed; and in each case the buoys are carried out to sea, when the buoy tenders give chase, and, if successful in their capture, return them to position.



CAPE ELIZABETH.

“The sea-going qualities of the large buoys are shown by their volunteer voyages. One is now anchored off the coast of Ireland, where it was picked up, about six weeks after it had been wrenched from its place in New York harbor, and turned over to the Irish light-house establishment, by which it was reported to the United States Light-House Board, when it was presented to the Irish Board, who simply added to its former marks their own, and moored it near the point where it came ashore, in commemoration of its peculiar voyage.

“The iron ice-buoy is made of boiler-iron, and is divided into compartments, so that any one may be pierced without sinking the buoy. One of the first-class costs \$275, is fifty feet long, and stands twenty-two feet out of water. One of the second-class costs \$181, is forty feet long, and stands seventeen feet out of water. As with wooden spar-buoys, the ice passes over them without carrying them away; but, unlike the wooden buoys, they break the propeller blades which strike them, instead of being broken, and, thus defending themselves, last many times longer than spar-buoys, and, though costing more at first, are more economical in the end.”

Captain Eph had remained patiently near the window during all the time Sidney was reading that which has been given here, and a smile overspread

his face as the lad said when he closed the book:

“It seems as if I ought to know all about buoys, after reading so much, and I’ lltry not to forget it.”

“The longer you stay with us, Sonny, the bigger idee you’ll get of the money it costs to keep the waters of this ’ere country in proper trim for sailors. I reckon there ain’t more’n one landsman in twenty who, when he sees a light-house, could give any reasonable guess as to the bigness of the service.”

“There’s a lot to learn about it,” Sidney said with a sigh, and Captain Eph replied laughingly:

“Indeed there is, Sonny, an’ you ain’t forced to wade through it all unless your curiosity leads that way. There’s a big fleet of steamers to be talked about yet, an’ they must surely cost a lot of money.”

The keeper was interrupted by the voice of Uncle Zenas from the kitchen:

“Ephraim Downs, I want to know if your losin’ your senses entirely ? ”

“Now Uncle Zenas, what seems to be the trouble with you ? ” the keeper called down through the door. “Has the cookin’ gone wrong, or didn’t we buy all the gim-cracks you wanted ? ”

“In case you haven’t lost your senses, why is Sammy allowed to make a jumpin’ jack of himself all over this ’ere ledge ? If anybody should see him,

it would be told everywhere on the mainland that we'd gone crazy, an' then goodness only knows what might happen !”

“ I didn't know Sammy was up to any capers, Uncle Zenas ; but I'll look into the matter, an' if he's doin' anything agin the rules an' regerlations, I'll straighten him out in short order. Don't worry about his bein' seen, for there isn't so much as a fisherman's dory in sight.”

“ He'd be cavortin' 'round jest the same if a whole fleet had hove to off here,” Uncle Zenas cried, and without waiting to make any reply, Captain Eph hurried to one of the windows, from which Sidney was already gazing out with a look of wonderment on his face.

“ What in the name of goodness has come over Sammy ? ” the old keeper cried to no one in particular ; but Sidney replied in a tone of perplexity :

“ It looks as if he was nailin' up a lot of sticks, sir.”

“ But he can't nail 'em to the rocks, an' whatever he puts up there will be carried away by the first wave that breaks over the ledge ! ”

Mr. Peters certainly was acting in a very peculiar manner. He had in his arms five or six strips of boards or planks, which had the appearance of having been washed up from some wreck, and was striding to and fro, evidently trying to find some place

where he could place them in a sort of frame-work, for, during the short time Captain Eph and Sidney watched from the window, he made two unsuccessful attempts to secure them in an upright position.

The old keeper watched his first assistant narrowly for some time, evidently losing a tiny bit of his temper each moment, and presently it was impossible for him to remain silent any longer:

“I ain’t so certain but that we’ll have to set about makin’ a straight-jacket for Sammy, an’ we sha’n’t have much more’n time to do it before the lamp must be lighted. Come down with me, an’ we’ll try to soothe him a little. I thought he acted queer about that stuff he bought, an’ most likely this spell was jest comin’ on.”

Sidney was not prepared to believe that the first assistant had become insane so suddenly; but he followed the keeper down the narrow stairs, eager to hear what explanation Mr. Peters might give for his peculiar behavior.

When the lad entered the kitchen he saw Uncle Zenas standing in the open door leading to the outside ladder, looking out as if in greatest alarm.

“Have you seen Sammy?” he asked in a whisper, and with such a comical expression of fear on his face that Sidney was forced to laugh outright.

“You don’t seem to think there’s anything the

matter with him," Uncle Zenas said reproachfully. "That's because you don't know Sammy very well. In all the years I've lived on this 'ere ledge, I never saw him cuttin' up any sich capers as he's flingin' now."

"It looks to me as if he was hunting for a chance to build something, sir. I can't see that he is acting very queerly."

"It's queer for him to be runnin' 'round so when there's no need of it," Captain Eph interrupted. "Sammy don't like work overly well, an' I never saw him do any more than he could help. I'm goin' to know what's the matter, though."

Then the keeper, while descending the ladder, called softly, as if afraid of frightening his first assistant:

"Hello, Sammy, what seems to be the matter with you ? "

"With me ? " Mr. Peters repeated in astonishment. "What made you think there was anything wrong ? "

"What are you runnin' 'round so after ? "

"An' why shouldn't I, if the notion strikes me ? Are you afraid I'll do any harm to the rocks ? "

"Now don't get excited, Sammy; but it kind'er bothers Uncle Zenas an' me to see you runnin' around as if you'd lost your head."

"Don't look, an' then you won't feel so bad," the

first assistant said sharply, as once more he attempted to fasten the strips of board in an upright position, and Captain Eph asked impatiently:

“What are you tryin’ to do, Samuel Peters? As the keeper of this ’ere light, I call upon you to explain your actions.”

Mr. Peters dropped the sticks and stared at Captain Eph in astonishment while one might have counted ten, and then asked irritably:

“Is there anything in the rules an’ regerlations to stop me from nailin’ these boards together, an’ standin’ ’em up on end, if so be it can be done?”

“Not a thing, Sammy, not a thing; but it makes Uncle Zenas an’ me feel kind’er bad to see you jumpin’ ’round at sich a rate. Does your old wound trouble you any?”

By this time Mr. Peters began to understand somewhat of the fears in the minds of his comrades, and it all seemed to him very comical. He laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks, and his mirth brought on such an attack of coughing that Sidney was really afraid he would be strangled.

“Thought I’d gone crazy, eh?” he cried as soon as it was possible for him to speak. “You an’ Uncle Zenas have been figgerin’ how you could get me into the hospital, I s’pose? Crazy!” and again the first assistant laughed until he choked and gasped for

breath. "Let me tell you, Cap'n Eph, that when I do go off the hooks you won't see me loafin' 'round peaceable as this, for I'll think I'm in front of Petersburg again, an' cut up in a way that you can't call pleasant."

"But what are you tryin' to do, Sammy?" Captain Eph asked eagerly. "What's the meanin' of your runnin' 'round with them strips of board under your arm?"

"I'm tryin' to set up what you might call a frame; but can't find a place to put it."

"But, Sammy, it wouldn't stand against the first wave that ever washed over the ledge!"

"I know that, Cap'n Eph, an' I only want it to hold together till 'bout eight o'clock to-night, an' then it can go drown itself for all I care."

"Now you're talkin' queer, agin, Sammy," the old keeper said in a tone of real concern, and the first assistant replied as he struggled to restrain his mirth:

"Look here, Cap'n Eph, jest try to hold in till eight o'clock to-night, an' then you'll understand all about it. This 'ere is a little surprise of mine, an' I reckon there ain't anythin' in the rules an' regerlations to prevent me from springin' it."

Even Uncle Zenas was convinced by this time that Mr. Peters had not lost any portion of his mind, and

Captain Eph returned to the kitchen, where he said, as if having solved some important problem:

“What Sammy bought when he was ashore has got somethin’ to do with the surprise he’s countin’ on givin’ us, an’ I s’pose we may as well let him have his fling, for he always was a good deal of a boy.”

As a matter of fact, so Uncle Zenas afterward told Sidney, Mr. Peters was two years older than Captain Eph, but one might have thought, from the way the others treated him, that the first assistant was a mere child as compared with them.

The cook was brimming over with curiosity as to the nature of the surprise which Mr. Peters had in store for them, and Captain Eph confessed that he was “all in the dark”; but, remembering the shape of some of the packages the first assistant brought with him, and his fear lest they should get wet, Sidney believed he could make a very good guess as to what was coming.

“He sha’n’t be the only one on this ’ere ledge who can rig up a surprise,” Uncle Zenas finally said. “You two are to get out of this kitchen, an’ stay out until after the light is started; when I call you to supper, come runnin’, or I’ll make considerable trouble.”

“This way, Sonny,” Captain Eph said with a laugh. “I reckon our place is upstairs whether they

want us to go or not, for there's gettin' to be altogether too much mystery about this 'ere ledge to suit me."

Sidney followed the keeper, and when the two were climbing the stairs, the lad said:

"This must be one of the highest towers the Government ever built, Captain."

"Indeed it isn't, Sonny, not by a long chalk. From the ledge to the light is only one hundred an' twenty feet; but I've got upstairs an account of the highest tower the Board ever built, an' you shall read it. I ain't tryin' to fill you chock-a-block with facts about light-houses, but when you spring these 'ere questions on me I can't help flashin' up what I know about 'em, which ain't a great deal when you come to simmer it right down."

When the two were once more in the watch-room, the keeper handed Sidney a slip of paper on which was printed the following:

"The tallest skeleton iron tower erected by the United States Light-House Services was at Hell Gate, Astoria, N. Y., in 1883--84. Its height was two hundred fifty-five feet and five-eighths of an inch. It was built in the form of a frustum of a pyramid, and was fifty-four feet square at the bottom and six feet square at the top. It cost \$11,000, and showed nine electric lights, each of which was of six

thousand candle power. It was designed to illuminate the narrow, intricate, and dangerous channel as by artificial daylight. At night the effect was grand. The tower itself could not be seen, and the lights appeared as if hung from the heavens. It accomplished all that was intended, and more, for the light was so brilliant that it dazzled the eyes of the pilots, and prevented them from seeing objects beyond the circle illumined. The shadows thrown were so heavy that they took the form of obstacles. So the light was discontinued in 1886, at the instance of those who had obtained its establishment. The tower was sold as it stood, for old iron; but it was so strongly built that dynamite had to be used to accomplish its overthrow."

"Captain Eph," Sidney asked as he ceased reading, "what shape is the 'frustum of a pyramid'?"

"Wa'al, Sonny, that 'ere bothered me so much when I first came here, that I studied the thing up in a dictionary the inspector lent me, till I knew all about it. You know what a 'pyramid' is in shape? Wa'al, jest cut off the top, and what's left will be the frustum. It's like a good many other words that puzzle a fellow, mighty simple when you study into 'em."

At this point conversation was interrupted by the

sound of angry voices below, and, going to the stairway, Captain Eph shouted:

“What’s happenin’ down there ?”

“It’s that ’ere Sammy,” Uncle Zenas replied. “He’s kickin’ up a terrible row out here, an’ I wish you’d poke your head through the window so’s to make him mind his eye !”

“What’s he doin’ ?”

“Tryin’ to get in, an’ I’ve got the door locked.”

“Why don’t you open it ?”

“’Cause he can’t come in till supper’s ready. He went amblin’ ’round the ledge gettin’ up his surprise, an’ now he’ll stay where he is for a spell.”

“I declare it does seem as if all hands of this crew had gone crazy since daybreak !” Captain Eph exclaimed as he went to the window.

Opening it he looked out for an instant, and then, his weather-beaten face convulsed with mirth, he said to Sidney:

“Come here, Sonny, an’ have a squint at Sammy. I declare he looks jest like a big grasshopper tryin’ to crawl up a blade of grass.”

After some difficulty, Sidney succeeded in getting a glimpse of Mr. Peters as he stood on the iron ladder in front of the kitchen door, pounding on it vigorously with his fist.

“Ahoy there !” Captain Eph cried as soon as he

could control his mirth. "What'er you doin', Sammy Peters ?"

"I'm tryin' to get in, that's what I'm doin' !" the first assistant cried angrily. "That pig of a Zenas Stubbs has locked the door in my face !"

"Go down an' 'tend to your surprise, Sammy," the keeper commanded. "Uncle Zenas allows that he's got jest as much right to rig up fool things as you have, an' it looks to me as if the only way was to hold on till he's ready to spring on us whatever he's got."

"How long will that be ?" Mr. Peters demanded angrily.

"Till after the light is started for the night, so he told me."

"An' where am I to stay all that time ?"

"Crawl inter the boat-house, if you can't do any better, for I allow Zenas Stubbs is standin' on his rights as the second assistant keeper of this 'ere light."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SURPRISES.

Uncle Zenas held possession of the kitchen, refusing admittance to Mr. Peters from without, and threatening Captain Eph and Sidney with severest penalties if they should attempt to descend, until the long beams of light from the lantern illumined the waters in the vicinity of Carys' Ledge, and then, flinging wide open the outer door, he summoned all hands to supper.

As a matter of course no one was greatly surprised, because, owing to the excessive precautions of the cook, the dwellers in the tower expected to see something very elaborate in the way of a supper; but they were not a little mystified as to how he had contrived to make so many different dishes with such raw material as was at his command.

It was "a reg'lar Thanksgivin' spread," as Captain Eph declared, and although the principal portion consisted of fish cooked in a variety of ways, the second assistant had found among the stores a sufficient amount of canned delicacies to relieve it of sameness.

Mr. Peters apparently forgot that he had been forced to spend considerable time on the rocks, when it was his desire to be inside the tower, and ate as if he had been deprived of food for many days.

“There’s no use talkin’, Uncle Zenas, you lay way over anybody I ever saw when it comes to cookin,’ an’ this ’ere lay-out is fit for the best king that ever lived,” the first assistant said approvingly, as he applied himself industriously to getting a full share of all that had been placed before him. “It’s growin’ cold mighty fast, an’ gives a man quite an appetite to loaf around on the ledge only about half dressed.”

“Don’t make any excuses because you’re eatin’ a good deal,” Uncle Zenas said as he gave the first assistant another portion of the broiled corned-fish. “I laid myself out on this supper so’s you’d take hold with a will, for it’s what you might call a party that we’re givin’ to Sonny.”

“He’s the one I was thinkin’ ’bout when I figgered out my surprise,” Mr. Peters added, speaking indistinctly owing to the fullness of his mouth.

“When’s that comin’ off ?” Captain Eph asked.

“I reckon it’ll be time when we’ve finished supper, an’ the sooner the better ’cordin’ to my idee, for if this nor’east wind ain’t blowin’ up a storm I don’t know anything about the signs.”

“It wouldn’t surprise me if we had snow,” the

keeper said with an air of wisdom. "It's late enough in the season for somethin' of the kind, an' this day has been what you might call a weather-breeder."

"I should think it would be snug and comfortable here in a storm," Sidney said thoughtfully, and Captain Eph replied:

"So it is, Sonny; but somehow a man can't really enjoy it because of thinkin' of the many craft which must be off the coast battlin' with it."

"Have there ever been any wrecks on this ledge?"

"Bless your heart, yes, Sonny. Many a vessel went ashore here before the tower was built, an' we've had a wreck close at hand twice since, though neither of the craft struck this ledge. If the weather is changin', as Sammy says, it ain't very pleasant to be talkin' 'bout what's likely to happen whenever the light can't be seen. Ain't it time for you to show up your surprise, Sammy?"

"I reckon it is, Cap'n Eph, an' if all hands of you will sit over by this window, I'll start the show."

"I wonder what it is he's got in his noddle?" the old keeper said curiously as Mr. Peters went hastily out of the tower to the ledge below, and Uncle Zenas declared that he "couldn't guess if he should try all day"; but Sidney cried gleefully:

"I believe he bought some kind of fireworks when we were ashore, for I noticed that the shop-keeper

had to hunt around a good while before he could find what Mr. Peters wanted, and you know how careful he was to stow the packages where they wouldn't get wet."

"I declare if Sonny hasn't hit the nail right on the head !" Captain Eph cried in delight, "an' there goes the beginnin' of his show."

It was evident that the first assistant had succeeded in putting up the framework of boards, for by the time Captain Eph had ceased speaking half a dozen small spinning wheels were revolving in a manner which told that they were fastened to something above the level of the ledge.

The display of fireworks was not as brilliant as many Sidney had seen ; but the two keepers cried out again and again in delighted surprise, thus proving that to them it was something very wonderful.

During fifteen minutes or more the exhibition was continued, and then, the last fiery serpent having wriggled its way among the rocks, Mr. Peters appeared in the doorway triumphantly happy.

"Wa'al, what do you think of it, Cap'n Eph ?"

"It's jest great, Sammy, great !" the keeper replied emphatically. "I'm wonderin' how you got the hang of settin' 'em off in that style."

"I've seen a good deal of them things, an' once I helped fire a big pile of all kinds. It's been so long

since I've had a Fourth of July, that I got to hankerin' after it an' on the way over I made up my mind that if there was any fireworks ashore left from last summer, I'd spread myself, jest to show how glad we are 'cause Sonny has come to make us a visit."

Sidney tried to say something which should express his gratitude for all that had been done for him by these kind-hearted old men, but, try as he might, it was impossible, and Captain Eph, seeming to understand what was in the lad's mind, cried heartily:

"Wa'al, Sammy, both you an' Uncle Zenas have done yourself proud on this day. I don't know when there's been so much excitement on Carys' Ledge, an' it pleases me same as it does Sonny; but we mustn't forget that we're hired to look after this 'ere light, an' it's time we turned in, else we'll get the watches mixed in great shape."

Then Captain Eph ascended the stairway, the others following, and ten minutes later it was as if Carys' Ledge had never been the scene of such bewildering festivities.

Greatly to his delight, Sidney was awake when Mr. Peters called the keeper to perform his share of the night duties, and as soon thereafter as he could make his toilet, the lad went into the room directly beneath the lantern.

"How the wind howls!" he exclaimed after

saying "good morning" to Captain Eph. "It really seems as if the tower was shaking."

"I reckon it does sway a bit, for we're gettin' what you might call a full-sized nor'east gale. Sammy was right when he allowed there'd be a change in the weather, an' I wasn't so far out of the way when I talked about snow."

"Is it snowing?" Sidney cried in surprise.

"Take a squint out of the window, an' you'll see the flakes comin' so thick an' fast that it's worse'n a fog."

Sidney did as he was bidden, and after gazing into the wreaths of the whirling particles which were revealed by the strong light from the room above, he cried:

"I really believe the waves are breaking over the highest part of the ledge!"

"If they are it won't be anythin' new, Sonny. Time an' time agin I've looked outer that window when it seemed as if this 'ere tower stood right in the sea, with never a rock showin' itself; but the surf ain't runnin' as high as it will be in the mornin'. Then, whether the wind dies away or not, you'll see the waves breakin' mighty near the kitchen door."

"But what about the motor boat?" and Sidney looked alarmed.

"Sammy called me after he'd been on watch a

couple of hours, an' we went down to see what could be done. She's lashed fore an' aft to the boat-house, but with all that there's danger of her bein' stove, an' we can't do anything to prevent it."

"What shall I do? What shall I do?" Sidney cried in distress, for it seemed to him that if the boat belonging to the *West Wind* was destroyed, the last link binding him to his father would be broken.

"There's nothin' you can do, Sonny," Captain Eph said soothingly, as he took the lad in his arms. "Out here we have to take whatever comes, without a chance of fightin' agin it. If your boat is lost you must try to look pleasant, an' thank God this 'ere gale didn't spring up before you reached Carys' Ledge."

The howling of the wind and the beating of the surf against the base of the tower made such a noise that it was necessary those in the watch-room should speak loudly in order that their words might be heard above the tumult of the elements. Sidney clung tightly to Captain Eph, with both arms around the old man's neck, for the danger seemed suddenly to have increased as he realized that they were beyond reach of earthly aid in event of any accident.

Never before had he understood how entirely alone were light keepers on an isolated station, nor how

ominous the howling of the wind might sound under such circumstances.

“Could the wind blow this tower over, sir?” he asked, and Captain Eph replied as he stroked the lad’s hair affectionately.

“Now don’t get anythin’ like that inter your head, Sonny, although I allow there’s reason for it. When I first came to Carys’ Ledge, an’ was standin’ watch on a night like this, it seemed certain the tower would go by the board; but after a time I made myself understand that it was almost as firm as the solid rock. Besides, not bein’ so big as to offer much resistance to the gale, I question if even a full-sized tornado could harm it.”

“But light-houses are sometimes destroyed,” Sidney whispered.

“Anything like that doesn’t happen once in a hundred years. I reckon you’re thinkin’ of Minot’s Ledge Light, on the Massachusetts coast, which was carried away in 1851; but in that case it was shown pretty clearly the mischief was done through the keepers’ disobeying orders.”

“Tell me about it, sir.”

“Wa’al, Sonny, I allow it ain’t overly cheerful talk on a night like this; but so long as it’s in your mind I don’t s’pose it’ll make matters seem worse if we go over the story. Nobody knows jest what time,

on the night of April 16th, the tower was carried away; but it's reasonable to allow it was done about high water, which was an hour after midnight. It was built on iron piles set into the rock, instead of bein' a solid tower sich as are put up nowadays. I've heard them as should know, say that keepers weren't held up to the rules an' regerlations as strict as they are now, an' them as were in charge of Minot's Ledge Light had built a platform well down below the livin' rooms, where they could stow anything which it might not be convenient to keep inside. Here's what the Government engineer, who was sent to look after the matter, said about it," and Captain Eph, opening a book which lay near him, read the following:

“ ‘ The keepers had improperly built a sort of deck or platform, upon which were placed heavy articles, such as fuel, water-barrels, etc., which should have been in the store-room, designed for their reception. The deck, in addition to the weight placed upon it, was fastened to the piles and braces, thus offering a large surface, against which the sea could strike.

“ ‘ In addition to this, the keepers had attached a five-and-a-half inch hawser to the lantern deck, and anchored the other end to a granite block, weighing, according to their account, seven tons, placed upon the bottom at a distance of some fifty fathoms from

the base of the tower. The object of this was to provide means for running a box or landing-chair up and down; but it is very clear that so much surface exposed to the moving sea had the same effect upon the light-house as would have been produced by a number of men pulling at a rope attached to the highest part of the structure, with the design of pulling it down.

“ ‘At 4 o’clock on Wednesday afternoon, the 16th, or ten hours before the light fell, the platform above mentioned came ashore at Cohasset. As this was forty-three feet above the line of low water, and twenty-eight feet above high water, spring tides, the sea had at that time reached within seven feet of the base of the store-room of the light-house. Without undertaking to speculate upon the probable shock that the structure must have received from the effect of the sea upon a platform fastened to the piles forty feet above the rock, it is enough to know that the sea had reached within seven feet of the body or solid part of the structure.

“ ‘ Still increasing, it required but a slight increase in the height of the waves, after having reached the deck, to bring it in contact with the main body of the structure. When this took place it is plain to perceive that such a sea, acting upon the surface of the building at the end of a lever fifty or sixty feet

long, must be well nigh irresistible, and I doubt not that the light-house was thus destroyed.'

"So you see, Sonny, carelessness had, 'cordin' to the belief of the Government engineer, a good deal to do with the loss of the light," Captain Eph said as he came to an end of the reading.

"Was that the only light-house ever destroyed in a storm, Captain Eph?"

"Bless you, no, Sonny. There was the Eddy-stone, off Plymouth, England. It was a fanciful sort of a thing, an' disappeared during a hurricane in the year 1703. The tower was rebuilt, an' in 1755 was burned, because there was a good deal of wood-work inside, which you won't find in light-houses built nowadays. That makes up the list of coast lights that have been destroyed, so you see we needn't bother our heads about anything of the kind happenin' here, for Carys' Ledge Light has stood against many a worse gale than this."

"But it shakes as if it was going over," Sidney persisted, and Captain Eph replied with a laugh:

"This 'ere tremble ain't anything compared with what I have felt, an' it'll be worse as the sea gets wilder, for—"

The old keeper did not finish his remark, for at that moment Mr. Peters' head appeared through the trap door, as he said sharply:

“It strikes me that a man of your age, Cap’n Eph, could be in better business than tellin’ stories about light-houses that have been carried away, to a lad who’s gettin’ his first taste of a storm in a place like this ! I wouldn’t have thanked anybody for spinnin’ sich yarns the first year I came on this ledge. We didn’t have a heavy sea in all that time but I expected the tower would go, an’ when a nor’easter struck us, I allowed there wasn’t any show of savin’ our lives.”

“I was only tellin’ Sonny of the Eddystone an’ Minot’s, to prove that a light-house what’s been properly built don’t go under in any kind of a gale,” Captain Eph replied, much as if apologizing for what he had said. “I’d like to know what you’re out’er bed for, Sammy Peters. It can’t be more’n half an hour since you turned in.”

“I haven’t been asleep anyway,” Mr. Peters grumbled, “an’ the reason for it is that I can’t help thinkin’ we might do somethin’ to put the motor boat in better shape. It stands to reason there’ll be a heavy sea runnin’ by sunrise, in which case there won’t be much chance of savin’ her.”

“I don’t know what we can do, Sammy, unless we should turn out the dory, an’ put her inter the boat-house, which couldn’t be thought of for a minute because it’s clean agin the rules an’ regerlations.”

“Of course you can’t do anythin’ of that kind. Cap’n Eph, no matter if Sonny’s boat is worth five or six times as much as the dory; but what about haulin’ her up between the boat-house an’ the tower? She’d be more sheltered there.”

“We couldn’t do the job without callin’ all hands, an’ I don’t feel as if I’d be doin’ right to take any chances jest to save property. The sea is breakin’ over the ledge already, an’ the rocks remainin’ out of water must be covered with snow an’ ice. Go back to bed, Sammy, for, as you know full well, we’ve got no right to stick our noses outside this night. After daybreak, if she’s still sound, we may be able to work somethin’ for her safety.”

Mr. Peters disappeared without further remark, evidently realizing that the keeper was fully justified in refusing him permission to leave the tower at such a time, and Sidney said half to himself as he gazed through the window, trying to prevent the tremor of fear from being apparent:

“It must be uncomfortable in a light-ship when the storm is so severe.”

“Uncomfortable, Sonny? There’s where you get danger! We’re snug as mice in here; but the poor fellows who keep a light-ship must have their hearts in their mouths at sich a time. In this ’ere report I found a little somethin’ regardin’ lights of that

kind, which seemed to strike the spot. Here it is," and the keeper handed Sidney an open book, from which he read the following:

"The purpose of a light-ship is to do the work of a light-house in a place where one is necessary, but where it has not been erected because of the great difficulty, not to say expense, of such a structure. To insure permanency of position is a matter of great difficulty. When moorings have been made too heavy to drag, chains have broken; when they have held, mooring-bitts have been torn out; when they have held, the ship has foundered at her anchors, or the cable has been slipped, and the ship has sought a harbor or gone to sea for safety."

"Is there a light-ship near here, sir?" Sidney asked as he finished the reading.

"One lays off to the east'ard about twenty miles. I've never seen her, because she hasn't been on the station more'n two years. I don't claim to be anything of a coward in seafarin' matters; but I never wanted any part of a light-ship in weather like this. Let's have a look around the lantern, lad. If a body don't feel jest right in mind, it's a good idee to move about a bit, instead of stayin' in one place listenin', for the wind does contrive to make some mighty queer noises."

After assuring themselves the light was burning

as it should, the two went down to the kitchen, at Captain Eph's suggestion, and there ate quite a hearty breakfast from that which remained of Uncle Zenas' feast. Then it was Sidney understood, even better than while they were in the watch-room, the danger which threatened the motor boat.

The waves were dashing entirely over the ledge, and now and then a heavy one would strike the base of the tower with a force which seemed to jar the entire structure.

"It'll soon be daylight, Sonny, an' then the storm won't seem so bad, even though it may be worse," Captain Eph said soothingly, as he noted the lad's start of alarm.

"Do you think my boat will be wrecked?"

"I'm obleeged to confess, Sonny, that the chances are agin her. It ain't likely much damage has been done yet; but it won't be high tide till eight o'clock, and then's when she'll get the worst poundin'."

The keeper and Sidney were yet sitting at the table when Uncle Zenas entered the kitchen, and Captain Eph cried in surprise:

"What sent you out so early as this?"

"There's sich a racket upstairs that I can't sleep; I was awake when you two came through the room. What do you say to a cup of hot coffee?"

"It wouldn't go bad, Uncle Zenas, an' that's a

fact, though Sonny an' me have had quite a bite already."

The cook built a fire, and the cheery glow went very far toward restoring to Sidney the courage which had oozed out of his finger ends as the tower trembled under the blows of the tempest.

"You two have been up in the watch-room till you're half frozen," Uncle Zenas said as he shoveled a generous supply of coal into the stove. "It has grown cold mighty sudden, an' I reckon Sonny will need his coat by the time I get it done."

"When will that be?" Captain Eph asked, hoping rather to turn Sidney's attention from the raging of the gale, than because he was eager for information.

"If nothing happens I'll take the last stitch in it by noon. I got on famously with the work while you were ashore."

Then Uncle Zenas, after having filled the coffee pot, brought out the partially finished garment for inspection, and before they were done critising it, Mr. Peters came down-stairs, complaining bitterly of the cold.

"It was lucky we went ashore yesterday," he said as he warmed his hands over the stove. "I reckon it'll be quite a spell before we make any more visits, or have any visitors."

Captain Eph was on the point of replying to this remark when suddenly, even amid the roar of the tempest, could be heard a dull, booming sound, so foreign to anything which the gale brought to their ears that even Sidney ran to the window in alarm.

The gray light of the coming day had dispelled the darkness in some slight degree: but the swirling downpour of snow was so great that it was impossible to make out the crests of the surges twenty feet away, yet all four remained at the window silent and motionless.

Then came that which they feared to hear—another dull report brought on the wings of the gale, and there was no longer any doubt in the minds of the keepers.

“God help ’em !” Captain Eph cried fervently as he began to pace the room nervously, and Sidney asked:

“Help who, sir ?”

“The poor wretches who are firin’ that ’ere gun with the idee that there may be some one near who can give ’em a hand.”

“Do you mean that there is a wreck ?” the lad asked, speaking in a tone so low that none save the old keeper heard him.

“Ay, Sonny. This ledge makes off to the east’ard

near half a mile, an' the craft, whatever she may be, has struck there."

"How can you tell without seeing her, sir?" Sidney asked, as if hoping to convince the keeper that he had made a mistake.

"In the first place, she must be there because the wind brings to us the sound of her signal gun; she might be only half as far away on the other side, an' we couldn't hear anything, owin' to the gale."

"She must be a large craft, else she wouldn't have a gun aboard," Mr. Peters suggested, and Uncle Zenas nodded in token that he was of the same opinion.

"I can't make out why any craft should be hereabouts in an easterly blow," Captain Eph said with nervous impatience. "It seems to me that any half-careful skipper would have clawed off shore at sunset, unless he knew his way as I do this 'ere ledge!"

"Don't you count on trying to do anything?" Sidney asked as the men moved nervously about the small room.

"That's what makes it so tough, Sonny," Captain Eph said in a tearful tone. "There's nothin' we can do, but stay here an' think of the poor wretches who are facin' death."

"Couldn't you go out in one of the boats, sir?"

"Bless your dear heart, Sonny, it ain't possible!"

The dory is the better sea-boat of the two, an' we couldn't even launch her, to say nothin' of pullin' up into the teeth of the gale."

"My boat doesn't need any pulling."

"She wouldn't be more'n an eggshell in this sea. There's nothin' but a life-boat that could do the trick, an' the nearest station is a good fifteen miles away."

Again the wind brought to them the boom of the gun, and Sidney covered his eyes with his hands as if to shut out the picture his fears had painted.

Mr. Peters went swiftly from window to window, although knowing full well that nothing could be seen from either. Uncle Zenas walked from the door to the stove, and then back to the door as if questioning whether he should not open it, despite the fact that every now and then a wave would dash against it, while Captain Eph paced swiftly to and fro, stopping now and then to listen.

"There ought'er be a fog signal with this 'ere light !' he cried angrily, and Uncle Zenas asked helplessly :

"S'posen there was ? It wouldn't help them poor fellows out any, an' I'm doubtin' if the best whistle that was ever made could have been heard a mile away to the east'ard."

"There'd be some little comfort in blowin' it to

tell the poor creeters we're here an' willin' to help 'em. If she's a square-rigged vessel, as I count she is, there's a chance of her holdin' together till mornin', an' we're got to sit with our hands folded, listenin' to their calls for help !”

Uncle Zenas ground more coffee to add to that which was already on the stove, and then tried in vain to set about getting breakfast ; but succeeded in doing nothing.

It was a positive relief to Sidney when the keeper finally said :

“ It's gettin' well on to sunrise, an' I'll go inter the lantern. Of course there's no show of our bein' able to lend a hand out yonder ; but yet it won't do any harm to be ready, so eat your breakfast as soon as it's cooked, Sammy.”

“ What about yours ? ”

“ I don't want any.”

“ Neither do I. Do you think a man could eat while that gun is bein' fired ? ”

Captain Eph ascended the staircase slowly, and Sidney asked timidly if he might be allowed to go with him.

“ Of course you may, Sonny. There's never any need of askin' to go with me, my boy, for I'd like to have you by my side every minute of the day or night.”

Not until the two were in the lantern did Sidney speak, and then it was to cry, as he burst into tears :

“ Oh, Captain Eph, wouldn’t it be dreadful if the wreck was the *West Wind*, having come out here after me ? ”

“ Bless your heart, Sonny, it couldn’t be her no-how, for she’s way down by Porto Rico by this time.”

“ But father might have heard where I was, and come back after me ! ”

“ Now don’t get any sich idees into your head as that, for your father don’t even dream where you are, more’s the pity. Why my report hasn’t yet reached the inspector, consequently there ain’t a single soul, outside of us four, who knows anything wreck was the *West Wind*, having come out here after about it. Did the *West Wind* have a gun aboard ? ”

“ No, sir.”

“ Then that part of it is settled. The craft that’s taken the ledge yonder is a heavier vessel than your father’s, so you can count him right out of your mind, so far as this wreck is concerned.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE WRECK.

It was not surprising that Sidney should have feared the appeals for help came from the crew of the *West Wind*, for even Captain Eph had questioned in his own mind whether such might not be the case.

If Captain Harlow had cruised around in the hope of picking up the motor boat, he was quite as likely to be in the vicinity of Carys' Ledge, as elsewhere, and not until Sidney had assured him that there was no gun on board the *West Wind*, did Captain Eph entirely dissmised the matter from his mind.

As a matter of fact, at that very moment Mr. Peters and Uncle Zenas were discussing such a possibility, the cook insisting that it was only reasonable to suppose Captain Harlow would stand off and on in the vicinity of where Sidney's boat had last been seen, until there was no longer any chance the lad could be afloat.

"Of course Sonny's father would know how much gosolene there was in the boat's tank," Mr. Peters finally said, hoping to convince himself that the appeals for aid had not come from the *West Wind*, "an'

he'd understood that the craft, if she was kept at sea, would be swamped mighty soon after the power gave out."

"I reckon you're right, Sammy," Uncle Zenas said with a sigh, "an' yet if yonder vessel is of any size, I can't make out why she should be near this ledge, unless it was a case of huntin' for something."

And as the crew of the light-house thus discussed the possibility that the signals of distress might have a terrible meaning for the lad whom they had learned to love so well, the new day came slowly, revealing a wind-lashed sea which rolled angrily over the ledge as if striving to compass the destruction of the tower, while a dense veil of fleecy particles, blown into wreaths and clouds by the gale, enveloped the light-house as by a fog.

Captain Eph extinguished the beacon light, and as he did so it seemed to Sidney that in some way the light keepers had deserted those who were battling for life amid the icy waters.

"The light can do the poor creatures no good, Sonny," the old keeper said as if he read the thought in the boy's mind, "for since daybreak they couldn't even see the reflection of it on the snow."

"And you haven't been able to so much as think how we might help them?' Sidney asked in tremulous tones.

“Look down on the ledge, Sonny, an’ say whether, even if it was possible to lend a hand, we could get outside ?” Captain Eph replied as he pointed to the window, and after the lad obeyed he drew back with a faint cry of terror.

The sea so entirely covered the rocks that nothing could be seen save the huge waves which broke into foam as they rolled over the ledge, or beat against the tower with a thunderous roar.

“I can’t even see the boat-house !” he said at length, and the old keeper replied :

“No, Sonny, there’s little chance of that at this time of the tide while the wind comes with sich force from the east’ard.”

“And my boat ?”

“I reckon you may as well count that gone, for she wasn’t built to stand sich poundin’ as she’s been gettin’ this last hour. Don’t feel bad, Sonny, for the best craft that was ever launched ain’t of much account as compared with a single human life. When the tide goes down we may be able to get outside, if so be there’s anything to be done ; but I’ve known of our bein’ shut in here by the sea a full week, with only now an’ then a glimpse of the ledge.”

Then it was that the boom of the gun could be heard, for the first time since the day broke, and Captain Eph said in a voice tremulous with emotion :

“They’re still alive, Sonny, an’ their vessel is holdin’ together, else it wouldn’t have been possible for ’em to fire the gun; but I ain’t certain as we should be thankful for it, ’cause it only means that they’ll be the longer comin’ to the end.”

“And you don’t think there is any hope for them?”

“I can’t see where it’ll come from, Sonny. Only the One who ‘holds the waters in the hollow of His hand’ can help ’em now,” and, flinging his arm around the boy’s shoulder, the old keeper prayed fervently that those who were in such sore distress might be comforted and upheld in their time of trouble.

Then it was that Mr. Peters came into the lantern, stepping softly as one involuntarily does in the presence of the dead, and began his work of cleaning the lens, speaking never a word, but looking out of the windows from time to time as if hoping he might get a glimpse of that which he feared to see.

On this morning Uncle Zenas did not call his comrades to breakfast from below; but ascended the stairway until it was possible to look into the lantern, when he said in a subdued tone:

“Everything’s ready when you want to eat, an’ I’m allowin’ that all hands had better have a bite whether they feel like it or not, for there may be work to be done on the reef when the tide goes down.”

“I reckon you’re right, Uncle Zenas, though it seems as if food would choke me,” Captain Eph replied as he led Sidney toward the stairway. “Come on, Sammy, we’re bound to go through the motions, if nothin’ more.”

Once while they were pretending to eat, the report of the gun was heard faintly, and Sidney shrank from the sound as if he had received a blow, while Mr. Peters ran quickly to the window, although knowing full well that nothing could be seen because of the driving snow.

“I never think I’d like to be in the life-savin’ service except at sich a time as this,” he said as he returned to the table. “Even if the crew can’t really do anything, there must be a good deal of satisfaction in makin’ a big fight for it; but to be shut in a place like this, knowin’ what’s goin’ on outside, gets on to a man’s nerves worse’n anything I ever struck. A hot battle ain’t a marker alongside of it.”

No one made reply, and when the pretense of a meal was at an end Captain Eph went back to the lantern, Sidney following close at his heels. There the old keeper and the boy did a great deal of unnecessary work in order to keep their hands employed, and at short intervals strove to peer through the blinding whirl of snow.

After a time, how long Sidney would have been

unable to say, so slowly did the moments pass, Mr. Peters cried from the kitchen:

“We can get on to the ledge now, an’ I’m goin’ to see what damage has been done.”

Captain Eph looked hurriedly out of the window to make certain the first assistant was correct in his statement, and then shouted:

“Hold on a bit, an’ I’ll go with you.”

“Am I to stay here?” Sidney asked wistfully.

“You can stay anywhere in the tower you please; I can’t let you go with us, for not only is the footin’ bad; but the tide hasn’t got down so far that a wave doesn’t sweep clean over the ledge every now an’ then.”

Sidney followed the keeper into the kitchen, and when they arrived there Mr. Peters was clad in his oil-skins, while Uncle Zenas was sewing on the coat he intended for Sidney’s use, as if his very life depended on finishing it within a short time.

“Now don’t do anything rash,” Uncle Zenas said warningly as Captain Eph began to put on water-proof clothing. “It’ll be a big temptation to make a try for the poor creeters; but you’ve been put here to look after the light, an’ if it didn’t burn to-night more than one ship’s crew might lose their lives in consequence.”

“We’ll be cautious, Uncle Zenas,” the keeper said

in a low tone; "but there ain't overly much need for your warnin', because I don't know of the least little thing we can do."

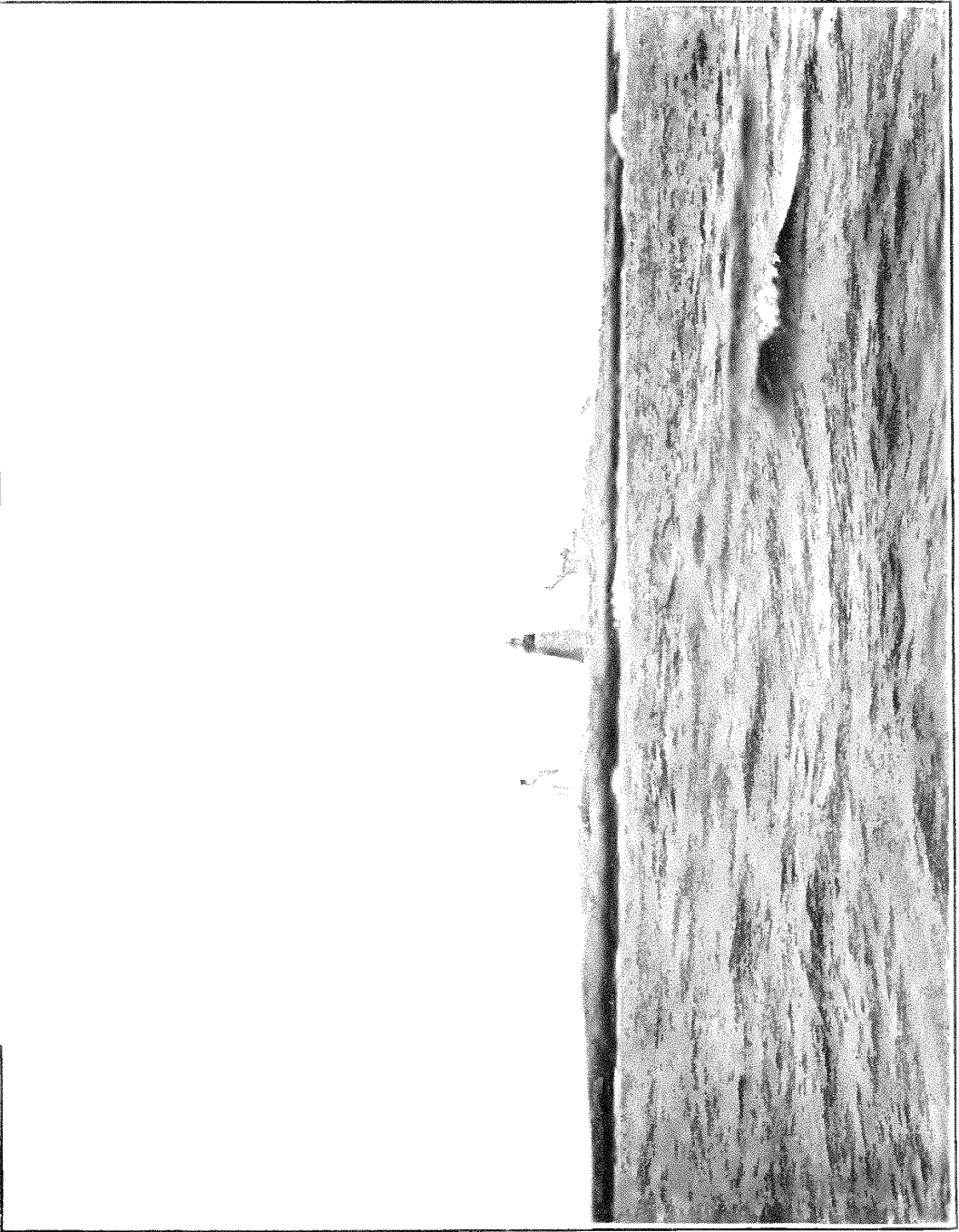
Then the kitchen door was opened, and on the outside of that a shutter of iron, which must have been put on during the night, since Sidney had not seen it before, after which Mr. Peters descended the ladder cautiously, followed by the keeper.

By looking out of the window, it was possible for Sidney to follow with his eyes the movements of the men while they remained near the base of the tower, and he understood by their gestures that the motor boat had been destroyed.

Then Mr. Peters opened the door of the boat-house, not without considerable difficulty, and the dory was pulled out until Sidney could see her bow. As a matter of course she was uninjured, because of being protected from the force of the waves; but she was filled with water, and this the two men removed by tipping her partially over.

At that moment the report of the gun was heard again, and Mr. Peters ran down toward the narrow cove where the spray was flung high over his head, standing there in a listening attitude while Captain Eph scrambled across the rocks to the western side of the ledge.

"I knew both them men had the same idee in mind



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when they went out, an' it didn't make any difference how much I said agin it !' the cook cried impatiently, and Sidney asked in bewilderment :

“ What do you mean by that, Uncle Zenas ? What did they have in their minds ? ”

“ The idee of tryin' to reach the wreck, if there was anything to be heard from the poor creeters after the tide went down so's they could get at the dory.”

“ Do you mean that they will try to launch the boat while the waves are breaking over the ledge ? ”

“ If they wasn't up to something of the kind, why would Cap'n Eph be prowlin' 'round here to the lee'ard ? ”

“ I can't see why that has anything to do with their trying to help the people who have been wrecked,” Sidney said in perplexity.

“ Why, he's lookin' 'round to see what kind of a chance he can find for launchin' the dory ! He's crazy, dead crazy ! Of course I know how wild he is at bein' obleeged to stay here idle when people are bein' drowned before our very eyes, even though we can't see 'em, for I feel the same way ; but he an' Sammy will be only givin' up their own lives in tryin' anythin' of the kind.”

It surely seemed as if Uncle Zenas had spoken no more than the truth. The sea was running as high as

at any time since daybreak, and Sidney could not believe that any small boat, however skilfully she might be handled, could live for a moment in such a swell.

Dimly amid the swirling snow Sidney could see Captain Eph as he crept over the rocks on the western side of the ledge, looked about him for a moment, and waved his hand to Mr. Peters, whereupon the first assistant began pulling the dory out of the boat-house. Then the lad cried to Uncle Zenas:

“They *are* going to launch the boat, sir. Mr. Peters is making her ready.”

“God help them an’ us, Sonny !” Uncle Zenas cried fervently, and he could have said nothing which would have caused Sidney more alarm, for he understood by the exclamation how dangerous the old man believed would be the attempt.

“Why don’t you coax them not to try it ?” Sidney asked tearfully.

“Because it wouldn’t be any manner of use, Sonny. Ephriam Downs is pig-headed when he gets his mind set on anything, an’ Sammy Peters ain’t far behind him. Besides, how can you blame ’em for wantin’ to make a try at it ? I’d rather be with them in the dory, if I wasn’t quite so fat, than sittin’ here thinkin’ of what may come to ’em.”

By this time Captain Eph had returned to the vicinity of the tower, and was helping Mr. Peters

drag the boat over the jagged rocks, a task which seemed beyond their powers, and yet it was finally accomplished.

Uncle Zenas had come to the window by the side of Sidney, and the two could see the keepers as they shoved the dory out into the sea where it was comparatively calm because of being to the leeward of the ledge. Then both the men, heeding not the biting cold and the sleety snow, stripped off first their oil-skins, and afterward all superfluous clothing, until they stood in their shirtsleeves.

“What’s that for?” Sidney asked excitedly. “They’ll freeze to death!”

“There’ll be some little chance of their swimmin’ ashore if they haven’t got too many clothes on,” Uncle Zenas replied mournfully, and then he raised his head quickly as the muffled report of the gun could be heard. “I’m proud of ’em, Sonny, proud of ’em! Talk about men being brave! I’ve wintered an’ summered with them two, an’ you can’t find more courage in the same weight of human bein’s than they’ve got!”

“But you believe they’ll be drowned!” Sidney cried, striving to prevent his voice from trembling.

“There’s nothin’ we could say or do, Sonny, to prevent ’em from goin’ an’ we’ll hope the good God will send ’em back to us, for I’d be a terrible lonesome,

useless old man if them two were taken from me."

Uncle Zenas wiped the tears from his eyes as he strove to peer through the falling snow while the brave keepers leaped into the dory, after shoving her bow from the shore, and Sidney literally held his breath in suspense as the frail boat was tossed high up on the crest of a wave, only to be seemingly engulfed by the next.

"She'll be swamped before they can get around the ledge !' the lad cried in an agony of terror. "Oh, why did they go ?"

"I ain't afraid but they'll keep her right side up for a spell, Sonny; but it's when they get anywhere near the wreck that the most dangerous part of the business will come in. Wouldn't you feel better if we went into the lantern ? I don't reckon we can see any more there; but it'll seem as if we could."

For reply Sidney ran up the narrow staircase, Uncle Zenas following more rapidly than one would have supposed he could have moved, and when the two were in the lantern the shadowy forms of the keepers could be seen as they toiled at the oars in what seemed like a vain effort.

In a very few seconds the snow hid them completely from view, but yet the watchers stood with their faces pressed against the glass, picturing in

their minds the dory and her brave crew as they saw them last.

“If — if — if nothing happens to them, how long before they ought to be back ?” Sidney asked in a choking voice, and Uncle Zenas replied in tones hardly more steady :

“That is what we can’t make any guess at, lad. It’s certain they couldn’t pull out to the wreck, against this wind, in less than an hour, an’ if anything can be done toward savin’ the crew, half a day may be none too long.”

Sidney strove in vain to distinguish anything through the snow wreaths; but yet he remained at the window until Uncle Zenas, straightening himself up as if with an effort, said slowly :

“It’s no good to stay here when nothin’ can be seen but the snow; I must be doin’ somethin’, or nobody knows what will happen to me. We’ll go down in the kitchen, where I can work on your coat.”

“I want to get the first glimpse of them when they come back,” Sidney said, reluctantly following the old man.

“Then don’t begin to look for ’em till later in the day; it’ll make you crazy to watch the snow-flakes while they’re whirlin’ ’round the tower at sich a rate.”

Once in the kitchen Uncle Zenas took up his work, sewing feverishly, and keeping his eyes fixed on the

garment as if he was afraid to look out of doors, while Sidney walked nervously from one window to another in silence.

When it seemed to the lad as if a full day had passed, the old man asked in a half-whisper:

“Do you reckon we’d better get dinner, Sonny?”

“I couldn’t swallow a mouthful. It seems as if I’d never want any more to eat.”

“That’s about the way I’m feelin’, Sonny, an’ perhaps it won’t do any good to force ourselves. I’ll make a big lot of coffee, so we’ll have plenty of hot drink for Cap’n Eph an’ Sammy when they get back. I reckon they’ll be more’n half frozen.”

“I only wish I knew they *would* come back!” Sidney said as if to himself, and Uncle Zenas cried with more of hopefulness in his tone than he had indulged in since his comrades went out:

“We’re bound to think they’ll come, Sonny. There’s no sense in dwellin’ on the dark side of things, an’ we’ve *got* to keep our spirits up. You shall help me build a roarin’ fire, for it ain’t any ways certain we won’t have half-drowned strangers here before a great while.”

It was a positive relief to have something in the nature of work to do, and Sidney obeyed eagerly, bringing coal from the odd cellar, shaking the ashes

from the grate, and brushing up the dust which had fallen to the floor.

When he went back to the window again it seemed as if he could see a dark shadow through the snow to the southward of the ledge, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that he could prevent himself from crying aloud.

“I won’t make a fool of myself by exciting Uncle Zenas about nothing,” he said to himself, and then he was positive the shadow rose and sank, as if on the waves.

“I believe I can see something,” he said softly, trying hard to repress any evidence of great joy. “There’s a shadow out on the ocean, and—”

“It’s our dory, Sonny, it’s our dory !” Uncle Zenas cried loudly, suddenly lifting the lad in his big arms and kissing him again and again. “Yonder’s a boat, sure enough, an’ it *must* be ours !”

“But if she should be—”

Sidney could not finish the sentence, and the old man cried excitedly as he ran to and fro:

“But she won’t be, Sonny. That craft is held straight on a course, else she’d be wabblin’ ’round. Get somethin’ on—Here, this coat is far enough along in the makin’. Get into it quick, an’ we’ll go out to bear a hand !”

“But what can we do ?” Sidney cried, now show-

ing quite as much excitement as did Uncle Zenas. "How are we to bear a hand?"

"They'll need some one to help 'em make a landin', whether there are passengers aboard or not! Be lively, Sonny, an' thank God that He has let Cap'n Eph an' Sammy come back to us!"

Neither Uncle Zenas nor Sidney were very well protected from the cold when they clambered down the iron ladder to the rocks; but it is safe to say that neither of them could have told whether he was warm or cold, wet or dry, as they stood on the ledge gazing with painful intentness at that dark line behind the snow which both believed to be the boat they were so anxious to see.

Then, slowly, the shadow took on form, until it was possible to trace the outlines of the dory, and an instant later a great cry of triumph went up from both.

There were four men at the oars instead of two, and a heap of something in the stern-sheets that might well be a human being.

"Just think of it!" Uncle Zenas cried, dancing to and fro over the icy rocks more like an insane person than a staid, elderly cook and second assistant of a first-order light. "Them two old idjuts have gone out when a man had no business even to walk the length of this 'ere ledge, an' saved sailors as were

drownin' ! There ain't another couple on the whole coast, never mind how young they may be, who'd dared to put off in this gale."

It would be well nigh impossible to set down all that Uncle Zenas said or did while he waited, unmindful of the falling snow or flying spray, for the coming of his comrades. Never for an instant was he silent or motionless, and it is extremely doubtful if he was aware of what he said or did; his joy was so intense as to have become a form of delirium.

Sidney, on the contrary, neither moved nor spoke during that time of waiting; but with pallid face, and lips compressed until the blood was driven from them entirely, he watched eagerly and fearfully the approach of the dory.

The little craft was laboring fearfully in the heavy sea, even though the wind helped her along, and the watchers could have some dim idea of what a battle the two keepers must have had when advancing in the very teeth of the gale, by the labor which was required now, when the most difficult portion of the task was virtually at an end.

Then came the moment when, having run across the southerly end of the ledge, the dory was headed for the western shore and the two watchers ran into the water waist-deep in order to lend a hand.

Save for the incoherent cries of Uncle Zenas, no

word was spoken until the bow of the little boat had been hauled up on the rocks, and Captain Eph leaped ashore.

His clothing was covered with ice; his hair weighted with snow, and his face so disguised by the mask of frost that even Uncle Zenas might have failed to recognize him under other circumstances; but he lifted Sidney in his arms, as if it was the lad instead of himself who had performed the bravest of brave deeds, and, kissing him again and again, said in a half-whisper:

“Thank God that I’ve got your face next to mine once more !”

“He has been good to let you come back to me,” Sidney said reverentially, and the greetings were at an end.

“Bear a hand, Uncle Zenas, an’ help get these poor fellows into the tower. Two of ’em are well nigh dead, an’ the others ain’t much better, though I reckon the work at the oars has done ’em a world of good.”

Then, and only then, did Sidney understand that the keepers had rescued four sailors, two of whom were huddled in the bottom of the dory as if life had already departed.

It was as if Uncle Zenas had the strength of half a dozen men. He lifted one of the unconscious sail-

ors in his big arms, as if handling a baby, and ran across the slippery rocks like a goat, depositing his burden in the kitchen and getting back to the dory before the second sufferer had been taken out.

“Leave him to me,” the cook said as he raised the sailor in his arms, literally forcing Captain Eph to release his hold. “I’m feelin’ so mighty good ’cause you’ve come back alive that I’ve got to do somethin’ out of the common run, or take the chances of bustin’.”

Sidney could do nothing more than help Captain Eph and Mr. Peters drag the boat across the rocks to the little boat-house, and when she was properly secured the three entered the kitchen.

Two of the survivors of the wreck were in front of the fire drinking hot coffee, while Uncle Zenas was stripping the clothing from the others, and the cook’s first words showed that he intended to take entire charge of the rescue from that point.

“Sonny,” he cried, “run upstairs an’ strip all the beds; bring the clothes here, an’ then help me rub these poor creeters down. Ephraim Downs, you an’ Sammy Peters are to get out of them wet duds jest as quick as you know how, an’ don’t you dare let me see you liftin’ a finger till you’re in dry clothes. I’ve had trouble enough about you this day, without your gettin’ all drawed up with rheu-

matiz jest for spite. You're enough to wear a man down to skin an' bones, an' I've come to that pass where I can't stand any more of your capers."

All was bustle and excitement during the next hour. Sidney tried to obey promptly all the cook's orders; but at times he became so confused as to hardly be aware of what he was doing.

The two survivors who had assisted in working the boat were in no need of care after they had been supplied with dry clothing; but it was necessary to rub the others vigorously before they showed signs of returning consciousness.

Within an hour, however, the rescued men were lying in the beds which had been made up on the floor of the kitchen, and Captain Eph sat in the rocking-chair before the stove, with Sidney in his arms.

"You're a brave man, Captain Eph," the lad said as he clasped the keeper's big, brown hand, "and I'm mighty proud of you."

"That's a good deal more pay than I deserve for doin' what little was in my power, Sonny, dear."

"Were all the rest of the crew drowned?"

"Ay Sonny, sixteen of 'em either froze or went under before we got there, an' two of these couldn't have lasted another half hour; but we won't talk about that jest now. From the time Sammy an' me started, I kept sayin' to myself that when we got

back I'd take you in my arms, as I've got you n'er an' hold you jest as long as you could stand it, for you're gettin' to be a good part of my life, laddie."

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CHAPTER X.

THE RESCUE.

Uncle Zenas grumbled because Captain Eph insisted on holding Sidney in his arms, instead of lying down to rest as it seemed he ought to have done; but to all his protests, uttered in whispers lest the rescued men who were sleeping on the floor be disturbed, the old keeper replied:

“I don’t need any coddlin’, Uncle Zenas, for what I’ve done this day hasn’t tuckered me out a little bit. Besides, I’m restin’ with Sonny in my arms, a good deal more’n I would alone in bed.”

Sidney had a vague idea that he was much too large a boy to be thus held as if he were a baby; but he made no protest against being thus petted, because it could be plainly seen that it gave the old keeper real pleasure.

After a short time Uncle Zenas proposed that the strangers be left alone, lest their rest be disturbed by the conversation, and the crew of Carys’ Ledge light went into the watch-room, where Mr. Peters had already built a fire in the small stove.

The storm raged as severely as at any other time

during the day; but to Sidney there was no longer any menace in the howling of the wind, while the beating of the snow against the windows only served to remind him how cosy and comfortable it was inside the tower, for with the return of the two keepers from their perilous voyage he had forgotten his fears.

“It doesn’t seem possible that you could have kept the boat right side up in those terrible waves,” the lad said at length, and Mr. Peters replied:

“There’s a good deal of difference between a dory and a boat with a keel, Sonny. In almost any other kind of a craft I’ll allow that it mightn’t have been possible; but it was a mighty tough pull at the best.”

“All it needed was a clear head an’ plenty of grit, Sonny,” Captain Eph added. “We were stripped down to it till we had to work or freeze, an’ so we kept her goin’, but more’n once I made up my mind that we’d have to turn back in spite of the hankerin’ to give them poor fellows a lift. Sammy ain’t overly fond of laborin’, as a general thing; but I must say he pulled away this forenoon as if he was a glutton at it, an’ time an’ time again it seemed as if he reg’larly lifted the dory out’er the water with his oars.”

“That’s when I was tryin’ to keep myself warm,”

Mr. Peters said with a laugh. "The hardest part of it for me was keepin' the snow out'er my eyes; twice they got froze up, what with the sleet an' spray, an' I had all I could do to pry 'em open without losin' stroke."

"Was the vessel where you believed, sir?" Sidney asked.

"Ah, Sonny. She'd struck the shoal jest as I allowed, an' had driven up on the rocks till the fo'-c'sle deck was well out'er water, else never one of the crew would have lived to talk about it. She was a big barkentine—nigh to a thousand tons, I should say—breakin' up mighty fast when we got there, with only four men left on deck, an' they so covered with ice an' snow that you wouldn't have taken 'em for human beings. They had a small gun, sich as is used for signalin', lashed to the capstan; but were past firin' it when we hove in sight."

"How was it possible to get on board?" Sidney asked.

"That was what we couldn't do, Sonny. The cap'n of the vessel was the only one able to give us any help, an' all we could do was to run down under the lee of the wreck, trustin' to their jumpin' aboard as we passed, for it stands to reason we couldn't hold the dory in any one place many seconds, except at the cost of havin' her stove."

“Now don’t you think, Sonny, that it didn’t need some mighty fine work to do what Cap’n Eph’s tellin’ about so quiet-like,” Mr. Peters interrupted. “There ain’t another man on this whole coast who could have done the trick, an’ I’m willin’ to confess that my heart was in my mouth pretty much all the time.”

“Sammy did his full share of the work, Sonny, an’ did it like a little man,” the old keeper said, continuing his story as if there had not been any interruption. “The first time we ran down, the captain of the wrecked vessel tossed one of the men aboard us, for the poor fellow was so far gone he couldn’t help himself. The second trip we got another passenger in the same way, an’ the third venture, which was nigh bein’ the last of our work, owin’ to an ugly sea catchin’ us when we were within four or five feet of the wreck, the other two men jumped aboard.”

“An’ by that time we had a full cargo, I can tell you,” Mr. Peters said, determined to relate his share of the story. “We had shipped a barrel of water while gettin’ down there, an’ when both the men jumped into the dory at the same minute, she had all any craft could swim under.”

“The two men who had life enough left in ’em to bear a hand, bailed the water out while Sammy an’

I pulled at the oars the best we knew how," Captain Eph continued, "an' when she was lightened a bit, they got out the second pair of oars. Of course the wind helped us mightily, when we was homeward bound; but at the same time considerable work was needed to fetch her in safe. That's all there was to the rescue, Sonny, an' I reckon Sammy an' I are feelin' a good deal better than if we'd hung 'round here listenin' to the gun without liftin' a hand."

"You're brave men, the bravest that ever lived, as Uncle Zenas said this forenoon," Sidney whispered, and Captain Eph looked up quickly at his second assistant as he asked sharply:

"What right have you got to fill Sonny's head with sich stuff as that, Zenas Stubbs? I've seen you do plenty of bigger things in front of Petersburg, an' never yet felt called upon to say you was so terribly brave!"

"It's nobody's business what I said to Sonny when you two idjuts was away," Uncle Zenas said snappishly. "I didn't tell him then what I will now—that you're both the most pig-headed, opinionated old shell-backs that ever wheedled the Government into appointin' 'em to the charge of a light-house!"

Having thus expressed himself so forcibly, the cook went down-stairs as if suddenly attacked by a

fit of the sulks, and Captain Eph whispered in Sidney's ear:

"Now wouldn't you think he was a cross-grained old curmudgeon? Wa'al, he ain't, an' his heart is jest as big as his body. It's what you might call second nature for him to tear 'round when we don't get into the kitchen the very minute he has the food on the table; but, bless you, neither Sammy nor I pay any attention to what he says."

"It's gettin' well on to sunset," Mr. Peters suggested, "an' I was so mixed up this mornin' that I ain't willin' to swear the work in the lantern was done 'cordin' to the rules an' regerlations. It won't do any harm to have a look at the lamp."

"Go ahead, Sammy, though I'm allowin' that we did our duty as keepers before we started out to help them poor creeters," and Captain Eph followed his first assistant, while Sidney kept close at the latter's heels.

So far as the lad could judge, there was no decrease in the strength of the wind, nor could he see anything to betoken the end of the gale, yet Captain Eph confidently announced that the "backbone of the blow was broken," and the weather would be fair next morning.

"I hope you're right, Cap'n," Mr. Peters said, as he examined critically the apparatus, "for it

ain't dead sure that we mightn't fetch away from the wreck quite a lot of stuff that would come in handy to us now an' then."

"That may be, Sammy; but the question is whether we'd get enough to pay us for pullin' the dory out there an' back while the sea is runnin' high."

Now, for the first time since the keepers returned from their dangerous errand of mercy, did Sidney think of the motor boat, and he asked concerning her.

"She's stove for good this time, Sonny," Mr. Peters replied, "an' if we hadn't gone ashore in her jest when we did, all my work would have been thrown away. I'm allowin' that you'd have hard work to find two of her timbers; but the motor lays there on the rocks in what I'd call pretty fair shape, considerin' how it was ripped out of her."

"I wouldn't waste many tears on her, Sonny, for, take it all in all, we've come out of this 'ere gale a good deal better than we had any right to expect," Captain Eph said, as if believing the lad would feel badly because his boat had been destroyed.

"Don't think I'd be so foolish as that, sir," Sidney said with a laugh. "Of course I'd rather we had her whole and sound; but she didn't begin to be of as much value in a place like this, as the dory,

and if we had put her into the house, taking your boat out, those poor fellows downstairs would not now be alive."

"That's the way to look at it, Sonny," Captain Eph cried cheerily. "Now we'll start the light, an' then be ready for Uncle Zenas' call. I reckon he'd expect us to come down when supper was ready, even if the kitchen was stacked full of half-drowned sailors."

As if in answer to the keeper's remark, Uncle Zenas' head appeared just above the floor at the head of the stairs, and he said in a hoarse whisper:

"Two of your shipwreckers are hoppin' 'round down there lively as chickens; but the others are still asleep. What 'ere we doin' to do 'bout supper?"

"I reckon we'd better have it the same as usual, Uncle Zenas," the keeper replied. "It won't do any harm if them as are still in bed get wakened, for they're likely needin' food as much as sleep."

"Then the sooner you get into the kitchen an' go to eatin' the better it'll be for me. I've got work enough on hand, what with sewin' an' cookin', without havin' the table in the middle of the floor all night."

"If a fat man who claims to be cook on this 'ere ledge would get off the stairs so's we could pass, them as have to do all the work while he's loafin'

'round might get their meals in better season," Mr. Peters cried as he attempted to crowd past Uncle Zenas, and the latter hurried down to the kitchen muttering as if he was beside himself with rage.

When Sidney reached the kitchen all the rescued men were awake, and their captain was introducing them to the crew of the light-house.

"This is Henry Clark, second mate of the barkentine *Nautilus*," he said as the man who had assisted in rowing the dory ashore stepped forward. "Carl Bragg and Thomas Cutler were of the crew, and are both able seamen. I was in command of the ship, and my name is Benjamin Nutter."

Then Captain Eph introduced himself and crew, including Sidney, and added when that formality was at an end:

"I reckon you're needin' somethin' hot to eat, an' the sooner you tackle what Uncle Zenas has cooked up, the better he'll be pleased."

The rescued men did not delay in acting upon what was a suggestion rather than an invitation, and instead of simply asking a blessing upon the food, Captain Eph offered a fervent prayer of thanksgiving because the crew of Carys' Ledge light had been permitted to save the lives of their fellows.

During the conversation which ensued while the meal was in progress, Captain Nutter explained that

his compasses were to blame for the wreck, since, had they shown true, the *Nautilus* would have been nearly an hundred miles to the southward of where she struck. Then, suddenly, he asked:

“Is that lad one of your crew?”

“Wa'al,” Captain Eph replied slowly, “we’ve begun to think he is, though I don’t reckon we can hold him with us very long. He came ashore in a fog storm—”

“His father is Captain Harlow of the schooner *West Wind*!” Captain Nutter cried quickly.

“Ay, that’s who he is,” the keeper replied in surprise; “but how do you happen to know it?”

“Because I spoke the *West Wind* two days ago. She had been cruising around in search of the missing boat, and was only just put on her course again when I met her. Captain Harlow asked me to have the fact of the lad’s being adrift in a motor boat inserted in all the leading newspapers, offering a reward to any one who could give information concerning the boy. He is bound for San Juan, and thence to Cadiz.”

It was only natural that Sidney should be in the highest degree excited and delighted at thus hearing directly from his father; but an expression of disappointment came over his face as he heard the keeper’s question and Captain Nutter’s reply:

“How long is he likely to be gone on such a voyage as that ? ”

“Of course very much depends upon the length of time he is forced to remain in port discharging and loading; but it is safe to reckon on its being ended inside of a year. In the meantime, as I understood him to say, his owners will advance whatever money the boy may need.”

“A year !” Sidney exclaimed ruefully.

“A year !” Captain Eph cried in delight, and Mr. Peters asked anxiously :

“Think you’d be able to stick it out on Carys’ Ledge that long, Sonny, or will you go ashore the first chance that offers ? ”

“I’d rather stay here than anywhere else,” Sidney replied ; “but if the owners of the *West Wind* are to pay for my board, perhaps they may claim the right to say where I shall live.”

“That is easily arranged if you want to stop here, lad,” Captain Nutter said. “Write a letter to your father, explaining matters, and there is no doubt but he will prefer that you stay where it may be the most agreeable.”

“But no one can say when I may be able to send a letter ashore, sir,” Sidney replied in perplexity.

“Get it ready, lad, and I will see that it is mailed without delay. The keeper will be so eager to rid

himself of four men, that, as soon as the weather permits, you will see us pulling to the mainland in the dory."

"He's right, Sonny; we're bound to set him ashore as soon as it may be done, an' I'll write to your father myself, tellin' him what we old shell-backs are willin' to do for the sake of keepin' on Carys' Ledge a little shaver whom we're mighty glad to have with us. Of course you'd rather go to him; but since he's arranged for you to stay ashore, I hope you'll want to stop with us."

"Indeed I shall, Captain Eph, and if we can mail our letters very soon, perhaps I may hear from father before he leaves Porto Rico."

"I allow it can be done without turnin' a hair. I'm predictin' a fair day for to-morrow; but with a heavy sea runnin'. Four an' twenty hours later it should be possible for Sammy an' me to make the mainland in the dory. It'll take the best part of to-morrow for me to write out another report as to the wreck, an' a letter to your father, so we'll be gettin' off about as soon as all hands are ready."

Way down deep in Sidney's heart was a feeling of disappointment because so much time must elapse before he could see his father; but the keepers were so delighted at the prospect of his remaining with them during the winter at least, that he strove to

hide his own feelings lest they might think he was ungrateful.

Despite the protests of the shipwrecked men, they were sent to sleep in the room used by the assistants. Uncle Zenas laid down a pile of blankets in the kitchen for his couch, and the same kind of a bed was made for Sidney in the watch-room, he begging for the privilege of remaining there during the night, to the end that Mr. Peters and Captain Eph might use the keeper's room.

The occupants of the tower retired at a very early hour, and Sidney slept so soundly that he did not awaken until after Captain Eph had been on duty a long while.

"Why didn't you waken me when you came up here?" he asked reproachfully, and the old keeper replied:

"I allowed it would do you more good to sleep, Sonny, for you had what might be called a hard day, an' needed all the rest that could be scooped in."

"It was you and Mr. Peters who had the hard day, sir. I did nothing but idle the time away."

"Stayin' inside was the worst part of the whole job, Sonny. If a man can work he's all right; but when it comes that there's nothin' to be done, he reg'larly eats his heart out worryin'. What are you an' me goin' to do from now till sunrise?"

“Suppose you tell me some more sea stories?”

“All right, Sonny, if that’s what you want, an’ I only hope I’ll always be able to satisfy you as easy. This’ll be a great year for me; but I reckon I’ll be a terrible lonesome old man after you go away.”

“There is no good reason for looking ahead so far as that, sir, for no one knows what may happen before father comes back, so we’ll get all the pleasure we can now,” Sidney said as he seated himself on the old man’s knee.

“You’re right, Sonny. It’s almost wicked for me to be thinkin’ of anything but the fact that we’re to have you with us nigh to twelve months longer than I thought yesterday at this time could possibly be the case.”

Then Captain Eph drew upon his memory for some of the wildest and weirdest yarns that were ever spun during a northeast gale, and the time came for extinguishing the light before Sidney realized that he had been awake more than half an hour.

The morning’s work was done, and breakfast made ready, while the survivors of the wreck were yet asleep, and Captain Eph would not allow Uncle Zenas to awaken the slumberers, claiming that it was far better the cook should do a little additional work, than deprive the unfortunate men of the rest they needed.

As Captain Eph had predicted, the storm subsided during the night, and before breakfast had been eaten the clouds were being driven eastward by the wind. The sea yet ran so high that the ledge was covered by the waves a goodly portion of the time; but all the crew were positive that within the next four and twenty hours it would be possible to make the trip to the mainland in the dory, even though she carried the four shipwrecked ones in addition to two of the keepers.

“Now we’ll go into the watch-room, an’ do our writin’, Sonny,” Captain Eph said as he arose from the table. “It may be a little early to begin; but we want to put down all the facts an’ figgers so that your father an’ the inspector may know what has happened, an’ there’s nothin’ like havin’ plenty of time when you’re writin’ out a long yarn.”

Before he had finished giving his father a detailed account of all that had happened to him since he left the *West Wind*, Sidney came to believe that Captain Eph was not far wrong when he proposed that the task be begun early in the day. The lad had the satisfaction of knowing, however, that he told a straightforward, connected story, even though the greater portion of the forenoon had been spent in writing it down.

Captain Eph did not finish his work very much

sooner than had Sidney, and when the two went down into the kitchen, they found the rescued men discussing with Mr. Peters and Uncle Zenas the incidents of the disaster.

The details of the disastrous voyage were related by each of the survivors in turn, and then came the question as to whether it might be possible to save anything from the wreck.

Captain Nutter was of the opinion that the *Nautilus* had already gone to pieces; but the crew of the light felt certain the forward portion of the vessel was yet held by the rocks, and Mr. Peters said decidedly:

“When we come back from the shore I’m goin’ to make a try for it, an’ if I bring away half a dory-load of canvas, I’ll count the time well spent.”

“I sincerely hope you may get enough to pay you for your trouble, and only wish I might be able to reward you for what you have done in our behalf; but with the *Nautilus* a wreck, I’m the same as penniless,” and the deep sigh which escaped Captain Nutter’s lips told of the sorrow in his heart.

“We wouldn’t take the value of a cent if you had all the money in the land,” Captain Eph cried emphatically. “This ’ere crew tries to do its duty by the Government, an’ when that’s been done, if we can work in a little overtime, like takin’ you off the wreck,

we feel as if we could look ourselves in the face knowin' we'd lent a hand when it was needed."

The serious tone which the conversation had taken did not please Uncle Zenas, and in order to change the subject he held up the coat on which he had been working, saying as he did so:

"Come here, Sonny, an' let me see how it fits. I don't claim to be any great shakes of a tailor; but I hope there's gimp enough in me yet to do a job like this in a decent manner. Of course Cap'n Eph will buy you what's needed, when he goes ashore to-morrow, but even then this won't go amiss to knock around on the ledge in."

Uncle Zenas had no reason to be ashamed of his work; he had made a sailorly looking garment out of Captain Eph's second-best uniform coat, and it fitted Sidney quite as well, if not better, than any which could have been purchased ready made.

"I allers said you was a master hand with a needle, Uncle Zenas," Mr. Peters cried as he surveyed Sidney in his new coat, with the eye of a critic, "an' here's the proof that I knew what I was talkin' about. Captain Eph may buy clothes for Sonny till the day of his death, an' he won't get anything that'll match this one for all-around goodness."

"I'll do better than that before Sonny has finished his year on Carys' Ledge," the cook said, vainly

striving to hide the pardonable pride he felt because of his work. "Jest now, though, it's my business to get dinner, an' if you people will go up into the watch-room so's a man can have a chance to turn 'round, we'll have some prime salt fish boiled, with plenty of pork scraps."

"So long's you've got your coat on, you may as well come with me an' see what's left of the motor boat," Mr. Peters said to Sidney, and since Captain Eph did not make any objection to the proposition, the two went down to the ledge.

The machinery was all that could be seen of the little craft in which the lad had spent so many wretched hours, and that was so badly rent and rusted that Sidney felt confident it could never be put in working order again.

"I'm not so certain of that," Mr. Peters said as he examined the motor carefully. "Of course neither you nor me could set it up, because we don't know how; but if it holds good weather I'm goin' to take it ashore, an' put it in the hands of some man who understands his business. If it's possible to get it in shape, I'll buy a hull, an' next spring we can knock around out here like a couple of swells, with our own yacht."

Sidney was not particularly elated by the promise, since he believed the motor was injured beyond re-

pair; but Mr. Peters was so confident that he talked of little else during the remainder of the day, and before sunset even Uncle Zenas had begun to speculate upon the possibility of owning a power boat, which might be housed on the mainland during the winter season, when she could not be kept on the ledge.

“You’re to stay with Uncle Zenas to-morrow, Sonny,” Captain Eph said while he and Sidney were in the lantern waiting for the moment when the lamp should be lighted. “I allow it’ll be a bit more lonesome than usual; but it’s better than knockin’ about in a boat that’s overloaded with six grown men.”

“I shall get along all right, sir,” Sidney replied in a cheery tone, although the prospect was not pleasing. “I’ve been wanting to know more about light-houses, and I’ll spend the time reading some of your books.”

“That’s right, Sonny,” and the keeper stroked the lad’s hair affectionately. “I like to see a boy try to make the best of everything, as you’ve done since comin’ ashore here. It ain’t likely I’ll be gallyvantin’ all over creation this winter same’s I’ve been doin’ these three days past, an’ we’ll have some prime good times after we’re shut in by the weather. Now what are you allowin’ that I shall buy for you at the store?”

“I really don’t want anything, except something more to wear, and of course you know that father will give back all the money you may spend for me.”

“He won’t if I can prevent it,” Captain Eph cried sharply. “It’ll do me solid good to rig you out in proper shape; but I do wish you was hankerin’ after gimcracks.”

“But I’m not, Captain Eph, and I’ll be perfectly contented here till father comes, for I’m a mighty lucky boy to have fallen into such good hands after floating around so long in an open boat.”

“Sunset, an’ time to start the lamp !” the keeper cried, looking at the watch he had been holding in his hands, and once more the light on Carys’ Ledge streamed out across the waters, warning sailormen of the treacherous rocks near at hand.

CHAPTER XI.

“SONNY’S” OUTFIT.

The inmates of the light-house were astir next morning very shortly after Captain Eph went on watch, because it was the desire of the keepers to start for the mainland at the earliest hour possible.

Uncle Zenas had insisted that they should leave as soon as breakfast had been eaten, declaring that he and Sidney could trim the lamp and clean the lens before the kitchen had been set to rights.

Therefore it was that the day had but just begun to break when the party was ready to set off, and Captain Eph said warningly to his second assistant when all were gathered at the cove, waiting for Mr. Peters to launch the dory:

“See to it, Uncle Zenas, that the light is shut off on the stroke of sunrise.”

“I reckon I know enough to run this ’ere place one day, without any extry lessons from you,” the cook said gruffly, and Captain Eph continued placidly, as if there had been no interruption:

“Remember that the lantern must be put in order before you get to work on the kitchen. It seems to

me as if we'd been a little slack in our duties lately, an' I'm countin' on keepin' a stiffer hand over this 'ere crew from now on."

"If you're goin' ashore, be off, an' don't try to teach your grandmother how to suck eggs !' Uncle Zenas cried as if in anger. "Unless I'm a nat'ral born idjut, I know as much 'bout this 'ere light as you do, Ephraim Downs."

"I ain't sayin' anythin' agin that part of it, Uncle Zenas. We'll all allow you know enough; but what worries me is that you'll get the idee inter your head that it's more important to fix up the kitchen first, an' I want you to keep sharp in mind that the cookin' part don't cut any figger alongside of the light itself."

"Anybody would reckon you thought the cookin' part was all in all on this 'ere ledge, if they could hear you growlin' when the meals don't jest suit you," Uncle Zenas cried, and perhaps he would have said more but for the fact that Captain Nutter came forward to say good-bye, and thank him for the hospitality extended.

"Don't say a word about it," Captain Eph interrupted. "It's mighty little we've done at the best, an' no more'n one Christian man ought'er do for another. If we could have saved your whole crew, then there'd be somethin' to talk about."

Each of the shipwrecked men in turn wanted to give words to his gratitude, as was only natural, since, save for the exertions of the keeper and his first assistant they would not have been alive; but Mr. Peters was as much opposed to being thanked as was Captain Eph, and the men went on board the dory after silently shaking hands with Uncle Zenas and Sidney.

“Don’t let Sammy linger ’round on shore any longer than is necessary!’ the cook cried warningly. “He’s been off so much lately that I’m afraid he’ll get it inter his head it must be done reg’lar, whether he’s got any business or not.”

“I’ll look after him all right, so you needn’t worry, Uncle Zenas,” the keeper cried cheerily, and then the dory was pushed off from the shore, the cook and Sidney watching her until she had rounded the ledge, heading a straight course for the shore.

“Now I reckon we’ll go inter the lantern,” Uncle Zenas said when it was no longer possible to distinguish the faces of those in the boat, owing to the dim light. “Cap’n Eph will keep his eyes on the light, an’ if it shouldn’t happen to die away at the very minute when the sun ought’er rise ’cordin’ to his watch, the chances are he’d make all hands come back to straighten us out.”

Nothing so serious as that took place, however,

for the light was extinguished at the proper moment, and then the work of making it ready for another night was begun.

“I declare for it, Sonny, you’re as handy with this job as if you’d been at it all your life!” Uncle Zenas exclaimed while Sidney was working. “You’re doin’ it a heap better’n Sammy ever can, even if he sticks on this ledge to the day of his death.”

“That is because I’ve been trying hard to find out just how it should be done,” Sidney said laughingly, but decidedly pleased by the words of praise. “You’ve all been so good to me, that I’d be a pretty poor kind of a boy if I didn’t do my best at the little jobs that come my way.”

“It may seem as if you was gettin’ the best end of the trade, Sonny; but you’re way off mistaken. We old shell-backs are the ones who’s havin’ all the fat, ’cause it brightens us up wonderfully to have you ’round.”

Sidney was at a loss for a reply to this remark, and changed the subject of the conversation by asking Uncle Zenas of what service a certain cylinder of thin brass, which entirely encircled the chimney of the lamp, could be in the general arrangement of the light.

“I reckon you’ve noticed that this ’ere light seems

to die away once in every forty seconds, eh ? ” the old man asked as he raised and lowered the cylinder. “ Well, this cover of brass is what does it, an’ the clock keeps it movin’. You see the clock is made fast to the brass cylinder, an’ as the wheels go ’round it is raised till the whole of the flame is uncovered, an’ then lowered till it’s nearly shut out. The whole thing is simple enough, but it took a mighty clear-headed man to think it up. When a vessel comes off this coast, an’ the cap’n sees Carys’ Ledge light growin’ dim an’ then brightenin’ up, he counts the number of seconds that go by from one bright flash to another, an’ says to himself, says he: ‘ That ’ere is a forty-second flash, an’ she’s about so an’ so off the coast.’ Then he dives inter the cabin, hunts up his list of lights, sees which one answers to the description he’s got in mind, an’ says to himself, says he: ‘ That’s Carys’ Ledge, an’ I’ll make the course a leetle more southerly.’ If that ’ere clock should happen to break down on account of not bein’ properly cared for, we’d have to take turns grindin’ a crank to keep the brass cylinder movin’ up an’ down ’cordin’ to the rules an’ regerlations, else there’d soon be another ship piled up on the rocks alongside the *Nautilus*. ”

By the time Uncle Zenas had come to an end of his explanation, the necessary work had been per-

formed, and he said with a sigh of satisfaction as he began to descend the stairs:

“Now I reckon we can be gettin’ at the serious part of the business ! It allers makes me feel lonesome to know that the kitchen hasn’t been set to rights, for that’s the first place a visitor gets into when he comes to the light, an’ he’s liable to judge everything by what he sees there.”

“There isn’t any great need to bother your head about visitors,” Sidney said with a laugh. “People don’t come out to this ledge every day.”

“True for you, Sonny ; but s’posen the kitchen was lookin’ like all possessed on that pertic’lar day ? I keep it put to rights as much of the time as I can, an’ then I don’t stand any chance of bein’ caught nappin’.”

Then Uncle Zenas went to work with a will, positively refusing all offers of assistance from Sidney, and, finally, the lad went into the watch-room, where he read about lenses and the refraction of light until he despaired of ever thoroughly understanding the subjects.

At noon there were no signs of the keepers’ return, but Uncle Zenas declared the dory would “heave in sight” within the next two hours, and proposed that they “have a bite to stay their stomachs,” deferring

a regular dinner until all the crew were together once more.

“I don’t want even a bite now,” Sidney said decidedly. “Do you suppose Captain Eph would be displeased if I carried the glasses into the watch-room ? ”

“Not a bit of it, Sonny. Use ’em wherever you please, an’ I’m allowin,’ if you keep a sharp look-out, you’ll see the dory inside of half an hour.”

Then Sidney climbed the narrow stairs with the glasses held carefully under his arm, and twenty minutes had not elapsed before he could see, far away in the distance, what looked like a toy boat manned by a miniature crew.

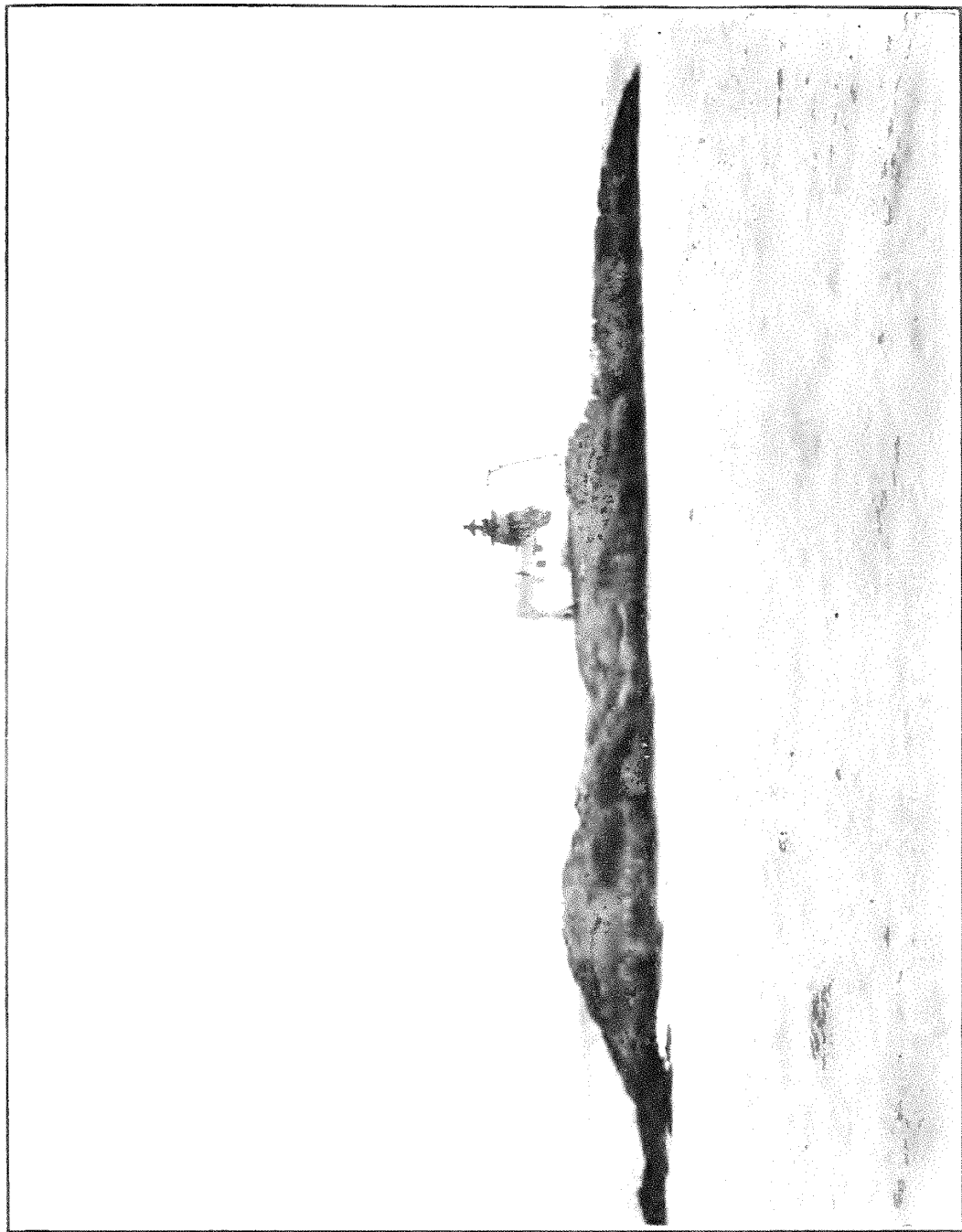
“They’re coming, Uncle Zenas ! They’re coming !” he shouted, and the cook replied:

“I reckoned it was about time they’d be showin’ up, an’ have jest put on the potatoes. Dinner’ll be ready when they get here.”

Sidney watched through the glasses until he could distinguish the features of both the keepers, and as he gazed Captain Eph waved his hand to show that he had seen the little lad in the window of the tower.

Then Sidney ran down-stairs and out on the ledge, standing at the head of the narrow cove as the dory rounded the rocks, while Mr. Peters shouted:

“I’ll tell you what it is, Sonny, we must have our



SADDLE BACK LIGHT.

motor boat in runnin' order before next spring, for pullin' a pair of oars when a man can jest as well sit still an' let a screw do the work is all nonsense. I've found a fellow who claims he can put your machinery in prime order for us, an', what's more, he's comin' out here to get it, when the wind hauls 'round to suit him."

By the time Mr. Peters had thus imparted his news, the dory's bow was on the ways, and Captain Eph had leaped ashore to take the lad in his arms as if they had been parted many days.

"Been lonesome, Sonny?" the keeper asked anxiously, and Sidney replied laughingly:

"No sir, though I was glad when you came in sight. Have you had a good time?"

"I was wishin' every minute that I'd staid at home an' let Uncle Zenas go; but I don't reckon it would have done any good if I'd coaxed him all night to take my place. He's kind'er shy 'bout knockin' 'round in a boat since he's growed so fat. We'll haul the dory up, an' then you shall see what I've brought in the way of an outfit."

Captain Eph had no more than ceased speaking before the cook called them to dinner, and in such a peremptory tone that the old keeper said hurriedly:

"I reckon we'd best put off seein' the things till

after we've pacified Uncle Zenas by eatin' what he's been cookin'. It does beat all how neryous that old man gets if all hands ain't ready to sit down at the table the minute he says the word, an' 'twixt you an' me, he's growin' worse every year of his life."

"Wa'al, Ephraim Downs, I hope this is the end of your gallivantin' for a good long spell," Uncle Zenas cried when the keeper and Sidney entered the kitchen. "It don't seem as if you'd been at home more'n one hour out of every ten for the past five days."

"I reckon you can count on my stickin' pretty close to the ledge till next spring," Captain Eph said in a soothing tone as he took his place at the table. "When this spell of weather breaks, we're likely to get it so heavy that there won't be a chance for an honest man to stick even the end of his nose outside the tower."

"That's jest the way I figger it," Mr. Peters added as he seated himself opposite Captain Eph, "an' so I've made up my mind to have a look at the wreck before sunset."

"Haven't you pulled a pair of oars long enough for one day?" the keeper asked in surprise, and Mr. Peters replied:

"I can't say that I ain't a bit tired; but it stands to reason the wreck won't stay on the shoal a great spell, an' I want to see her."

“What did you get for Sonny?” Uncle Zenas asked, interrupting Mr. Peters without the slightest compunction.

“We bought what Sammy an’ me both allowed was the proper kind of an outfit for a boy who counted on spendin’ the winter on Carys’ Ledge, an’ you’d seen the whole lot by this time, if you hadn’t been in sich a pucker for us to come to dinner,” Captain Eph replied, much as if he felt in some way injured because the meal had been served so promptly.

“The sooner you eat what’s set before you, the sooner we’ll see what you brought,” Uncle Zenas said sharply, and, thus admonished, Captain Eph asked that the food be blessed to them.

The meal was not prolonged; as soon as his hunger had been satisfied the old keeper went out to the dory for the several packages which had been stowed in the bow of the boat, and Uncle Zenas stood in the doorway that he might have the first opportunity of examining the goods.

It did really seem to Sidney as if Captain Eph and Mr. Peters had purchased twice as many articles of wearing apparel as he needed; but Uncle Zenas talked as if he thought they had been niggardly in selecting the outfit.

There were two full suits of clothes, neither of them very expensive or stylish, but stout and

serviceable; under garments, stockings, boots, oil-skins which were somewhere near small enough for him, and, what pleased the lad hugely, a sou'wester—meaning a waterproof hat—which fitted him to a nicety.

After the wardrobe had been examined critically by Uncle Zenas, who declared that he would be obliged to “sew up every seam, else they'd fall apart the first time Sonny looked at 'em hard,” Captain Eph unwrapped a large paper box, saying as he removed the cover:

“I know that little shavers are powerful fond of candy, so I bought what I reckon will last Sonny quite a spell. Leastways, here's all there was in the shop, so we couldn't have got any more, no matter how much he might have wanted it.”

“You must have as much as ten pounds there, Ephraim Downs, an' it's a downright shame to give Sonny that kind of truck when, if he wanted sweets, I could have made him plenty of wholesome molasses candy,” and Uncle Zenas helped himself liberally from the box.

“I reckon he'll soon be needin' the molasses candy if you're goin' in so steep,” Captain Eph said with a laugh, as he covered the box and placed it on a shelf behind the stove.

“What's to hinder Sonny from comin' with me

to see the wreck, now that you've showed up all the assortment?' Mr. Peters asked, and the old keeper looked inquiringly at the lad.

"I'd like to go, sir," Sidney said in reply to the mute question. "I have never seen a wrecked vessel."

"All right, Sonny; but I'm goin' along too, for I couldn't trust you alone with Sammy," Captain Eph cried cheerily, and Uncle Zenas grumbled:

"I knew it would turn out this way, when you went ashore with Sonny. You're gettin' a bad habit of roamin', Cap'n Eph, an' I'll count myself lucky if I find you at meal time."

"You'll reach me then, Uncle Zenas, so long as you have your tongue left," Captain Eph replied with a hearty laugh at his own wit as he went hurriedly out of the tower, beckoning Sidney to follow.

Not until the lad had put on the coat made from the keeper's uniform would the cook allow him to leave the kitchen, and by the time he gained the head of the little cove, Mr. Peters had the dory ready for the voyage.

With each of the men using a pair of oars, and Sidney in the stern-sheets steering, it was not a long journey to an outlying spur of Carys' Ledge on which the *Nautilus* foundered. The stern of the vessel had been carried away, and the timbers completely

shattered forward of the main-mast; but from that point toward the bow she remained comparatively intact.

“There won’t be much to take away, Sammy,” Captain Eph said grimly as Sidney steered the dory around the hulk that they might get a good view. “The cargo has been washed out clean as a whistle, an’ the decks swept till there’s not so much as a belayin’ pin to be seen. I don’t reckon you count on strippin’ off the forward riggin’ single-handed, eh?”

“I had an idee we might pick up somethin’ in the way of small timbers,” Mr. Peters replied ruefully. “We’ll be needin’ considerable of that kind of stuff for our motor boat, when we get at her.”

“I thought you had decided to put the motor in a dory?” Sidney said in surprise.

“That was what I had in mind till I talked with the machinist ashore, an’ now I think we may as well build a craft with a cabin, seein’s we’ll have plenty of time,” and Mr. Peters searched the wreck with his eyes for such lumber as he believed might be needed in order to carry out his newly formed plan.

“All the light stuff would have been in the cabin, an’ I’m allowin’ that a good bit of it will be washed up on the ledge,” Captain Eph said as he looked with a weatherly eye at the sky. “We’re goin’ to have the wind from the east’ard mighty soon, if signs

count for anything, an' then's when you'll get all the lumber needed for half a dozen boats, though where it can be stored for the winter beats me."

"There's plenty of room in the boat-house on either side of the dory. It won't do any harm to fill up that space, an' she'll lay more quiet when it's flooded," Mr. Peters suggested.

"We'll allow you're right, so far as that goes, Sammy, an' now if there's anythin' on the wreck that you believe is worth savin', shin aboard, for it's gettin' time we was back to the ledge."

Then Captain Eph pulled the dory in toward the wreck until it was possible for Mr. Peters to clamber on board at the expense of a thorough wetting, and while the keeper and Sidney waited in the dory, after she had been backed off at a safe distance, the lad said with more of decision in his tones than he ordinarily used when speaking to the old sailor:

"I was thinking while you were ashore this forenoon, sir, that if I am to stay at the light until father gets back, it's time I made a change of sleeping quarters."

"Is there anything the matter with the bed you've got now, Sonny?" Captain Eph asked anxiously.

"Nothing, except that it is yours, and I'm not willing to have you turned out any longer. I don't

need a room all to myself, and you do, so there must be a change."

"I couldn't be any more comfortable than I am the way we've already fixed things, Sonny, an' it would do me a world of good to know I was givin' you somethin' nigh as fine as you'd get ashore."

"Neither you nor I know how little I might have ashore, sir, and I sha'n't feel contented so long as you are kept out of your own room."

"How would it do if Uncle Zenas could fix up another bed there? It seems to me we'd be snug an' cosy then," and Captain Eph's tone was much the same as if he had been asking a great favor.

"Then it would be all right, sir. What I want is, to know that you have the same chance for sleeping as before I came."

"I'll get Uncle Zenas to see what can be done this very night. You shall have half the shelves for your own things, an' we'll make it look mighty homelike, unless I'm way off my reckonin'. Hello, you Sammy!" the old man cried, raising his voice. "How much longer are you goin' to fiddle 'round there?"

"I ain't much more'n got aboard; but if you're in sich a pucker to get back to the reef, I'll wind up business for the night, an' come alone to-morrow

mornin', when I can do somewhere nigh what I want'er."

"That'll be the ticket, Sammy. Come out here an' stop all day, if you like; but jest now I'd rather be where I'm paid for stayin'."

The dory was backed in as Captain Eph spoke, and Mr. Peters succeeded in boarding her without serious mishap.

"There's a good bit of stuff aboard that's worth savin'," the first assistant said as he pulled at the oars. "I reckon I'll make a raft of it, so's to get it ashore in one trip."

"Take what you like, Sammy; but don't forget that you've got a mighty small place in which to stow it."

Mr. Peters was so busily engaged in planning how he could care for the material which might be taken from the wreck at the expense of considerable hard work, that he was not inclined for further conversation, and no word was spoken during the return trip.

When, the dory having been hauled up on the ways and properly housed for the night, Sidney went into the tower, he found Uncle Zenas sewing on the clothing which Captain Eph had brought from the mainland, and he asked in surprise:

"Do you have to make new things over, sir?"

"Yes, Sonny, when they're sich slop-shop things

as these. A stitch here an' there now will save a world of trouble later, an' I'm lookin' to the future. Where are you to keep all this stuff ? ”

Sidney repeated the substance of the conversation he had so lately had with Captain Eph regarding sleeping quarters, and without awaiting orders from the keeper, Uncle Zenas set about making preparations at once.

“ I reckon you're both right about the bed, an' I know jest how we'll fix the thing to suit you ; there's plenty of time before I begin to get supper.”

“ But perhaps Captain Eph would rather hear about it first,” Sidney said timidly, as the cook began to ascend the staircase, and the old man halted suddenly as he cried :

“ Why, Sonny ? What does he know 'bout sich things ? He's helpless as a baby when it comes to the livin' part of keepin' a light-house, an' the more he'd say 'bout it the less we'd know what ought'er be done. I'll 'tend to this part of the business myself ! ”

Then the old man went up-stairs, and a moment later, when Captain Eph entered the kitchen, his first question was as to the cook's whereabouts.

Sidney explained how it had happened that he spoke to Uncle Zenas regarding the bed, and expressed sorrow because possibly he had interfered

with some plan which the keeper might have had in mind.

“Not a bit of it, Sonny,” Captain Eph cried with a hearty laugh. “You’ve saved me a world of trouble, perhaps, for if I’d said anything of the kind to Uncle Zenas he’d been certain to want it this way or that, an’ we’d had a heap of tongue-waggin’ before gettin’ the matter settled. Now he’ll go ahead in his own way, as he thinks, an’ the job is done.”

Half an hour later Uncle Zenas came into the kitchen to cook supper, when he announced that everything had been done in what he considered a proper manner, and, curious to see how it was arranged, Sidney at once went to the keeper’s chamber.

On the floor, in that part of the room where it would be sheltered from the draft of the stairway, was a rest-inviting bed with an ample supply of coverings, and the lad said to himself that now he could lie down to sleep knowing he was not depriving Captain Eph of the comforts which he absolutely needed.

“Got it fixed, eh?” Mr. Peters asked when Sidney came into the kitchen again, and the lad replied:

“It’s as snug as possible. Uncle Zenas has done the thing up brown.”

“That’s ’cause I didn’t have anybody standin’ ’round sayin’ it ought’er be done this way or that,” the cook said emphatically, and Captain Eph winked slowly at Sidney and Mr. Peters.

“Well, Sammy, what time do you count on startin’ for the wreck to-morrow ?” the keeper asked when they were eating supper, after lighting the lamp in the lantern.

“Jest as soon as we get cleaned up. I reckon I’ll make a good long day of it, for the chances are she’ll go to pieces mighty soon, if your prediction about an easterly blow comes out true.”

“I’ll do your share of work in the morning,” Sidney cried eagerly. “Then you can start as soon as it’s light.”

“There’s no reason why he shouldn’t,” Captain Eph said in answer to the look Mr. Peters gave him. “Sonny could take care of the light all by himself, if so be there was any need for it; he’s the quickest little shaver to learn I ever saw.”

“Then I’ll take up with his offer, an’ be glad of the chance,” the first assistant replied, and by this time Uncle Zenas insisted on knowing what it was Sammy proposed to do.

When Mr. Peters explained that it was his intention to save what he could from the wreck, with the idea that the material thus obtained might be useful

in the future, Uncle Zenas made most vigorous protest to the surprise of all. He declared that it was not safe for the first assistant to go alone, and insisted that if the work must be done, Captain Eph should accompany him.

It was useless for the others to argue the matter with the cook; he would not allow that any one person was warranted in venturing alone on the wreck, and begged that the keeper would refuse permission for Mr. Peters to leave the ledge.

“I sha’n’t do anything of the kind,” Captain Eph replied bluntly. “Sammy has got it inter his head that he’ll get a lot of stuff from the wreck, an’ if he’s willin’ to do all the work, I can’t see that I’ve got any right to stop him.”

Sidney believed Uncle Zenas was making a “mountain out of a mole-hill,” but before four and twenty hours had passed he wished most fervently that the cook had prevailed in the argument.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. PETERS' MISHAP.

On the morning after Mr. Peters had announced his intention of saving what he could in the way of timbers and rigging from the wreck, Sidney went on duty with Captain Eph, and instead of going to bed when his watch was ended, the first assistant remained in the room until the keeper asked sharply :

“What’s the matter with you now, Sammy ? Ain’t you goin’ to bed ? ”

“I want’er start for the wreck at the first crack of light, if Uncle Zenas will give me somethin’ to eat when he gets up, an’ there’s no sense in goin’ to the trouble of lyin’ down jest for a half-hour nap. I’ll turn in a good bit earlier to-night.”

“Have your own way, Sammy, but I’m afraid that you won’t get enough from the hulk to pay for the labor you’re puttin’ out. Why didn’t you speak to Uncle Zenas last night, so’s he’d kind’er stir his stumps this mornin’ ? ”

“He had his back raised so high because I was goin’ alone, that I knew it wouldn’t be any use, an,’ feelin’ kind’er warm as he was, he might’er said ‘no’

right up an' down," Mr. Peters replied with a faint smile.

Captain Eph did not continue the conversation, but turned his attention to the work of cleaning the watch-room windows, which Sidney had voluntarily taken upon himself, and Mr. Peters dozed in his chair until awakened by the movements of Uncle Zenas in the room below, which told that he was making ready for the day's work.

"I reckon I'll be off now," the first assistant said, going toward the stairway as if almost afraid to descend.

"Uncle Zenas hasn't built the fire yet," Captain Eph said carelessly, "an' it'll be a good half hour before the coffee is ready."

"I don't count on waitin' for anything hot," Mr. Peters replied as he began the descent of the stairs. "A cold bite is all I'm askin' for, 'cause the sooner I get away the better."

"If that was all you wanted, the wisest course would have been to got it without askin' leave of anybody," Captain Eph said half to himself, and then he tiptoed his way to the head of the stairs.

"What is the matter?" Sidney asked curiously.

"Nothin' as yet, Sonny; but I'm allowin' that Sammy won't find it all plain sailin' when he runs up against Uncle Zenas. The old man is pretty stuffy

when he gets a notion inter his head, an' for some reason or other he's dead set against our tryin' to save anything from the wreck."

Captain Eph had not yet ceased speaking when loud, almost angry conversation could be heard from the kitchen, and Sidney ran quickly to the keeper's side. It was impossible to distinguish any words spoken in the kitchen, however, and, two or three moments later, the emphatic closing of the outer door told that Mr. Peters had left the tower.

"Uncle Zenas wouldn't give him anything to eat until breakfast time, an' the poor, foolish fellow has gone off with an empty stomach, countin' on doin' a full day's work," Captain Eph said as he went to the window from which it was possible to have a view of the little cove. "I do wish our cook wasn't quite so crotchety !"

"Why didn't Mr. Peters take what he wanted from the pantry ?" Sidney asked as he joined the keeper at the window.

"Then there *would* have been trouble," Captain Eph replied as if startled by such a bold proposition. "It has taken me a good many years to find out that when Uncle Zenas gets reg'larly set against a thing, the most peaceable way is for Sammy an' me to give in at the start."

Then the two stood gazing through the window,

unable to distinguish objects clearly because of the dim, gray light, until Mr. Peters launched the dory, pulling out of the cove with a steady stroke as if to show that the loss of a breakfast was not sufficient to turn him from his purpose.

Half an hour later the lamp was extinguished, and the keeper and his young assistant set about the daily routine of making ready for another night. The work was considerably more than half completed when the voice of the cook sounded impatiently from the kitchen, as he summoned them to breakfast.

“This is one of the mornin’s when I reckon we can’t afford to loiter many seconds,” Captain Eph said grimly, as he began to descend the stairs, Sidney following close at his heels, and when the two were in the kitchen, the old keeper asked as if in surprise:

“Where’s Sammy ? Didn’t he hear you call ? ”

“He went off without his breakfast,” Uncle Zenas replied in a tone of irritation.

“What’s the matter ? ” Captain Eph asked as if wholly ignorant of what had taken place in the kitchen. “Ain’t sick, is he ? ”

“He’s pig-headed, that’s what’s the matter with him. He’s next door to crazy, countin’ on goin’ alone to the wreck, an’ I told him plainly that I wouldn’t countenance sich foolishness by givin’ him anythin’ to eat till breakfast was ready. Then he

rose right up in the air, an' started off empty-handed; but if he ain't sorry 'twixt now an' noon, I'm missin' my guess."

"Dear, dear, but I'm sorry!" Captain Eph exclaimed. "Sammy has got it inter his head that he can get enough from the wreck to go a long ways toward buildin' a motor boat, an' he'll work like a tiger, savin' stuff, never thinkin' that he stands a good chance of makin' himself sick by foolin' 'round while his stomach is empty."

Sidney fancied that he saw an expression of regret on the face of the cook; but decided that he had been mistaken, when Uncle Zenas said sharply:

"I ain't responsible for what he does in the way of foolishness, an' if it's his desire to go off before breakfast is ready, he'll have to take the consequences."

The keeper did not linger over his breakfast; as soon as the meal had been eaten he hurried back to the lantern, and, as a matter of course, Sidney joined him there without delay, the two working industriously and in silence until everything had been put in proper order.

Not until then did Captain Eph venture a remark, by saying as he looked toward the east, where could be seen a portion of the wreck:

"I'm allowin' that Sammy won't be able to put

in a full day's work. The wind seems to be haulin' 'round, an' before noon the sea will be runnin' so high that he can't do anythin' in the way of strip-pin' the hulk."

"Can you see him?" Sidney asked.

"Not without the glasses. Run down an' get 'em, Sonny. We may as well watch him, as to sit here twirlin' our thumbs."

The lad obeyed promptly; but no sign of the amateur wrecker could be seen, and Captain Eph said as he turned to gaze westward:

"The hulk lays in sich a manner that we couldn't hope to see him, unless he was aloft. Hello, here comes a cat-boat from the shore, an' it wouldn't surprise me a little bit if the tinker Sammy talked about yesterday was comin' after that 'ere motor."

Because it was the first time since he landed on the ledge that he had seen a sail coming toward the light, Sidney gazed at it eagerly, until Captain Eph said:

"There's no use strainin' your eyes, Sonny, for it'll be a full hour before she gets anywhere near, with this wind. I reckon we'd better go down to the shore an' see the motor, for it ain't likely the tinker will care about stayin' here any very great while."

"Shall we let him take it before Mr. Peters comes back?" Sidney asked in surprise.

“Why not? When a man comes as far as he has while a storm seems to be brewin’, it would kind’er be hard lines to hold him because Sammy was off wreckin’. We’ll load on the motor as soon as it can be done, an’ send him back while the weather is decent, else he might be on our hands quite a spell. People can’t get out here at this time of year jest when the fancy strikes ’em.”

Although the motor was not particularly heavy, Captain Eph and Sidney soon came to understand that it would be quite a difficult task to get it down to the cove where it might be put aboard the boat, for the jagged rocks presented most serious obstacles.

However, the old keeper set about the task with a will, and by the time the stranger had run into the cove the work was well advanced.

“I allowed that you’d be wantin’ to put about as soon as might be, owin’ to the looks of the weather, so Sonny an’ I have been at work gettin’ this ’ere thing where it could be handled. I reckon this is what you’ve come after,” and the keeper pointed to the motor.

“Yes, that’s what brought me out here, though I wish now I’d staid at home, for the wind is likely to blow pretty fresh before I can get back,” the machinist replied as he made his boat fast to the ways,

and began to make a critical inspection of the motor.

“ Well, what about it ? ” Captain Eph asked after it seemed as if the newcomer must have made himself acquainted with every portion of the machinery. “ Think you can put it in shape ? ”

“ Sure,” was the confident reply. “ It hasn’t been hurt any to speak of, an’ I can have it runnin’ in a couple of days. Where’s the man who made the trade with me ? ”

The keeper explained why Mr. Peters was absent and before he was at an end Sidney cried:

“ He’s coming now ; there is the dory ! ”

Both the men looked up quickly, and then it was that Captain Eph cried excitedly:

“ That’s our dory, sure enough ; but she’s empty ! Went adrift I reckon, an’ Sammy is in the biggest kind of luck because of his fiddlin’ ’round ’bout the motor, else he’d be likely to stay on the wreck quite a spell, seein’s we couldn’t go after him. Say, Mister, I reckon you won’t kick against pickin’ our boat up, eh ? ” and the keeper turned to the machinist, who replied in a not particularly cheerful tone:

“ Of course I’m bound to do that much, seein’s you’re in a pickle ; but I don’t like the idea of loafin’ out here any longer than is necessary, for my boat ain’t overly handy in a heavy sea, such as we’re likely to have precious soon.”

“Pick up the dory, an’ we’ll help you put the motor aboard before goin’ after Sammy.”

The machinist set off at once, refusing any assistance from Captain Eph, and ten minutes later he returned with the dory in tow. The boat was half laden with blocks and tackle which had evidently been taken from the wreck, and both pairs of oars were lying on top of the cargo.

When the runaway craft had been hauled up on the rocks beyond reach of the tide, and unloaded, the old keeper and Sidney set about carrying out their part of the bargain; but nearly an hour was spent before the motor had been stowed aboard the cat-boat to the satisfaction of all concerned.

While the visitor was working his boat out of the cove, Captain Eph said to Sidney:

“Run into the kitchen an’ get your coat. Tell Uncle Zenas why we’re goin’ out, an’ skip lively, for Sammy won’t have any idea the tinker was here jest when we most needed him, an’ will be in a terrible stew, thinkin’ there’s no way for him to get off the shoal.”

Sidney obeyed promptly; but it was necessary to answer Uncle Zenas’ eager questions, and fully five minutes more were spent before the rescuers could set off.

The cook came down to the cove before the dory

had been pushed out, and the expression on his face told that he was very anxious regarding the safety of the first assistant.

“ You ought’er started the very minute the dory was picked up, Ephraim Downs ! ’ he cried. ‘ It ain’t no ways certain that the poor fellow didn’t tumble out of the boat, an’ has been swimmin’ ’round ever since ! ’ ”

“ I’ll go bail that Sammy never tumbled overboard,” Captain Eph replied cheerily as he pulled the dory around until she was headed toward the east. “ He’s too good a sailor to do a trick like that ; but I reckon he hasn’t been any too comfortable in mind since the boat drifted away.”

Then, when they were beyond sound of Uncle Zenas’ voice, the old keeper muttered, as if to convince himself :

“ Of course nothin’ has happened to Sammy, beyond losin’ the boat ; but I do wish Uncle Zenas wouldn’t do quite so much croakin’. Jest because he was set agin the wreckin’, he’ll be conjurin’ up all sorts of terrible things that might have happened, an’ Sammy won’t have the pleasantest time that ever was, when he gets back.”

“ How do you suppose the dory got adrift ? ” Sidney asked, not knowing what else to say, and beginning to feel a bit nervous.

“That’s what beats me. I’d never thought Sammy could be so careless, but it seems that he was.”

Then Captain Eph pulled vigorously and in silence, Sidney steering to the best of his ability with one of the heavy oars, and the little craft rose and fell with an uneasy motion on the rising sea.

“There’s the wreck !” Sidney cried as he swung the dory around, and Captain Eph turned quickly to look, as he asked huskily:

“See anythin’ of Sammy ?”

“He must be under the forecastle deck working, and perhaps doesn’t know that the boat went adrift,” Sidney replied, as he searched in vain with his eyes for some sign of the first assistant.

There was an expression of deepest anxiety on Captain Eph’s face as he labored yet more energetically at the oars; but not a word was spoken until the dory was as near the hulk as was safe while the waves were running so high.

Then it was the old keeper shouted again and again at the full strength of his lungs, Sidney growing pale with fear as the hail remained unanswered.

“He ain’t there, Sonny, he ain’t there !” Captain Eph cried in a tearful tone as he turned toward the lad.

“But where *can* he be ?” Sidney cried in an agony of fear.

“The good Lord knows, an’ we’ll pray that He may guide us toward him!’ the keeper said as he raised his sou’wester reverentially. “It’s our business to find out what has happened, if so be we can. I reckon we’d best pull ’round to the other side of the hulk, an’ if needs be I’ll go aboard.”

“Are you afraid he may have got hurt, an’ can’t answer the hail?’ Sidney asked in a tremulous voice.

“There’s somethin’ wrong, an’ we’ll hope that he’s on board, with the breath of life yet in his body.”

Then Captain Eph swung the dory around, and, ordering Sidney to take a pair of oars, made ready to board the hulk on the northerly side.

“Pull in till I sing out, an’ then back water the best you know how,” he said sharply. “It’s a risky piece of business to board her with a lad like you at the oars; but I’d take bigger chances by a good bit, rather than go away without searchin’ this ’ere hulk.”

It was no more than natural that the lad should be frightened by the muttered words, and he was trembling violently as he obeyed the command.

“Fair an’ softly, Sonny!’ Captain Eph cried. “Don’t get worked up over what may all turn out to be the simplest kind of a simple matter, an’ keep your

wits about you. Now ! Back water for all you're worth !”

As he spoke the keeper had leaped for the shattered timbers of the hulk, and not daring to turn his head in order to see if a landing had been effected safely, Sidney threw all his strength on the oars, until the burden on his mind was lifted by hearing Captain Eph's cheery cry, which told that no accident had befallen him:

“Way enough, Sonny ! Hold her as she is a minute !”

Sidney did not dare venture to turn his head lest the wind should swing the little craft around where the waves might throw her against the hulk; but worked at the oars to hold her as nearly in one position as possible, until he heard Captain Eph cry again:

“Now pull in, Sonny; but stand by to stop her mighty sudden when you get the word. Way enough ! Keep her steady ! One more stroke ! Back ! Back the best you know how !” and at the instant Sidney put all his strength on the oars, the dory rocked to and fro violently as Captain Eph leaped aboard.

An instant later and the keeper was pulling the little craft around, while Sidney clambered astern to his former seat.

"You didn't find anything, sir?" the lad asked timidly.

"No, Sonny, meanin' that Sammy wasn't there; but he's left signs enough to show he made into a raft sich timbers as he could get at, which gives us the biggest kind of a hope, for I'm allowin' he was on the raft when the dory went adrift."

"Would he be carried out to sea, sir?"

"This wind ought'er sent him toward the mainland, an' it's in that direction we must look for him."

It was quite natural Sidney should suppose Captain Eph would set off on the search without delay; but to his surprise the keeper ordered him to steer for the ledge, and at the same time keep a sharp lookout for anything in the shape of a raft.

"Why are we going back to the light, sir? Do you think he may have drifted in there?"

"Not a bit of it, Sonny. He must have pulled the raft clear of the wreck, an' then, when well off the shoal, stepped on it to make some of the timbers fast. In which case the wind would take him clear of Carys' Ledge."

"Then why don't we pull in the direction you think he may have gone?"

Instead of answering the question, Captain Eph asked abruptly: "Think you'd have any trouble

in lightin' the lamp an' startin' the clock, Sonny ? ”

“ I could do that much all right, I am positive.”

“ Then I'm goin' to leave you in charge while Uncle Zenas an' I go after Sammy. It ain't anyways likely we shall be away till after sunset; but there's allers the chance; an' no one can say how fast his raft may be travelin'.”

“ You don't want me in the boat with you ? ” Sidney asked tremulously.

“ No, Sonny, an' for two mighty good reasons. The first is that it's goin' to blow hard inside of an hour, an' I'll need Uncle Zenas at one pair of oars. Then agin, the place is not to be left alone, no matter what straits we are in. Sammy would be the first to say we mustn't try to help him if it can't be done without takin' the risk of showin' no light at sunset. You'll be safe on the ledge, an' that's what I'm thinkin' about.”

The temptation to beg that he might go to the rescue with Captain Eph, leaving the cook to care for the light, was very great; but he succeeded in holding his peace, knowing that it was not for him, at such a time, to make any change in the plan the keeper had formed.

“ I'm allowin' we may have to pull eight or ten miles before catchin' the poor fellow, an' it'll be hard

work in a heavy sea, so Uncle Zenas must do his share."

It was not necessary to spend any time warning the second assistant of what had been learned. Uncle Zenas was at the head of the cove when they pulled in, and in the fewest possible words Captain Eph made him acquainted with the situation.

"Get in, Uncle Zenas. Sonny will take care of the light, if so be we're called on to go further than now seems likely."

"An' I sent the poor fellow off without any breakfast !' the cook said tearfully, as he clambered aboard the boat with a certain eagerness which told how anxious he was to have a share in the rescue. "If I had only been half-way decent when he asked for somethin' to eat !"

"Keep your upper lip stiff, Sonny !" Captain Eph cried as he pulled the dory around. "By stayin' to care for the light you're doin' a good deal more towards findin' Sammy, than if you went with us in the boat. You can watch us best by goin' inter the lantern with the glasses."

"Be sure to get your dinner, Sonny," Uncle Zenas cried in a mournful tone. "Everything is on the stove, an' what you can't eat had better be put back in the pantry. If I could only give poor Sammy his share an' my own with it, how relieved I'd be !"

By this time the dory was out of the cove, with both men at the oars, and Sidney noted, before turning to obey Captain Eph's command, that the boat was headed southwest, leaving the ledge behind her in a lively fashion because of the strong wind, which helped her along as much if not more than the oars.

Now that he was alone—alone on the ledge beyond sight of land—Sidney found it very difficult to keep the tears from his eyes; but he made a brave effort, and went into the tower to do as Uncle Zenas had bidden him.

He had no desire for food—could not have eaten a mouthful save after a real exertion; but the keepers would need it when they returned, therefore it must be cared for in such a manner that it would be appetizing.

By thus looking forward to the time when the searchers might return, Sidney provoked the alarming question as to whether they would ever come back. Captain Eph had predicted that a storm was near at hand, and even if they did not lose their lives, it was well within the possibilities that many days might elapse before he saw them again.

Then it was that Sidney gave way to tears, feeling as if he had been abandoned—left to die on the desolate ledge; but after thus yielding to his sorrow for

ten minutes or more, he resolutely put from him all forebodings, as he said aloud:

“ I’ve been left in charge, and if it hadn’t been for my being here Uncle Zenas couldn’t have gone to help Captain Eph pull the boat. I’m not a baby; but if I don’t mind my eye the keepers will have good reason for thinking I am one.”

Suddenly the thought came into his mind that he had missed the chance of watching the dory as it sped before the wind on its errand of mercy, and, running up-stairs at full speed, he threw open that window in the watch-room which gave toward the south.

The rescuers had made such good speed that he could barely distinguish the boat with the naked eye; but by the aid of the glasses he saw that both men were rowing strongly and steadily, as if knowing exactly at what point the missing man could be found.

Search as he might, it was impossible to see anything floating on the sea. If Mr. Peters had been carried away by the raft, it must have been at an early hour in the forenoon, otherwise it should have been possible to see him.

Sidney watched the rapidly retreating dory as long as it was possible to distinguish the forms of her crew, and then, with a lump in his throat which threatened to choke him, he went into the kitchen.

Here he cared for the food, replenished the fire,

swept the floor, and worked at whatsoever he could find for his hands to do until the room was seemingly as neat and tidy as ever it had been under Uncle Zenas' supervision.

It seemed to him that he must have been at work a full hour, and yet when he looked at the clock the hands were but ten minutes farther on their journey around the dial than when he began.

Again he went into the watch-room ; but now it was impossible to see even the dory, and he felt more forsaken than before.

Uncle Zenas was too good a housekeeper to leave very much work undone at that time in the day, and, search as he might, Sidney could find nothing with which to keep his hands busy.

With such a weight of sorrow in his heart he could not read, and he went to and fro between the lantern and the kitchen, hardly conscious of what he did. Again and again he searched the surface of the heaving waters with the glasses, but without seeing the smallest object which his fancy could shape into a raft or a boat.

When the clock in the kitchen struck the hour of four, it was as if his heart ceased beating, for he understood that even if the dory should come in sight immediately, it would be impossible for the keepers to reach the ledge before sunset, and he felt

positive they would never return. He would be the sole occupant of that lonely tower until the inspector found an opportunity of visiting Carys' Ledge.

The wind was increasing in force, as he could understand by the howling and shrieking around the lantern, while his eyes told him that the sea was running higher than at any time since the storm which had wrecked the *Nautilus*.

Suppose the keepers should return at the earliest possible moment—suppose the dory was even then headed toward the light? The men might not be able to make a landing on the ledge, and he could do absolutely nothing to aid them !

Five o'clock !

He went into the lantern ready to light the lamp at the exact moment of sunset. He was surrounded by the angry waters, which were creeping slowly but surely toward the tower, and there was nothing in sight to give him courage !

CHAPTER XIII.

A DISABLED CREW.

The tears nearly blinded the lad as he lighted the lamp, started the clock, and watched to make certain it was running smoothly. Then he raised the wick until the flame was of the same size as Captain Eph had said was required to get the greatest amount of light without danger of smoke, and, closing the door of the lantern softly lest the echoes should be aroused, crept down to the kitchen.

Here he lighted a small lamp; raked out the ashes from the fire, put on fresh coal, and then stood in the middle of the room asking himself if it was possible he could stay there alone all night.

“That’s a foolish question,” he said, speaking aloud as if to hear the sound of his own voice. “I’ve *got* to stay, because I couldn’t go away if I was willing to leave the light alone. It isn’t likely any of them will be back before morning, and I’d be ashamed to confess that I’d made a baby of myself at a time when it is possible to be of some service to those who have been so kind to me.”

It was as if this little self-lecture did him good,

for his face was brighter when he ascended the stairs to make certain the lamp was burning at its best.

Then back to the kitchen, where he put the dishes on the table so that a meal might be made ready quickly, if it so chanced that the keepers succeeded in gaining the ledge before another day had come. The coffee pot, full as when Uncle Zenas left it, was set on the back of the stove, and then he forced himself to eat a little.

“I’ll go into the lantern every half-hour till sunrise,” he said aloud. “There’s no danger I shall feel like going to sleep while I’m here alone, and climbing the stairs so often will take up just so much of the time.”

As he had said, so he did; but yet the hours passed so slowly that at times it really seemed as if the hands of the clock stood still. He tried in vain to read; but the words danced before his eyes, and he found himself listening to the moaning of the wind, instead of taking heed to that which was before him.

At eight o’clock it seemed as if the night must have passed, and from then until nine, each second was as a minute. It was hardly more than bed-time; eight more hours must elapse before a new day dawned, and there would be such a long, dreary time of waiting.

Then, suddenly, he heard what sounded like a hu-

man voice, and he ran swiftly to the door, but paused there, saying to himself it was foolish to allow such ideas to enter his mind, for none save the keepers themselves would come to that lonely ledge in the night, and it was not possible they had returned.

“Ahoy ! Sonny ! Fetch a lantern !”

It was Captain Eph’s voice, and with a shrill cry of relief and joyful surprise, Sidney flung wide open the outer door, letting the light stream out from the kitchen in rays of welcome.

“Hello Sonny ! Gettin’ lonesome, eh ? Bring the lantern that’s hangin’ behind the stove !”

It seemed to Sidney as if he had never been so clumsy before ; twice the matches went out before the wick was lighted, and when he finally succeeded, he had difficulty in shutting down the globe.

When it had been made ready he descended the ladder as rapidly as possible, not stopping for coat or hat ; but before gaining the rocks below the question came into his mind as to why all hands were remaining at the boat waiting for him to come with a lantern, when one could run her up on the ways without assistance.

“Did you find him ?” Sidney shouted as he scrambled over the jagged rocks, and Captain Eph replied mournfully :

“Ay, we’ve got the poor fellow.”

“What ?” and the lad stopped suddenly. “He isn’t— isn’t—”

“He’s alive, Sonny, an’ that’s about the best that can be said; but, thank God, we overtook him before it was too late.”

Now it was possible for Sidney to see the apparently lifeless form of Mr. Peters in the bottom of the dory; but before he had time for more than a passing glance, Captain Eph said softly:

“Now go ahead of us, Sonny, an’ hold the lantern behind you so we can see our way over the rocks. Walk slowly, son, for we don’t dare to hurry.”

Then Captain Eph and Uncle Zenas lifted with womanly tenderness the limp form, and the little procession crept over the ledge, giving due heed to their steps lest the unconscious man should receive yet further injury.

It was difficult to carry him up the ladder, and from the kitchen to his own room; but the task was performed after an expenditure of much time, and when he was lying on his own bed Uncle Zenas said, in a whisper:

“We’d better give him somethin’ hot first, Ephraim. If you’ll heat the coffee, I’ll get his clothes off.”

Sidney ran ahead of the keeper, rejoicing because he had made ready for the home-coming even

when it seemed impossible they could get there, and while Captain Eph was pouring out the coffee, he asked:

“What has happened to him, sir?”

“That’s what we don’t jest know, Sonny. We overtook the raft ten miles or more from here, an’ poor little Sammy was stretched out at full length on it as if he was dead, with the waves washin’ clean over him every now an’ then. It didn’t take us long to find that there was some little life left in his body, an’ you can make up your mind that we jumped it to the dory after takin’ him aboard, for the only hope of fetchin’ him around was to get back here. Uncle Zenas an’ I were feelin’ mighty glum, as you can well guess; but there was a big lot of gladness come inter our hearts when we saw the light streamin’ out from Carys’ Ledge, an’ knew that the little shaver we’d left behind was bucklin’ right down to duty.”

Having said this, Captain Eph went hurriedly up the stairs with the smoking-hot coffee, and Sidney said to himself as he put on the table such food as had been cooked for dinner:

“I’m afraid Captain Eph wouldn’t have said quite what he did, if he’d known how lonesome and discouraged I got because of being alone here on the reef.”

Not until nearly an hour had passed did either of

the keepers come down-stairs, and then it was Uncle Zenas who entered the kitchen, exclaiming as he saw the preparations for supper:

“ I declare for it, Sonny, you’ve done the work up in proper shape ! I wouldn’t have believed sich a little chap had it in him to look after things so well ! ”

“ Is Mr. Peters any better, sir ? ” Sidney asked, feeling more than a little ashamed because of being praised when he believed it was not deserved.

“ I’m hopin’ he is, Sonny. He came to long enough to ask how we knew he was adrift, an’ then it seemed as if he fell off to sleep. Cap’n Eph. is sittin’ with him so’s I can get supper ; but, ’cordin’ to the looks of things, it’s already got.”

“ Do you think Mr. Peters hurt himself in any way ? ”

“ It must be, Sonny, else he wouldn’t act so kind of queer. All Cap’n Eph an’ I can figger out is that he got squeezed in some way between the timbers of the raft, for it stands to reason he didn’t put ’em together very carefully. Oh Sonny, Sonny, if only I hadn’t refused to give the poor fellow his breakfast when he asked for it ! Somehow I felt last night as if it wasn’t right for him to go off to the wreck alone, an’ when he came down-stairs this mornin’ reg’larly achin’ to be off, I lost my temper, an’ that’s the fact. The worst part of this world is that after you

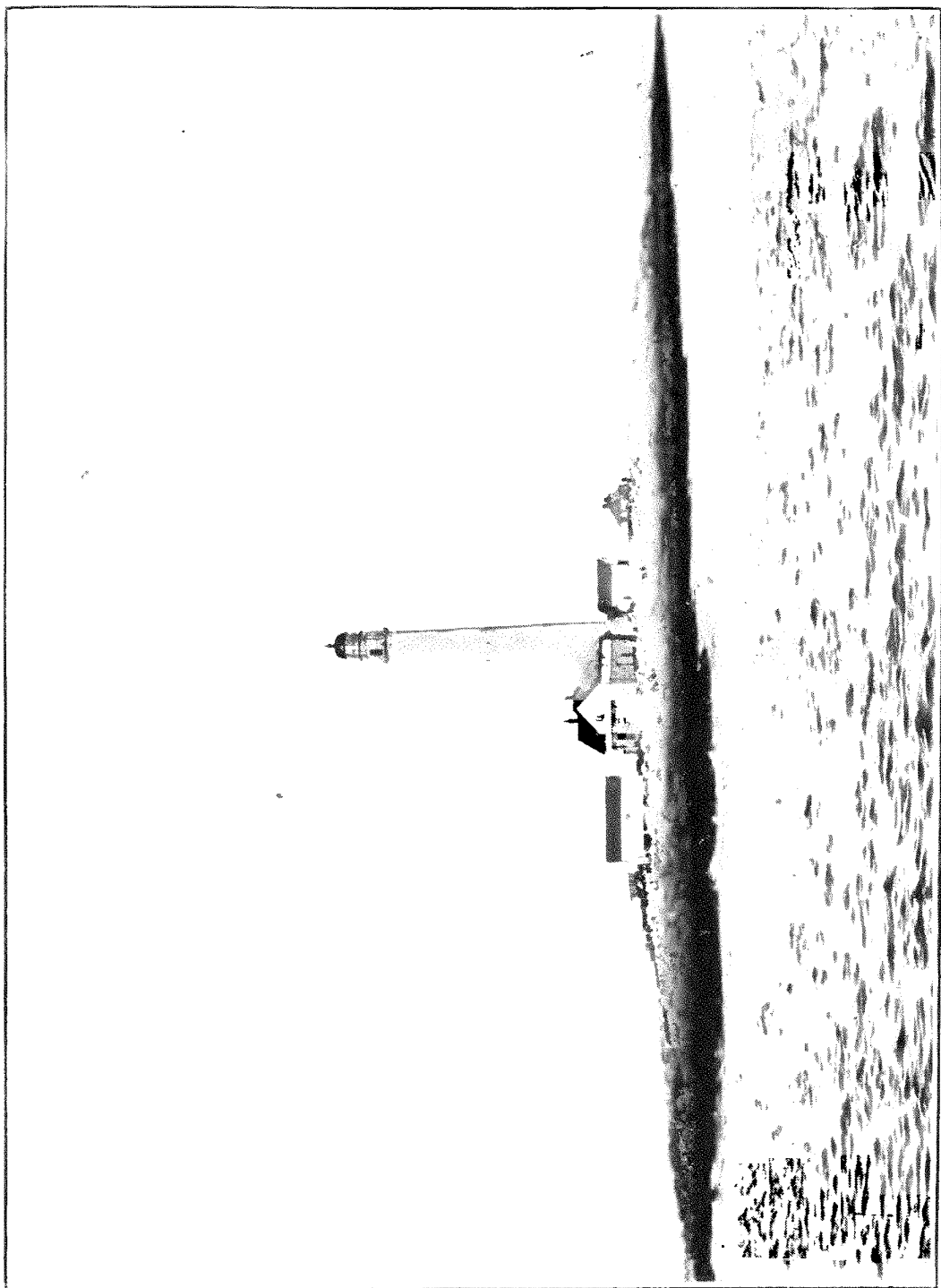
say or do anythin' that's wrong or mean, you can't take it back agin ! Jest as likely as not he'd be in better shape now, if he'd had a full stomach when he went away !”

Uncle Zenas paced to and fro as if in great mental distress, until Captain Eph stole softly down the stairs, and said :

“ There's no question but that he's asleep, an' I thought I'd get a cup of coffee, for I'm chilled clean through to the bone. Brace yourself up, Zenas, an' don't take on so 'bout the words you had this mornin'. I'll venture to say that Sammy had forgot all about 'em by the time he went aboard the wreck.”

Uncle Zenas refused to be comforted for some time ; but by alternately scolding and coaxing, Captain Eph succeeded in soothing him to such an extent that he finally ate supper, much to Sidney's relief of mind.

All hands stood watch during the night. Sidney felt positive he could not close his eyes in slumber if he went to bed, and Captain Eph did not urge him, understanding full well how the lad felt. Uncle Zenas claimed that it was his right, because of what had happened in the morning, to sit by the side of Mr. Peters, even though it might not be possible to do him any good, and thus it was that the



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crew remained on duty throughout the hours of darkness.

Shortly after midnight, when he and Sidney were in the watch-room alone, Captain Eph told all he knew concerning the accident.

“When we found Sammy it looked to me as if he was pretty far gone; but yet I took note of everything to be seen, with the hope of gettin’ an idee as to how the trouble came about. The top part of the raft was made of heavy timbers, which appeared as if they’d been thrown there the last thing because he’d seen that it would be jest as easy to take ’em along, an’ he was kind’er between the two biggest. Now it’s possible that in movin’ ’round he got jammed badly; but Uncle Zenas claims he tried to swim after the dory an’ over-worked himself, though I can’t figger it out that way, for if he’d started after the boat he’d most likely drowned, in case of strainin’ himself.”

“Hasn’t he said anything since you found him?” Sidney asked when the old keeper ceased speaking.

“Only after we got him into bed. He groaned now an’ then in the dory, an’ if it hadn’t been for that we’d never been able to make out whether he was dead or alive. Was you lonesome here all by yourself, Sonny?”

“Yes, sir, and I made a fool of myself by crying

at first. When I got over that it seemed as if the minutes were as long as hours, and I wondered how I would get through the night. The worst of it all was that I didn't believe you could get back to-night, and I knew if a storm came you wouldn't be able to land on the ledge."

"We'll get the storm all right, Sonny, more's the pity, for I made up my mind I'd go ashore for a doctor, providin' Sammy wasn't actin' any different by mornin', if the weather was sich that a boat would live from here to the mainland an' back."

The conversation was interrupted at this point by Uncle Zenas, who came to report that Mr. Peters had opened his eyes, swallowed a few mouthfuls of coffee, and then, apparently, sank into deep slumber again.

"I don't like the looks of it," Captain Eph muttered as he rose to his feet. "If we only knew what had happened, there'd be some chance of doctorin' him up from the medicine chest. Let's take another squint at him, Uncle Zenas."

Sidney was left alone in the watch-room while the keepers visited the patient, and he improved the opportunity by making certain the lamp was burning brightly, smiling despite his grief as he did so, for either he or one of the keepers had gone into the lantern every ten minutes since Mr. Peters had been put to bed, whereas, under ordinary circumstances,

it was not considered necessary to look at it oftener than once every hour.

Shortly after midnight Uncle Zenas prepared a hearty meal, what he called "a little snack," and for the first time since breakfast did Sidney feel any desire for food.

It was not yet daylight when the storm broke, not furiously, but with sufficient force to lash the waves into foam, and Captain Eph said with the air of one who considers himself a weather prophet:

"I'd rather seen it come on blusterin', for then there'd be a chance of blowin' itself out quickly; but this one will hang on quite a spell, an' I don't see that Sammy is gettin' any better."

There was no change in the invalid at sunrise next morning, save that he awakened oftener; but he either could not or would not answer the questions which were asked of him, and Captain Eph pored over his "Medical Suggestions" in vain for that which might give any light on the matter.

Sidney sat by Mr. Peters' bedside while Uncle Zenas cooked breakfast and Captain Eph put the lantern in order, and once he fancied the invalid looked up and smiled faintly; but the glance of recognition, if there had been one, faded away so quickly that he could not be positive it was a reality.

After the morning tasks had been performed, and

the sick man was left alone while the others ate breakfast, Captain Eph said:

“It stands to reason that somebody must stay with Sammy a good part of the time till he gets better, so we’d better have reg’lar watches, ’cause we’re bound to get our sleep. Of course Uncle Zenas must be in the kitchen an hour or more every mornin’. At night, whoever is on duty will be with the poor fellow, for he can be left long enough at a time to allow a flyin’ visit to the light—”

“Put Sonny in Sammy’s place, an’ keep the watches goin’ by day the same as by night,” Uncle Zenas interrupted, and thus it was settled, Captain Eph agreeing to stand his first trick in the invalid’s room as soon as he finished breakfast.

The old keeper did not spend any more time in the kitchen than was absolutely necessary; but hurried up-stairs even before his breakfast was really at an end, for he took a cup of coffee with him, saying as he did so:

“I don’t feel jest right about leavin’ Sammy alone so long, an’ I’ll drink this ’ere in his room.”

“Why don’t you try to get a little sleep, Sonny?” Uncle Zenas asked when he was alone with the lad, and the latter replied:

“I don’t feel sleepy now, sir. Let me do what I can down here, so you’ll be ready to take a turn at

watching, and the minute my eyes grow heavy, I'll go to bed."

"It's astonishin' what a difference tthere is in boys," the cook said half to himself when Sidney began to sweep the floor. "I allers allowed that I'd never rest easy with one under foot, an' yet this little shaver does his share of the work like a man. I reckon, Sonny," he added, raising his voice a trifle, "that I may as well make a batch of doughnuts while I've got the chance, for there's no tellin' when I'll have so much time on my hands. If it so be you're willin', s'posen you wash the dishes?"

Sidney was not only willing, but eager, to do a full share of the work, and Uncle Zenas began his task by putting on the stove a kettle in which was a goodly quantity of lard, after which he set about mixing the dough.

The two worked in silence until the cook suddenly exclaimed, as if his mind had been wandering to other subjects than that of the task on hand:

"I declare if that fat ain't boilin', an' I'm not half ready to use it."

Rising to his feet after his own clumsy fashion, he lifted the kettle of hot lard, intending to take it off the stove, when Captain Eph shouted from the head of the stairs in a voice somewhat resembling distant thunder:

“Glory be to God ! Glory be to God ! Sammy is sittin’ up as pert as a chicken !”

Uncle Zenas started violently at the first outcry, but as the welcome tidings came to his ears he half-turned to replace the kettle on the stove, when his knee struck the open oven-door with such force that he lurched forward, uttering an exclamation of pain, and in a twinkling the old man was on the floor with the kettle of fat uppermost upon him.

Sidney heard a shrill cry of mingled fear and pain, and, turning quickly, saw that which terrified him, for he knew full well Uncle Zenas must be seriously burned.

Before there was time for the lad to speak, or even make the slightest move toward offering assistance, that portion of the boiling lard which had been spilled upon the stove burst into a flame, and instantly it was as if the entire kitchen was ablaze.

“Help ! Captain Eph ! Everything is on fire, and Uncle Zenas is burnin’ to death !”

Fortunately Sidney remembered that water would be of no avail at such a time, and even while crying for help he caught up his coat which the cook had made for him, and threw it over Uncle Zenas.

At the same moment Captain Eph began to descend the iron stairs at the best possible speed, and, on arriving at the landing immediately over the kitchen,

saw that which caused him to believe the disaster was fully as great as Sidney had announced. In his eagerness he leaped, his feet struck the stair midway from the bottom, and down he came like a log, lying motionless on the floor as if he had been killed.

“He’s dead ! He’s dead !” Sidney screamed involuntarily in an agony of terror ; but instinctively continuing his efforts to extinguish the flames which seemingly enveloped Uncle Zenas.

Then occurred that which at any other time would have frightened the lad, even more than the apparently fatal series of accidents ; but which in his terror seemed no more than the natural sequence of events.

Mr. Peters, clad only in his under-clothes, came down the stairs so rapidly that it seemed as if he was sliding instead of running, and as he appeared Captain Eph staggered to his feet ; but only to fall back upon the floor again with a shrill cry of pain.

Hanging on the wall of the kitchen were the outer garments which Captain Eph and Uncle Zenas had worn when they went in search of the raft, and, gathering these in his arms, Mr. Peters threw them over the prostrate cook, smothering the flames, after which he dragged him, with no little difficulty, away from the stove.

Sidney was doing all in his power to check the fire

which rapidly crept out over the floor, and Mr. Peters shouted as he thus rescued Uncle Zenas:

“The flour ! The flour, Sonny ! Throw it over the fat !”

The pan in which Uncle Zenas had been mixing the dough was close at hand, and Sidney flung its contents upon the blaze, the sweet, sticky stuff acting like a blanket on the burning fat, but sending forth dense, stifling clouds of smoke.

Delaying only sufficiently long to make certain that the cook was no longer in danger of being burned to death, Mr. Peters ran swiftly to the head of the stairs, closed the door in the floor, and then darted back to open the windows lest all hands be suffocated.

In the meanwhile Captain Eph had made several vain efforts to rise, but each time his left leg bent under him, causing such agony of pain that he could not repress deep groans, which frightened Sidney almost as much as had the fire.

“What is the matter ?” the lad cried tremulously, as he knelt by the side of the keeper, giving no further heed to the possibility that the tower might soon be in flames.

“I don’t know whether my leg is broken or not,” the old man replied as he strove to prevent any sign of suffering from escaping his lips. “Don’t spend

your time on me, Sonny, but fight the fire, else we're all likely to be burned alive !”

Until this moment Uncle Zenas had not spoken ; but continued to roll over and over on the floor as if suffering severely, and Mr. Peters devoted all his attention to him. Now when Captain Eph gave a decided command, the first assistant set about obeying it, and, with Sidney, labored feverishly to extinguish the flames which had already eaten into the floor and around the window.

Fresh water was a precious liquid on Carys' Ledge, where the entire supply must be brought from the mainland ; but now it was used freely, and while the two injured men lay upon the floor unable to care for themselves, the kitchen was literally flooded before the last spark of fire had been extinguished.

Not until then did either Mr. Peters or Sidney give heed to the suffering keepers, but when the lad and the first assistant would have attended to Captain Eph, he said hoarsely :

“ Look after Zenas first ; his hurts must be worse than mine.”

“ How badly off are you ? ” Mr. Peters asked as he bent over the suffering man, who was lying in a pool of water, and Uncle Zenas replied, striving in vain to prevent his voice from trembling :

“That’s what I don’t know, Sammy; but it seems as if my legs were on fire.”

“Strip off his clothes, what there is left of ’em, Sammy, an’ you set to work, Sonny, scrapin’ potatoes till you get enough to cover all the burned flesh,” Captain Eph said in a tone of command. “Bring me somethin’ to work with, an’ I’ll help you.”

All this was done as speedily as possible, and when the partially burned clothing had been removed from the lower portion of Uncle Zenas’ body, it was seen that both legs and feet were seriously injured, the blisters already beginning to appear.

As rapidly as the potatoes could be scraped into a thick paste, it was spread generously over the reddened flesh, and fastened in place by the old linen cloths which had been used for cleaning the lens.

Nearly an hour was spent in this work, and then the suffering man was left on the floor near the window where there was but little water, until the extent of Captain Eph’s injuries could be ascertained.

“I didn’t break any bones, that’s certain, for I’ve been feelin’ of my leg,” the keeper said when Mr. Peters and Sidney knelt by his side; “but I came as near as a man could without splinterin’ ’em, an’ it looks as if I might be laid up quite a spell.”

He had already taken off his shoe and stocking, exposing to view a limb swollen to fully twice its

natural size, and Sidney was filled with wonder because the captain had been able to hide all evidences of the pain from which he was undoubtedly suffering.

“What shall I do for you, Captain Eph ?” Mr. Peters asked helplessly.

“The only thing I know of is to tie it up in wet cloths, an’ when that’s been done you two had best get things dried out here, so’s you’ll have a chance to go into the lantern. I’m allowin’ that the whole place is filled with smoke.”

“We won’t bother ’bout the light till we get you two fixed up in some kind of decent shape,” Mr. Peters said decidedly, as if he considered himself in command. “I’ll see to your leg while Sonny mops up the water.”

Then Mr. Peters closed the windows on the easterly side of the tower, through which the moisture-laden snow was driving, and Sidney turned all his attention to making the room look more habitable.

“How are you gettin’ on, Zenas ?” Captain Eph asked as the second assistant beat his hands together to prevent a cry of pain from escaping his lips.

“I’m in misery, Ephraim, clear misery; but I know I’ve every reason to be thankful that I wasn’t burned worse, an’ am tryin’ not to show myself a baby.”

“Don’t try, Uncle Zenas,” the keeper said, himself

striving to choke back a groan as Mr. Peters jarred the injured limb. "Yell all you want'er, an' we won't call it babyish, for when a man gets a kettle of hot fat poured over him he's like to be in a bad way."

It seemed to Sidney that he had never worked so slowly before, not even while he tried to light the lantern when Mr. Peters was brought home. He believed it in the highest degree necessary that the injured men be taken from the wet floor as speedily as possible, and yet he was making but little headway in mopping up the water.

Mr. Peters worked rapidly and dextrously, apparently in as good bodily condition as before he went adrift on the raft, and so great was the general excitement and suffering that no one appeared to consider his sudden recovery in any degree odd.

However clumsy Sidney may have thought himself, his work was finished within a reasonably short time. The floor was freed from water, the partially burned and saturated garments thrown out of the window, and the kitchen restored as nearly as possible to its former condition.

When this had been done Sidney brought from the sleeping rooms a plentiful supply of blankets and pillows, with which two beds could be made on the floor, and within three hours from the time the

accidents occurred, the injured keepers had at least the appearance of being comfortable.

“There’s nothin’ else you two can turn your hands to here yet awhile, an’ I *do* wish you’d go into the lantern. It stands to reason that everything there is in bad shape, an’ the sooner it is set to rights the better I’ll feel,” Captain Eph said in such a tone of entreaty that Mr. Peters and Sidney made all haste to do as he desired.

As was to be supposed, the smoke had ascended to the very top of the tower; but the lantern was by no means in a bad condition, and the first assistant said cheerily as he set about wiping the lens:

“Cap’n Eph hasn’t got any great call to worry ’bout this ’ere light. It won’t take us half an hour to put things in as good shape as they were before; but what’s worryin’ me is how we’re to get along while two of the crew are laid up for what’s likely to be a long spell.”

CHAPTER XIV.

NURSES AND LIGHT KEEPERS.

At that moment Sidney was thinking of what had just taken place, rather than of what they might or might not be able to do in the future, and the most perplexing part of it was the sudden and complete recovery of Mr. Peters.

He could understand that the first assistant might have been so excited by the disasters in the kitchen as to be able to do what, under almost any other circumstances, would have been absolutely impossible; but in such case a reaction should have set in after the danger had passed, when the patient would be in a far worse bodily condition than before.

If Mr. Peters had collapsed immediately Captain Eph's needs were supplied, Sidney would not have been surprised; in fact, he would have looked upon it as the most natural thing possible. But the first assistant showed no signs of weakening even now when they were absent from the scene of the accident; he appeared to be in as good bodily condition as ever, and the lad was so very curious regarding the situation that he asked abruptly:

“How did it happen, Mr. Peters, that you got well so quickly? We all thought there was danger you might die.”

“It does seem kind’er queer, don’t it?” and the first assistant rubbed the tip of his nose reflectively with the buff-skin. “Wa’al now, Sonny, I’d like mighty well to tell you jest how it happened; but I don’t rightly know all the pertic’lars myself, although I can let in a little light if you’ll promise never to tell a livin’ soul.”

“Of course I wouldn’t tell anything which you wanted kept secret,” Sidney replied.

“That’s a promise, is it?” Mr. Peters asked sharply.

“Of course it is; but if it’s so very much of a secret, there’s no reason why you should tell me. I was only wondering how you got well so quickly, and it won’t do any harm if I don’t know.”

“But I’d rather tell you, Sonny, though I’d feel mortally bad if Cap’n Eph or Uncle Zenas heard about it, because I’m ashamed of a part,” Mr. Peters said seriously, and Sidney looked at him in surprise, failing to understand why so much of an introduction was necessary to the answering of a simple question.

“It isn’t any of my business, you know, and perhaps you’d better not say any more,” Sidney began,

but Mr. Peters interrupted him as he softly closed the door in the floor of the lantern.

“ I’m goin’ to tell you the whole story, Sonny, an’ it shall be a secret ’twixt you an’ me. In the first place I was chafin’ under the collar a good bit when I left here to go to the wreck, after Uncle Zenas had declared I shouldn’t have a bite to eat till breakfast was ready. It didn’t seem jest the thing for him to make me go hungry because he was set against my savin’ what I could from the *Nautilus*, an’ I’ll leave it to you if I wasn’t right ? ”

“ He might have let you have some of the food that was already cooked,” Sidney replied guardedly, not disposed to find serious fault with the cook while he was in such distress.

“ Wa’al, he declared I shouldn’t have the least little crumb, an’ off I started on work that was as much for his benefit as my own. When I got aboard the wreck I found it was goin’ to be possible to get away with a good deal more’n could be loaded into the dory, so I built a raft, an’ Sonny dear, I had timber an’ ropes there that would have done your heart good to see ! Of course it wasn’t a great while before I found out that we was likely to have a storm, an’ I jest threw the stuff together in the hope of gettin’ back to the ledge before the wind got too high.”

“Then you did start with the raft just as Captain Eph believed?”

“Yes, I started, Sonny, but hadn’t got very far before I saw that I was likely to lose some of my load unless it was looked after, so I ran the bow of the dory up on the lumber, an’ got out to make the heaviest timbers fast. I reckon that in movin’ ’round I tilted the side of the raft down so the boat slipped off; but she was twenty yards away before I knew what had happened. Of course I didn’t suppose that the man would come after the motor so soon, an’ allowed that my only chance of ever seein’ Carys’ Ledge agin was to catch the dory.

“Over I went without stoppin’ to think that the wind would shove her along faster’n I could swim; but it wasn’t a great while before I found that much out. Then I started back for the raft, an’ mighty hard work I had to reach her. When, after bein’ a good half-hour in the cold water, I climbed up on the timbers, you’d better believe I was in bad shape, an’ jest about as near crazy as I ever shall be till they lug me off to some asylum.”

“I wonder that you wasn’t frozen,” Sidney said sympathetically, as Mr. Peters ceased speaking for a moment.

“Frozen? I was so cold, Sonny, that I couldn’t

tell you what my name was, an' layin' there on the timbers with the wind blowin' half a gale didn't tend to make me any warmer. After a while, though, I got to understand that I'd die for sure if somethin' wasn't done, because I counted help couldn't come till I'd drifted ashore, an' that mightn't be much before mornin'. Wa'al, as I figgered it, thinkin' you folks on the ledge couldn't come out to help me owin' to your not havin' a boat, my only chance was to work the raft in toward the shore faster'n the wind was carryin' her."

"But how could you do that without oars, sir?" and Sidney was literally trembling with suppressed excitement, as he imagined himself in Mr. Peters' position.

"I had lumber enough to make a hundred oars, but no tools with which to put 'em in shape. I got out a piece of plankin', usin' my foot as a thole-pin, an' in that way got the raft workin' more favorably in the wind; but I couldn't raise the plank high enough out of the water. A big wave caught the outer end, an' then I got sich a clip on the stomach as knocked me silly. It looked as if I was pretty nigh my last gasp, an' jest then a sea swept me clean off the timbers. It's a solemn fact, Sonny, that I don't have any idee how I got back to the raft. The next thing I realized, was when Cap'n Eph an'

Uncle Zenas brought me inter the tower. But now comes the mean part of it."

Mr. Peters paused, and Sidney would have spoken, but that the first assistant checked him with a gesture, as he said sharply:

"Don't say a word, Sonny, or my courage won't hold out to tell the whole of the story. Until about midnight I wasn't more'n half sensible of what was goin' on; but after then I could have got up an' gone to work jest as well as I can now, though I felt a bit lazy, an' considerable tired. I was jest mean enough to lay there in bed an' let you three stay on watch all night, when there was nothin' to prevent my doin' a full share of the duty."

"But why didn't you get up?" Sidney asked in surprise.

"Because I was so all-fired mean, Sonny, that is the reason. I saw that Uncle Zenas was worryin' a good deal about me, an' made up my mind to give him a good dose, so the next time I wanted to start away early he wouldn't dare to say I shouldn't have breakfast till it was ready for all hands. I fixed it with myself that I'd get up sometime this mornin', an' had jest begun to come 'round gradual-like, when the trouble happened, an' 'twixt you an' me, Sonny, I'm to blame for the whole thing. All I ask now is, that I may live long enough to kind'er square

up with Cap'n Eph an' Uncle Zenas for my meanness."

Sidney was at a loss for words when the first assistant paused as if expecting him to make some comment, and during five minutes or more the two worked in silence. Then Mr. Peters said, as he gave the finishing touches to the lens:

"I reckon it would take a mighty smart man to say that there'd been any smoke in this 'ere lantern, an' now we'd better go down to see what the poor fellows are needin'. I don't expect, Sonny, that you'll ever think of me as anything except the meanest critter that ever walked the face of the earth; but I'm askin' that you won't show it before the others. Life wouldn't be worth the livin', if they should know what I'd done."

"Of course you couldn't have an idea that any accident would happen because of your staying in bed as you did, and so I don't think you're as much to blame as you make out," Sidney said earnestly. "You needn't worry that I'll ever tell Captain Eph or Uncle Zenas what you've said; but if they knew the whole story, I'm certain neither of them would look at it as you do."

"Is that the truth, Sonny, or are you sayin' it to make me feel a little better?" Mr. Peters asked eagerly, and Sidney assured him again and again

that he had said no more than he really believed.

“I’ll hope you’re right, Sonny; but at the same time I shall never be able to see my face in a lookin’ glass agin without callin’ myself hard names,” Mr. Peters said with a sigh, and then he led the way down-stairs.

When they reached the kitchen it was to find Uncle Zenas in greater pain than when they went into the lantern, and Captain Eph explained that it was to be expected he would suffer more each hour until the heat had been drawn from the burns by the potato poultice.

“He’ll have a mighty hard time of it for two or three days, an’ then, unless he’s been burned worse’n we think, there’ll be a change for the better,” Captain Eph said in conclusion, and Sidney asked how he was feeling.

The keeper drew aside the bandages to show the swollen and rapidly-discoloring flesh, after which he said:

“Knowin’ that it’s nothin’ worse’n a bad sprain, an’ will come ’round all right after a spell, I wouldn’t allow that I’d got it so awful hard if we hadn’t the light to look after, an’ how’s that to be done?”

“Now don’t fret over that a little bit, Cap’n Eph,” Mr. Peters cried imploringly. “It wouldn’t hurt

me any if I stood watch every night till you an' Uncle Zenas got 'round agin; but Sonny has shown that he can look after the light as well as either of us, an' he an' I will run things slick as grease. He can go on watch till midnight, an' I'll take the rest of the time, doin' all the cleanin' alone."

"I shall do my full share of the work," Sidney cried decidedly, "and be right glad of the chance to pay you off for having been so good to me!"

"But what about the cookin'?" Uncle Zenas groaned. "Somebody must get the meals an' keep the kitchen cleared up."

"I can make coffee, and boil potatoes," Sidney replied promptly. "Perhaps, if you'd tell me how, I could do a good deal more. Any way, it would be a pretty poor kind of a boy who couldn't wash dishes and sweep the floor, and it seems as if we ought to get along in great shape."

"You're countin' on doin' too much, Sonny; but perhaps, if Sammy takes all the care of the light, with you to stand watch the first part of the night, you might make quite a fist at runnin' things down here, 'specially since Uncle Zenas an' me will have to stay right where we can show you how to do this or that," Captain Eph replied, and Sidney cried in surprise:

“Are you thinking of staying here in the kitchen all the time, sir ?”

“What else can we do, Sonny ?” the keeper asked grimly. “Even if Uncle Zenas was in condition to be moved, which he ain’t, do you think you an’ Sammy could get him upstairs ? You might as well try to lug an elephant, as him. An’ the same holds good in my case. I wouldn’t put my foot down on the floor, to step any part of my weight on it, for the best hundred dollars I ever heard tell about, an’ you two couldn’t carry me half-way to my room. I’ve been thinkin’ it all out, an’ can’t see any other course than for Uncle Zenas an’ me to stay where we are.”

“If you’ve got to turn the kitchen inter a hospital, why wouldn’t it be a good idee for me to bring the beds down here ?” Mr. Peters asked eagerly. “It won’t be any hard job, an’ I’ll get at it right away.”

“You sha’n’t do anything of the kind, Sammy,” and Captain Eph spoke in a decisive tone. “You ought’er be in bed yourself this very minute, an’ you’d never been able to leave it if you hadn’t got all worked up over our gettin’ hurt. You’ve got a kind heart, Sammy, an’ mustn’t be allowed to trifle with your poor, weak body.”

A deep flush of shame overspread Mr. Peters’ face, and Sidney really pitied him. Such was the punish-

ment to which he must submit in silence because of the deception he had practiced.

“I’ll look after my body, Cap’n Eph,” the first assistant said after a pause. “I wasn’t hurt half so much as it seemed, an’ bringin’ the bedsteads down wouldn’t hurt a flea.”

“We can’t have ’em here, Sammy. There isn’t room enough in the kitchen, an’ we shall be comfortable the way you’ve rigged things.”

“The mattresses won’t take up any more room than those piles of blankets, an’ I’ll bring them anyhow,” Mr. Peters cried, hurrying up the stairs as if afraid the keeper might try to stop him, and Sidney could understand very well why the first assistant was eager to do even more that might not be absolutely necessary, hoping thus to atone for his deceit.

It was no slight task to move Uncle Zenas from the place where he was lying to the mattress which Mr. Peters brought, and not accomplished without causing the sufferer very much additional pain; but there could be no question as to the future benefit, and the keeper said in a tone of satisfaction:

“That’s first rate, Sammy, an’ now I reckon you may bring down another bed for me. When that’s done we’ll be in fairly good condition, an’ your hospital will look a deal more ship-shape.”

By the time Captain Eph had been attended to, it was necessary Sidney should set about getting supper, for even the invalids needed something in the way of food, and, with Mr. Peters to assist him, the lad succeeded far beyond his own anticipations.

“Before Uncle Zenas gets around agin you’ll be a first-class cook,” Captain Eph said when the supper was on the table, and Sidney was heating some of the canned soup with the hope that the second assistant would swallow it. “Beats all how handy you are. Haven’t been on Carys’ Ledge hardly long enough to get acquainted, an’ know how to look after the light ! It won’t be a great while before you can run the whole business.”

“It would be funny if I couldn’t do a little bit, when all of you have shown me how,” Sidney replied with a laugh, but secretly he was well pleased at being thus praised.

That evening, after the lamp in the lantern had been lighted, and the invalids were cared for as well as possible under the circumstances, Sidney spoke of the possibility that the tower might have been burned, and asked Captain Eph if light-houses had ever been entirely destroyed by fire.

“If you’ll go into my room an’ get a book called *Ancient an’ Modern Light-Houses*, which was written by Major Heap of the Army, I’ll show you a story

about the burnin' of the second Eddystone light—you remember that the first was carried away by the sea,” the keeper replied, and believing it might cause the invalids to forget in some slight degree their sad condition, Sidney went hurriedly for the book in question, reading aloud, after Captain Eph had found the story, that which is set down here:

“The fire which destroyed this light-house [the second Eddystone], which had withstood the fiercest storms for nearly half a century, took place in December, 1755. The keeper going to snuff the candles at 2 A.M., found the lantern full of smoke, and when he opened the door was driven back by a burst of flame.

“The candles were twenty-four in number, and weighed two and one-half pounds each; their long continued use must have thoroughly dried the wood-work of the lantern, which, besides, was probably covered with soot, so that a spark would easily ignite it.

“The poor keeper did what he could to put out the fire; he after a while succeeded in awakening the other two keepers, and they all tried to throw water on the flames, but as it had to be brought seventy feet high, they soon found their efforts unavailing, and, in addition, one of the keepers, the one who discovered the fire, was disabled by a curious accident.

“While he was looking upwards, endeavoring to see the effect of the water he had thrown, a shower of molten lead fell on his head, neck, and shoulders—part of it ran inside his shirt-collar and burned him badly; he also felt an intense burning inside, and supposed that part of the lead had passed down his throat.

“The three men gave up the unequal struggle and descended from room to room, as they were driven by the heat and melting metal.

“Early in the morning the fire was seen on shore, and a philanthropic gentleman fitted out a fishing boat which arrived at the light-house at 10 A.M. The fire had then been burning eight hours; the light keepers had been driven from the tower, and, to avoid the falling timbers and red-hot bolts, had taken refuge in the hole or cave on the east side of the rocks under the iron ladder, near the landing.

“The men were stupefied, and the wind being from the east made a landing extremely hazardous, if not impracticable. They, however, were saved by the crew first anchoring the large boat, then a small boat was rowed toward the rock, paying out a rope which was attached to the large boat; when near enough to the rock a heaving-line was thrown to the men. Each light keeper in turn fastened the rope around

his waist, and, jumping into the sea, was hauled into the boat.

“As the fishing-boat could do nothing to quell the flames, it returned to Plymouth to land the keepers; one, as soon as he got on shore, ran away, it is supposed in a panic; the one burned by the melted lead was sent to his own home for medical attendance; he was ninety-four years old, but remarkably active considering his age. He told the doctor that he had swallowed the molten lead, and that he could not be cured unless it was removed. He lived until the twelfth day, when he suddenly expired—the doctor opened his stomach, and found therein a solid oval piece of lead weighing more than seven ounces.”

“I don’t understand how a tower could be burned,” Sidney said thoughtfully as he ceased reading, and Captain Eph replied:

“If you look back a page or two, Sonny, you’ll find that the one burned was built wholly of timber on the outside, and so was the top part of the inside. This tower couldn’t burn flat, bein’ all stone, but the rooms would have been pretty well cleaned out if you an’ Sammy hadn’t worked mighty lively. We came off a good deal better than those poor fellows did, an’ Uncle Zenas can thank his lucky stars that it was melted fat instead of lead which fell on him.”

“Suppose the inside of the tower had burned,”

Sidney continued, seemingly finding a certain fascination in speculating upon the possibilities. "We might have been forced to stay here a long while before any one came to take us off."

"Ay, Sonny, that is true, but even then we wouldn't have been as badly off as other light-house keepers and builders have been. There's a story in that same book about the Smalls light-house, off the west coast of Wales. Find that an' read it, so's we can see how much we've got to be thankful for, even if we are disabled an' in a kitchen-hospital."

Sidney did as the keeper requested, and read the following, to which even Uncle Zenas listened with apparent interest:

"In the summer of 1772 Whiteside first made the acquaintance of the place on which he was to indelibly engrave his name. He disembarked on the rocks with a gang of Cornish miners, and the obstacles which they met at the commencement of the work nearly disgusted him with the enterprise. He and his companions had started the work when a storm suddenly broke upon them. The wind blew with great force, and the cutter which had brought them had to fly before the fury of the gale. The workmen left on the rock hung on the best they could for two days and nights. Whiteside was not discouraged, and

finally brought the work to a successful end, but not without being exposed to many dangers.

“ One day the dwellers on the coast picked up on the beach a cask inscribed, ‘ Open this and you will find a letter ’ ; inside was a carefully-sealed bottle, and in the bottle a document as follows :

“ ‘ Smalls, February 1, 1777.

“ ‘ Sir,—Finding ourselves at this moment in the most critical and dangerous condition, we hope that Providence will guide this letter to you, and that you will immediately come to our succor. Send to seek for us before spring, or we will perish, I fear ; our supply of wood and water is almost exhausted, and our house is in the most sad state. We do not doubt that you would come to seek us as promptly as possible. We can be reached at high tide in almost any weather. I have no need to tell you more, you will comprehend our distress, and I remain,

“ ‘ Your humble servant,

“ ‘ H. Whiteside.

“ ‘ We were surprised on the 23 January by a tempest ; since that time we have not been able to light the temporary light for want of oil and candles. We fear we have been forgotten.

“ ‘ Ed. Edwards. G. Adams. J. Price.

“ ‘ P.S. We do not doubt that the person in whose hands this will fall will be sufficiently charitable to send it to Th. Williams, Esq., Trelethen, near St. Davids, Wales.’

“ The history of Smalls has other and darker

pages. It is related that at the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a winter so stormy that for four months the two keepers were entirely cut off from any succor from shore. It was in vain that vessels were sent to the rock, the furious sea always prevented a landing. One of them returned one day with a strange report. Its crew had seen a man, standing motionless, in a corner of the exterior gallery. Near him floated a signal of distress. But was he dead or alive? No one could say. Each evening anxious looks were cast at the light-house to see if its light would be shown, and each evening it shone brightly, proof that some one was still there. But were both keepers alive, and if there were but one who was the survivor? This was learned later.

“One evening a fisher from Milford, who had succeeded in landing at Smalls in an intermission of calm weather, brought to Solway the two keepers, but one of them was a corpse. The survivor had made a coffin for his dead comrade, then, after having carried it to a corner of the gallery, he had stood it on end, attaching it firmly. Left alone he had done good service. When returned on shore he was so changed, so emaciated, that his relatives and friends could scarcely recognize him. He asserted that his comrade had died of disease; he was believed, but after this time there were always three

keepers at Smalls in the place of two—a wise precaution which has since been taken for light-houses placed in similar conditions.”

“I ain’t certain as that is very cheerful readin’ for us,” Captain Eph said grimly. “It’s too near hittin’ our own case, seein’s how every one of this ’ere crew has come near bein’ killed, an’ if that had happened, our little Sonny would have been in a worse way than a young girl in a light not far from here, which we’ll read about some other time.”

“Don’t say that I came near dyin’, Cap’n Eph,” Mr. Peters cried. “I’ve never been as bad off as you an’ Uncle Zenas believed.”

Sidney fancied that the first assistant was about to confess his deceit; but if such was the case, Captain Eph prevented him by saying sharply:

“I don’t know how a man could be in much harder sleddin’ than you, Sammy, when that ’ere raft was drivin’ before the wind, with the waves washin’ clean over both you an’ her. Uncle Zenas an’ me felt mightily down at the mouth ’bout that time, for we reckoned sure you was dead.”

“An’ I called myself all kinds of an old villain for declarin’ you shouldn’t have any breakfast, Sammy,” Uncle Zenas said, his voice tremulous with pain. “I hope you won’t lay it up agin me, for we’ve been in danger too often to let anything come be-

tween us, an' when I get so's I can stand on my feet, you may kick me all 'round this ledge at low water."

"Don't, Uncle Zenas, don't !" Mr. Peters cried passionately. "I might'er got out of bed a good deal sooner than I did, but for sulkin', an' if I'd been a decent kind of a man, we wouldn't be havin' all this trouble now !"

"Sammy !" Captain Eph cried sharply. "What do you mean by runnin' yourself down like that ? Uncle Zenas an' I have summered an' wintered with you, an' know there ain't a mean bone in your body, so don't let's hear any more 'bout your bein' to blame for what happened this day. If I hadn't yelled so loud, the fat wouldn't have been spilled, an' then I shouldn't have blundered down-stairs like an old fool."

Mr. Peters rose to his feet, and again Sidney felt certain he was on the point of making a confession ; but once more Captain Eph checked him.

"You're all wore up, Sammy, an' that's the fact. Now I want you to go straight to bed without openin' your mouth agin. It's got to be done, if you count on standin' a long watch. Don't answer me back, Sammy Peters, but start this minute !"

The first assistant hesitated an instant, half turned toward Uncle Zenas, and then ran up the

stairs as rapidly as possible, causing Captain Eph to say in a low tone:

“Poor Sammy ! He’s so soft-hearted that our gettin’ hurt has broke him all up, an’ we’ve got to keep our eye out, Uncle Zenas, or he’ll be down sick through worryin’ ’bout us.”

CHAPTER XV.

STORM-BOUND.

Sidney made up a bed for himself in the kitchen, that he might be near at hand in case either of the invalids should need attention, and it was nearly three o'clock in the morning when Mr. Peters awakened him.

"Why didn't you call me sooner ?" the lad asked in a whisper, when he saw what time it was. "You had no right to do more than your share of the work."

"Yes I had, Sonny. I'm tryin' to make up for my meanness, an' I'd be mighty glad if it was possible for me to get along without sleep till Cap'n Eph an' Uncle Zenas are in shape once more."

Sidney could make no further protest, understanding as he did all that was in the first assistant's mind, and crept softly up-stairs to the watch-room, while Mr. Peters lay down on the bed he had just vacated.

The lad, eager to show his willingness to perform a full share of the work, remained on watch even after sunrise, and was busily engaged cleaning the lens when Mr. Peters came into the lantern, having been awakened by Captain Eph.

"I want you to understand, Sonny, that this 'ere

thing won't go down with me," he said sharply. "There's good reason why I ought'er do the biggest part of this work, an' no call for you to strain yourself."

"There's little chance of my doing anything of the kind," Sidney replied laughingly. "I thought it would be a good plan to let you get as much sleep as possible; but so long as you're awake, I'll go down and see what kind of a breakfast I can fix up. How are they feeling this morning?"

"Uncle Zenas has still got a power of pain, an' I don't reckon there's much show of his bein' any easier for quite a spell. Cap'n Eph's leg is surely a sight. It's swelled twice the reg'lar size; but he won't give in that it hurts him so very bad, though I know it must."

When Sidney entered the kitchen he found the old keeper sitting bolt upright in bed, gently rubbing his injured limb, and the lad suggested that he be allowed to aid him.

"There's no need, Sonny, not a little bit; I'm only doin' this because I've got nothin' else on hand. Why didn't you call Sammy on time?"

"Because he didn't waken me until nearly three o'clock, and I wanted him to have something near a night's rest, sir."

"Wa'al, don't slip up in that way agin, for I've

got no notion of havin' you sick on our hands. After this, rout him out at sunrise, no matter what time he turned in. I reckon, Sonny, that you'll have to try your hand at cookin' agin."

"That's what I counted on, sir, and if Uncle Zenas can tell me what to do, I'll get along first rate."

The second assistant not only explained to Sidney how he should perform the necessary work; but, despite the pain with which he was suffering, watched his every movement until a really appetizing meal was on the table.

Then Sidney, after calling Mr. Peters, fed the two invalids as if they were babies, although Captain Eph protested against it, and when the first assistant came down-stairs, asked if he couldn't make something in the way of a short-legged table on which food might be placed while they sat up in bed to eat.

"I'll 'tend to that right off, sir," Mr. Peters replied, evidently pleased at the idea of having additional work to perform, and, after breakfast, while Sidney was putting the kitchen-hospital to rights, he set about the task.

The storm appeared to be increasing, and Captain Eph predicted that it would be a long one, giving his reasons for such an opinion, and adding:

"It'll suit me way down to the ground, for I'd be

ashamed to have anybody land here while Uncle Zenas an' I are stretched out on the floor."

"Does it often happen that a landing can't be made for some time?" Sidney asked, as, his work having been done, he sat by the side of the keeper.

"At this season of the year we count on bein' storm-bound a good part of the time, Sonny. Leastways, the heavy seas shut us in, because the weather must be fairly good for a boat to make a landin' on this 'ere ledge; but we ain't any worse off as to that, than the keepers of a light not sich a dreadful ways from here."

"Meanin' Matinicus," Uncle Zenas said, as if he hoped by taking part in the conversation to forget some portion of his pain.

"Ay, that's the light, Sonny, an' by the charts in my room you can see where it stands. Now give me the book you was readin' last night, an' I'll show you somethin' that tells how much of sufferin' is needed sometimes to keep the lights on our coast burnin'."

Captain Eph found the article on Matinicus Rock Light, and Sidney read aloud the entire chapter; but it is not well to set down here more than a few extracts:

"Matinicus Rock is twenty-five miles out in the ocean from the mainland, directly in the pathway of the ocean-steamers plying from Boston and Portland

to Eastport, St. John, Yarmouth, and Halifax, and of the immense fleet of coasting and fishing vessels trading between the United States and the British Provinces. This barren and jagged rock, covering an area of thirty-nine acres at low tide, is inaccessible except during favorable weather. . . .

“In the spring of 1853, Samuel Burgess obtained the position of light keeper; his family consisted of an invalid wife, four small daughters, and a son, who, though making his home on the rock, was absent much of the time fishing in Bay Chaleur and elsewhere. The eldest daughter, Abbie, fourteen years old, was the keeper’s only assistant; she aided in caring for the light as well as attending to the principal household duties. In the occasional absence of her father, the whole care of the light devolved upon her. . . .

“On the morning of January 19, 1856, Abbie being then seventeen years of age, the Atlantic was visited by one of those terrible gales to which it is subject. Her father was away.”

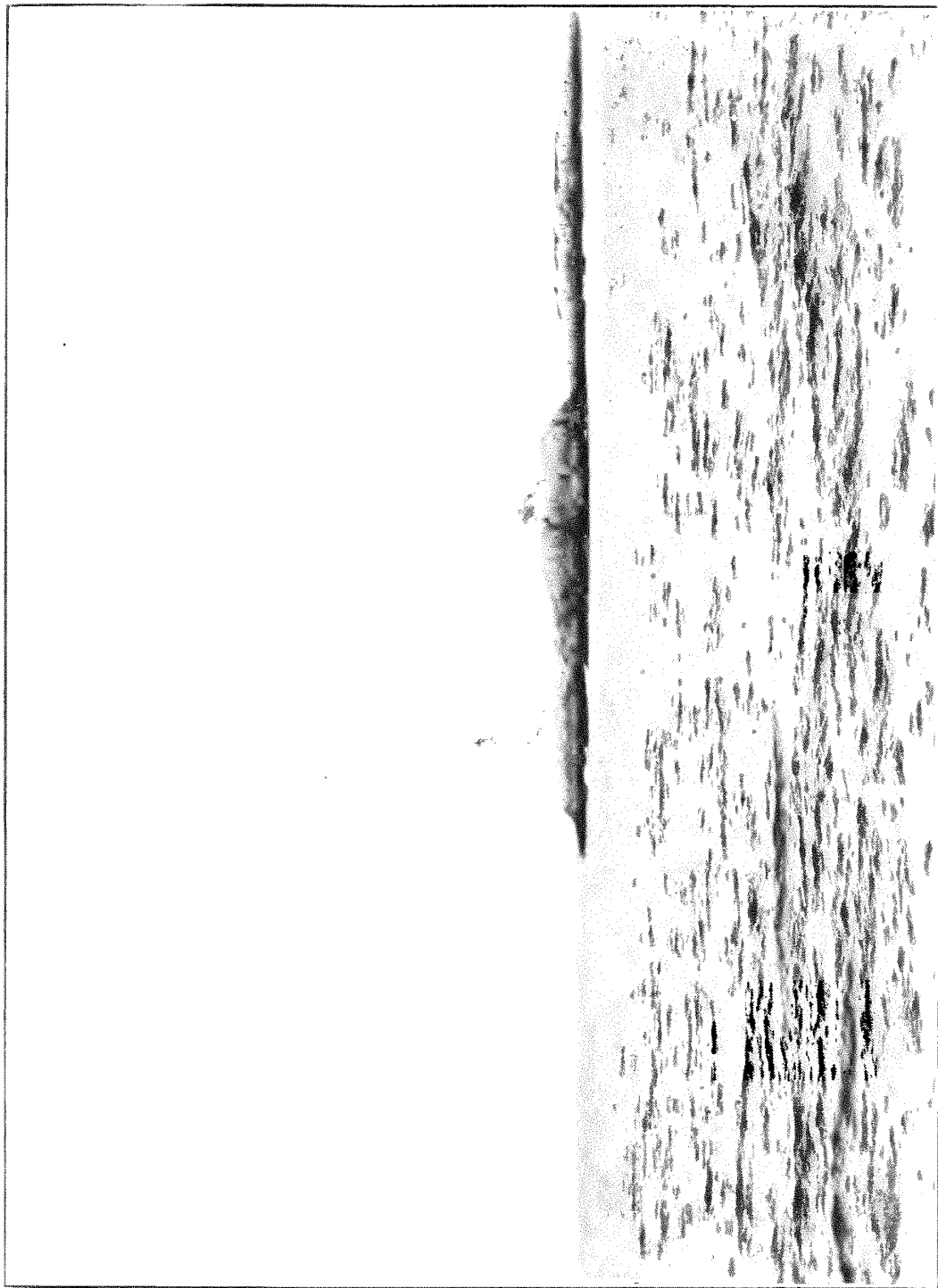
It was Abbie herself who wrote the following concerning the storm:

“Early in the day, as the tide rose, the sea made a complete breach over the rock, washing every movable thing away, and of the old dwelling not one stone was left upon another. The new dwelling was flooded,

and the windows had to be secured to prevent the violence of the spray from breaking them in. As the tide came, the sea rose higher and higher, till the only endurable places were the light-towers. If they stood we were saved, otherwise our fate was only too certain. But for some reason, I know not why, I had no misgivings, and went on with my work as usual. For four weeks, owing to rough weather, no landing could be effected on this rock."

"In the spring of 1857, Mr. Burgess left the rock to obtain his salary and secure some provisions and fuel. The weather prevented his return, and the family ran short of food. Waiting until famine stared them in the face, the son started in a little skiff equipped with a sail, made by the aid of his sister, to obtain succor. Pushing from the rock in his frail craft, he was at first lost sight of in the trough of the sea; he reappeared on the top of the waves for a short distance, and was seen no more for twenty-one days, during which time the mother and the four girls were reduced to a cup of corn-meal and one egg each per day. Added to risk of perishing of famine in mid-ocean, was the torturing suspense as to the fate of father and son.

"During all this time Abbie attended to the light, cared for her sick mother, and, by her spirit and example, cheered the little family clustered together on



ISLE OF SHOALS.

this wave-beaten rock in the Atlantic. Fortunately, father and son finally safely returned to their ocean home."

"I reckon, after thinkin' of all that, there ain't any one of this 'ere crew as feels like complainin', eh?" and Captain Eph looked around sternly, much as though believing his assistants were on the verge of insurbordination. "If a seventeen-year-old girl, with the same as nothin' to eat, can take care of a whole family an' a light for twenty-one days durin' heavy weather, we deserve to be kicked if there's any show of gettin' down at the heel."

"We're mighty lucky to be no worse off," Uncle Zenas said as he unfastened the bandages in order to look at his injuries, and this reminded Captain Eph that it was time to apply more scraped potato.

When the forenoon came to an end both the invalids were cared for, and Sidney had the noon-day meal ready.

Mr. Peters had made what served as tables, but which were really rough stools, and from these Captain Eph and Uncle Zenas ate their dinner with very little of discomfort.

Because there was nothing he could do in behalf of the invalids, Mr. Peters spent the greater portion of the afternoon in bed, and Sidney read to or talked with the keepers until it was time to get supper.

The record of this day would serve fairly well for the five succeeding days. The storm had cleared away after raging with mild violence forty-eight hours; but the wind seemed to have increased rather than subsided, and the waves were so boisterous that it would have been impossible, save at the cost of life, to descend from the kitchen to the ledge.

The keepers were storm-bound even though the sun was shining, and would be until the wind subsided. During all this time but few vessels were to be seen far down on the horizon, and never one near enough to be signaled.

Both the disabled keepers were recovering even more rapidly than could have been reasonably expected. Captain Eph's sprained leg no longer caused him very great pain; but he, as well as his companions, understood that very many days must elapse before he should venture to stand upon it.

Uncle Zenas was able to hobble around fairly well, and, with a certain amount of assistance from Sidney, attended to the greater portion of the cook's duties; but neither of the men had attempted to ascend the stairs.

Never for a moment had Mr. Peters faltered in his efforts to atone for his deceit. It was as if each day he tried the harder to perform more work, or minister

to the comfort of his comrades, until Captain Eph said privately to Sidney that "Sammy's trip on the raft had worked a wonderful change."

On the morning of the sixth day after the combination of accidents, there was a break in the monotony, which excited the invalids greatly.

Mr. Peters, who had been in the lantern attending to some trifling duty, came down-stairs at a rapid pace as he cried:

"The light-house tender is headin' this way, not more'n two miles away, an' makin' heavy weather of it !"

In a twinkling the room was a scene of the greatest excitement. Captain Eph, forgetting his injured limb, attempted to spring to his feet, but sank back quickly with a groan, and Uncle Zenas, thinking only that the inspector might not be pleased at seeing beds in the kitchen, bent over to gather up the clothing, when the partially healed burns caused him to straighten up again as a cry of pain escaped his lips.

"What is the matter ?" Sidney asked in surprise, not understanding why the announcement that the tender was coming toward the ledge should have so startled the two men.

"Matter, Sonny !" Captain Eph cried. "Why most likely the inspector is comin' on one of his

reg'lar visits, an' what'll he say if he finds Uncle Zenas an' me off duty, so to speak ? ”

“ I don't see why you need bother about him,” Sidney began ; but before he could finish the statement, Mr. Peters cried :

“ Of course you don't, Sonny, 'cause you never was here when he overhauled everything on the ledge as if he expected we allers left 'em at sixes an' sevens.”

“ But he won't see anything to-day,” Sidney continued. “ Didn't you say we were storm-bound ? If other people can't make a landing here, isn't he in just as bad a fix ? ”

Captain Eph leaned back in his chair and looked at the lad in astonishment, as he gasped :

“ Wa'al, who'd thought that little shaver had more sense than all the rest of us put together ? Of course the inspector can't make a landin', an' I don't understand why he has come out here, for he must have known what the weather was ! ”

“ It's given me the worst scare I've had since I upset the kettle of lard ! ” Uncle Zenas exclaimed, leaning back on the bed as if after severe exertions.

“ She's comin' out here jest the same,” Mr. Peters said as he stood by the window which opened toward the mainland, “ an' what is it they want ? ”

“ You an' Sonny better show yourselves on the lan-

tern gallery," Captain Eph suggested. "It won't take 'em long to find out that they can't step foot on Carys' Ledge this day; but it behooves us to make some signs of life."

Mr. Peters and Sidney ran up-stairs to obey this command. The lad had never been on the narrow gallery which ran around on the outside of what is known as the lantern-deck, and he experienced a decided sense of insecurity as he stepped on the narrow platform through one of the swinging windows of the lantern.

"You needn't walk so gingerly," Mr. Peters said with a laugh. "This 'ere would hold a hundred men as big as Uncle Zenas, an' I reckon your weight won't set it adrift. There's the steamer, an' it looks as if she was standin' on end 'bout half the time."

The little craft was indeed laboring in the heavy seas. More than once Sidney fancied that the tops of the waves were flung completely over her smoke-stack, and when she sank into the trough of the sea, it was as if she were bent on going to the bottom.

"I've yet got to guess why she's out here in this weather," Mr. Peters said half to himself, as he watched the steamer plunge and toss wildly when she was brought around parallel with the westerly side of the ledge. "They seem to know that there's no

chance of makin' a landin,' an' it looks as if they wanted to speak us."

Then the first assistant waved his arms wildly, and shouted at the full strength of his lungs:

"Ahoy ! What's the matter ?"

It was probable that the wind carried his words down to the steamer; but when a man emerged from the wheel-house with a megaphone, and evidently made some reply, it was as if he were indulging in a pantomime, for not a sound came to the ears of those on the tower.

"I can't hear you," Mr. Peters shouted, repeating the words again and again until he was literally red in the face, and the man on the steamer evidently replied again; but it was as if he had not spoken.

"I'm gettin' tired of this fool business," Mr. Peters said irritably. "Why didn't they stay at home ?"

"Perhaps some one saw the smoke of the fire, and sent word that the tower was burned," Sidney suggested, and then Mr. Peters shouted, using his hands as a trumpet:

"We're all right here ! Nothin' the matter with us ! and he added in a lower tone, "It's no use to try an' make 'em understand that Cap'n Eph an' Uncle Zenas are off duty, for they couldn't hear me."

Once more the man with the magaphone shouted,

and then the bow of the little steamer was headed landward, the steam which escaped from the whistle-valve telling that she had saluted.

“If that ain’t a leetle the biggest wild goose chase I ever heard of, then my name’s Benjamin, which it ain’t !” Mr. Peters exclaimed as he led the way inside the lantern, and when the window had been carefully closed, he asked sharply:

“What sent ’em out here on a day like this ?”

“I can’t tell you,” Sidney replied with a laugh, and at that moment the voice of Captain Eph could be heard from below:

“Ahoy, Sammy ! Are you goin’ to stay there all day ?”

It seemed as if the first assistant was about to make an impatient reply, as in the days before he had deceived his comrades; but he checked himself ere the first word was uttered, and replied:

“We’re comin’, Captain Eph. I only wanted to make certain everythin’ was ship-shape up here.”

Then the two descended the stairs, and they were yet on the floor above the kitchen when Captain Eph shouted again:

“What did they say to you ?”

“That’s what I wish I knew,” the first assistant said emphatically, as he entered the kitchen. “Somebody danced ’round a good bit; but with this wind

blowin' dead in his teeth, we couldn't hear so much as a single yip from him."

"But what did he want?" Uncle Zenas asked impatiently. "He must have been after somethin', to come out here when he knew he couldn't land."

Again Mr. Peters was about to make an impatient reply, and again he checked himself in time, replying mildly:

"There was no show for me to find out what he wanted so long as I couldn't hear a word he said. He's gone now, though, an' I wish he hadn't come, for it's mixed us all up."

"Wa'al, if it was important business, an' I reckon it must have been else the steamer wouldn't have come out in this wind, they'll have another try at it in better weather, an' perhaps by that time, Uncle Zenas, we'll be able to toddle 'round a little."

"I'm countin' on bein' as spry as ever in a couple of days more," the second assistant said proudly, "an' it looks now as if this 'ere blow would last that long."

During the remainder of this day the only conversation indulged in was concerning the coming of the tender. Each of the keepers in turn had some theory, more or less plausible, to account for the visit, but nothing was presented that satisfied all, until Sidney said timidly:

“Perhaps some word has come from my father, and whoever was in the boat came out to see if I was still here.”

“Sonny is right !” Captain Eph cried emphatically. “We’re nothin’ better’n three old fools, to be guessin’ this an’ that unlikely thing, while he, with more brains in his little finger than the whole of us can muster, comes up an’ tells the facts. Of course that was why the tender came out here, an’ we’ll see her again before many days. Sammy, I’m goin’ to make a try at gettin’ up-stairs, so’s there will be one bed less in this kitchen, an’ we’ll see if things can’t be pulled ’round as they ought’er be ’cordin’ to the rules an’ regerlations.”

“I can’t make out why everything ain’t that way now,” Mr. Peters interrupted. “The lantern couldn’t be any cleaner, an’ I’m sure there’s nothin’ wrong with havin’ beds down here when we’ve got to have a hospital somewhere.”

“I’m not sayin’, Sammy, that you an’ Sonny haven’t done wonders; but yet you know that the light isn’t run as it should be, when the keeper an’ his second assistant take up their quarters in the kitchen. We’ll have all that changed, though, before this time to-morrow, even if you have to rig up a block an’ tackle to send me into my room.”

Sidney was almost sorry because he had guessed

so nearly to what Captain Eph believed was the truth. Until that moment he had been well content so long as the invalids continued to improve; but now he was feverishly eager to know if his father had sent any message, and, if so, what it was.

Restlessly the lad wandered from one window to another, looking out in the hope of seeing some indication that the wind was subsiding, until Captain Eph said:

“Come here, Sonny, an’ make yourself contented. I can give a guess as to how you’re fussin’, an’ it’s all wrong. You ought’er be feelin’ mighty good because we’ve reason to believe your father knows where you are, an’ there’ll be no harm done if you don’t hear what he’s got to say for two weeks to come. S’posen he’s sent a message, which I don’t believe he has, for you to come to Porto Rico, what good would it do you to know it, seein’s how you can’t get off this ’ere ledge till the sea goes down? It’s foolish to fret over what can’t be helped. Tell me, did you ever hear of a light called Barnegat?”

“Indeed I have,” the lad replied, surprised at this sudden turn in the conversation.

“Wa’al, did you ever hear why it had that name?”

“I suppose because it is near the New Jersey town of Barnegat.”

“ That may be, Sonny ; but in the book you’ve been readin’ lately are some verses tellin’ how it got the name. Of course they ain’t true ; but there’s a good deal of fun in ’em. Bring me the book an’ I’ll show you where they are.”

Sidney now began to understand that the old keeper was simply trying to divert his mind from thoughts of the message which those on the tender had possibly tried to deliver ; but nevertheless he hastened to obey what had sounded very like a command, and Captain Eph opened the volume to the alleged poetry, which is copied below, with the name “ Adam Clark ’ appended as the author :

“ In the Bay of Barnegat sailed a jolly, jolly tar,
And he watched like a cat o’er the water,
Till he spied from the main-top-gallant-forward-mizzen-
spar
The pretty little light-keeper’s daughter.

Then he landed on the land, did this jolly, jolly tar,
And he chased her o’er the sand till he caught her,
Says he, ‘ My pretty miss, I’ve got to have a kiss
From the pretty little light-keeper’s daughter.’

But she squealed a little squeal at the jolly, jolly tar,
And said she didn’t feel as if she’d oughter ;
Then she scooted up the bar and hollered for her ma,—
Oh, the pretty little light-keeper’s daughter !

‘ Sure my name is Barney Flynn,’ said the jolly, jolly tar,
‘ And at drinking Holland gin I’m a snorter.’
Then a tub of washing-blue-soap suddenly she threw—
Did the mother of the light-keeper’s daughter.

‘Now, Barney, git!’ she spat, at the jolly, jolly tar;
And you bet Barney gat for the water.
Thus the place from near and far was named by the ma
Of the pretty little light-keeper’s daughter.”

If Captain Eph had thought that reading the jingle would turn Sidney’s thoughts from the possibility that those on the tender had tried to deliver a message from his father, he made a decided mistake; but the lad laughed heartily when he had finished the lines, and then did his best to hide from the old keeper that which was in his mind.

Next morning the wind was blowing quite as fresh as ever; but Captain Eph had not forgotten the determination to go into his own room, and when the routine work had been performed, Mr. Peters was summoned to assist in what promised to be quite a serious task.

“You’re clean wild to think of sich a thing, Cap’n Eph,” the first assistant said as he stood with folded arms in front of the keeper, and the latter replied petulantly:

“Perhaps I am, Sammy Peters; but I ain’t so wild as to let you try to argue me out of it. I’m goin’ to do what little lays in my power toward puttin’ this ’ere tower ship-shape, an’ you’ll help me without any back talk.”

“How do you count on doin’ it, seein’s you can’t touch the floor with your lame foot?”

“ You’re allers ready enough to riggin’ up schemes that ain’t of the least earthly account, an’ now let’s see if you can’t turn your mind to somethin’ sensible.”

“ Then I shouldn’t be thinkin’ how to help you up them stairs, for that ain’t in any way sensible,” Mr. Peters said calmly, and Uncle Zenas cried pleadingly:

“ Why don’t you stay where you are, Ephraim Downs, leastways as long as this wind blows ? When there’s a turn in the weather, you’ll have time enough to get up-stairs before the tender comes.”

“ I’m goin’ now if I have to crawl,” Captain Eph cried. “ Things have come to a pretty pass if the keeper of a first-order light can’t go where he pleases without both his assistants raisin’ a rumpus.”

“ I’m thinkin’ it’ll be you who’ll raise the rumpus,” Mr. Peters said grimly, “ but if you’re so set that you won’t listen to old friends, I’ll get to work. Put one arm around my neck, an’ I’ll do my best at luggin’ you up, though in case of a tumble you’re likely to be lamed for life.”

Even this possibility did not daunt Captain Eph, and the task was begun, with Sidney to assist so far as might be, and Uncle Zenas alternately uttering needless words of caution, and bewailing the keeper’s “ pig-headedness.”

It was both a long and difficult job, and when, at the expiration of a full half hour from the time the

first step had been taken, Captain Eph was seated in a chair in his own room, waiting until the bed could be brought up, all who had assisted were confident the keeper regretted having made the attempt.

“Wa’al, I’m up here,” he said grimly, and Uncle Zenas shouted from below:

“Yes, you’re there, Ephraim, an’ I’d like to know how much better off you are, except that it’ll be more work to wait on you.”

“I declare I hadn’t thought of that, Sonny,” the old man said as he took the lad’s hand in his; “but you won’t mind a few extry steps if it makes me feel any easier in mind, will you ? ”

“I’d be glad to take a great many more than are necessary even now, if you’ll be any more comfortable or contented, Captain Eph,” and Sidney stroked the old keeper’s hairy hand.

CHAPTER XVI.

AS IF FROM THE GRAVE.

After Captain Eph had moved into his own room it became necessary, as a matter of course, to carry his food up to him, and when the first meal had been served by Sidney, and eaten by the old keeper without any very great evidence of enjoyment, he said to the lad:

“What’s to hinder your messin’ with me, Sonny? I didn’t realize how kind’er lonesome it was goin’ to be up here alone, an’ Sammy will be company enough for Uncle Zenas.”

“I’ll be glad to do it, sir, if the others won’t think that I don’t want to stay with them.”

“I’ll ’tend to that part of it,” the keeper said sharply. “Things are at a pretty pass if I’ve got to be shoved up here all by myself, an’ can’t call on any one to sit with me!”

“You wouldn’t be up there, Ephraim Downs, if hadn’t been for your own pig-headedness!” Uncle Zenas called from below, and Captain Eph whispered to the lad:

“ I never thought he could hear me, else I wouldn’t have spoken so loud, for he’s terrible kind of fretty since his wounds are beginnin’ to heal in good shape,” and he added in a louder tone to the second assistant, “ I reckon I can make talk to Sonny, if I want’er, without your mixin’ your tongue in, eh ? ”

“ I’ll mix in jest as often as you tell ’bout bein’ shoved up there, when you know Sammy an’ I were both set against it ! ” and Uncle Zenas’ tone was what might truthfully be called “ vinegary.”

“ Hello down there ! ” Mr. Peters called from the lantern, and, running to the foot of the stairs, Sidney answered the hail.

“ Tell Cap’n Eph there’s a dory comin’ in from the east’ard. As nigh as I can make out, there are two men aboard, but they don’t seem to have her in hand very well.”

“ A dory from the east’ard,” the old keeper repeated, he having heard the first assistant’s report. “ There’s likely to have been trouble out that way, Sonny, for the most venturesome fishermen who ever lived wouldn’t be abroad in this blow unless somethin’ had gone wrong. Tell Sammy to keep his eye on ’em.”

Sidney repeated the instructions as Captain Eph had given them, and a smile overspread his face as he heard Mr. Peters mutter irritably :

“Keep my eye on ’em ? I’d like to know what else I can do ? Any idjut would have sense enough for that !”

“What’s he sayin’ ?” the keeper asked sharply.

“Nothing more than talking to himself, I guess,” Sidney replied, and Captain Eph retorted:

“That’s a mighty bad habit Sammy has got. You can’t rightfully say that he’s makin’ back talk; but he chews over a lot of words that kind’er riles a man, ’specially when he hasn’t really got a right to find fault. Go up an’ see what you can make out, Sonny.”

Sidney obeyed promptly, although feeling quite confident that he could not hope to learn anything more than Mr. Peters had already reported.

“There’s trouble of some kind out yonder,” the first assistant said when he handed the glasses to the lad, “an’ the worst of it is, that with both Cap’n Eph an’ Uncle Zenas under the weather, we’ve got to sit still an’ see those poor fellows drift past us while we’re suckin’ our thumbs.”

Sidney took the glasses, and after Mr. Peters had pointed out the direction in which he should look, it was possible to see now and then, as she rose on the crest of a wave, a dory in which was a mass of something which might be human beings.

“Can you see ’em ?” Mr. Peters asked impa-

tiently, after Sidney had gazed in silence several moments.

“ Yes ; but I’m trying to make out why you should think that dark stuff may be men.”

“ Because the craft must have belonged to a fisherman, Sonny, an’ they don’t very often let their boats go adrift. Then agin, what else could be in her but men ? ”

The argument was not convincing to the lad ; but since there was nothing he could say against it, he returned to make his report to the keeper.

“ Ay, Sammy is right,” Captain Eph said thoughtfully when Sidney explained what could be seen. “ It must be some poor fellows who have been blown away from their vessel while settin’ trawls, or hand-line fishin’. Is the dory comin’ straight for the ledge ? ”

“ That’s the way it looks now, sir.”

“ An’ here I am tied down like a log ! ” Captain Eph cried bitterly.

“ What could be done if you were in good condition, sir ? The waves are breaking over the ledge, and the boat-house is nearly under water.”

“ I know all that, Sonny, an’ yet there might be a chance to lend a hand in some way. Tied up as I am, it would be out of the question even to pass ’em a rope if they were right under the window. Bring

down the glasses, an' help me move around near the window, where I can look out."

It was necessary for Sidney to ask Mr. Peters to assist him in carrying out the latter portion of the order, and when everything had been done in accordance with his wishes, the old keeper, seated in front of the open window regardless of the chilling wind, gazed intently at the tiny object so far away, in which might be human beings sorely needing assistance.

"They should be close aboard the ledge within an hour," Captain Eph said half to himself, "an' it looks as if she might strike near about here, unless them as are on board can pull her around so's to pass it."

"Do you really think there are men in her, sir?" Sidney asked, as he tried in vain to see the distant object without the aid of glasses.

"That I'd be willin' to swear to, Sonny, though how much life may be in 'em is another matter. They're fishermen, that's certain, an' have likely parted company with their vessel in a fog—"

"What's goin' on up there?" Uncle Zenas cried from below. "It seems as if you'd struck somethin' out of the common, else you're makin' a good deal of talk 'bout nothin'."

"You'd better run down an' tell him what's in

sight, Sonny," the old keeper whispered. "Uncle Zenas is one of them fretty men that can't seem to wait with any show of patience when they think anything 'special is goin' on."

"What's the matter?" came in tones of impatience from the kitchen. "Have you all gone crazy?"

"I'm comin' down to tell you about it," Sidney cried, and a moment later the second assistant's face paled as he learned that human beings who stood in sore need of aid were probably near at hand.

"It'll be a case of seein' the poor creeters perish right under our noses!" he exclaimed. "What with Cap'n Eph so lame that he can't stand on more'n one leg, an' me laid up through bein' pretty nigh broiled, this 'ere crew ain't in shape to lend a hand, no matter how much sufferin' may heave in sight."

Mr. Peters had gone into the lantern after helping the lad move Captain Eph, and, because he found it difficult to remain in any one place very long at a time, Sidney went up to him.

The first assistant was standing near the lens, looking into the glass intently, and Sidney asked in surprise:

"What's the matter? Anything wrong there?"

"Not a bit, Sonny; I was tryin' to figger somethin' out."

"Has it to do with the lens, that you are looking

at it so sharply ?' Sidney asked, and Mr. Peters wheeled suddenly around as he replied:

"I declare I don't know why my eyes happened to be on that, for it hadn't anything to do with what is in my mind. I was tryin' to figger how we might lend a hand if that 'ere dory strikes the ledge, as I reckon she will."

"You couldn't even stand on the rocks, while the sea is running as it is now."

"I ain't so certain 'bout that, though I'll admit that a man couldn't keep his footin' there, an' 'tend to much of anything else; but the tide is ebbin' now, an' it'll be within an hour of low water by the time that 'ere dory gets here. I'm thinkin' you'll be able to see quite a bit of Carys' Ledge by that time. Has Cap'n Eph made out anything new ?"

"I didn't stop to ask him when I came up, and I may as well go back now."

Mr. Peters did not attempt to detain the lad; he was so deeply engrossed with the problem which presented itself, that it made little difference whether he was alone, or surrounded by the entire crew.

When he entered the keeper's room Captain Eph asked sharply:

"What's Sammy doin' ?"

"Trying to figure out how he can help those who are in the dory, if she strikes the ledge, sir."

“I knew he was up to somethin’ of that kind ! Sammy may be pig-headed an’ irritable at times, but let anything like this come up, an’ his heart swells out till it’s too big for his body. He never counts the danger if there’s a show for helpin’ them as are in trouble.”

“He asked if you had made out anything new, sir.”

“There’s no question about men bein’ in the dory—two of ’em, an’ one’s alive, for I saw him climb over the for’ard thwart. I allow they’re hopin’ the boat will drift this way, believin’ we can pick ’em up.”

Until this moment there had been a faint hope in Sidney’s heart that the dory might have no living freight, and now he grew literally sick with fear. It would be far more horrible for the men to be thrown up on the ledge when nothing might be done to aid them, than when the *Nautilus* foundered, for then the sufferers could not be seen.

He had turned away that he might not look out upon the cruel sea, which could be so calm and smiling at times, when Captain Eph said suddenly :

“Tell Sammy to come down here. Oh, if I hadn’t been so stubborn as to insist on gettin’ inter this room !”

Sidney was considerably mystified by these last words ; but he hastened to obey the command, and

when the first assistant came down-stairs Captain Eph said hurriedly :

“ If I’d staid in the kitchen where I belonged, we could have rigged a block to a bar across the outside of the west window, an’ by overhaulin’ all the spare line in the store room, have enough to make a tackle that would reach from the tower, well down inter the water.”

“ Yes, but what then ? ” Mr. Peters asked breathlessly, understanding that the keeper was eager to do something toward saving life.

“ With the loose end, well padded so’s it wouldn’t cut, belayed jest under your arms, there’d be a good chance for you to go well inter the surf, seein’s how Uncle Zenas an’ I could haul you out all right; but the trouble is that I’m up here, an’ he’s down there.”

“ I can fix all that in a shake,” Mr. Peters cried excitedly. “ Get on my back, an’ if I don’t have you down there in short order, it’ll be owin’ to a stroke of hard luck.”

Under almost any other circumstances the old keeper would not have made the painful attempt; but he was quite as eager to lend the sufferers a helping hand as was the first assistant, and Sidney was astounded by the rapidity with which the change was made.

Mr. Peters had not waited for Captain Eph to prepare for the move; but, swinging the old man's arms over his shoulders, he half-pulled, half-hoisted him on his back, running down the stairs as swiftly as he could have done without a burden.

Uncle Zenas cried out in alarm at the sudden appearance of the first assistant with the keeper on his back, and when Mr. Peters had lowered him into a chair, Captain Eph said grimly, striving to repress a groan:

"We had to come, Zenas, for we count on bein' ready for that 'ere dory, if so be she drifts in here."

"You look about as fit as I am for anything of that kind, Ephraim Downs," Uncle Zenas cried scornfully. "We're two poor old cripples who can't even help ourselves."

"I ain't so certain 'bout that, Uncle Zenas," the keeper said cheerily, for the hope of aiding others had brightened him up wonderfully. "I'm reckonin' that both you an' I can lend a hand. Hold on an' see what Sammy is doin'."

Mr. Peters had not waited to hear the conversation, but, immediately after depositing the keeper in a chair, had hastened to the store room, returning a moment later with a short length of joist and some seizing stuff.

Opening the window which looked toward the west,

he shoved the timber through, pulling it across the aperture on the outside of the tower, and there making it fast.

A second visit to the store room, and he returned with a small pulley block, and a large quantity of rope about the size of that used on vessels as heaving-lines.

By the time he had made the block fast to the timber, Uncle Zenas began to have some idea of the plan, and he cried approvingly:

“You’ve got a great head, Ephraim, an’ I reckon that’s why you’re so set in your ways. Sammy can stray off quite a bit from the tower, with us to look after him.”

“Yes, an’ the tide is fallin’,” Mr. Peters added as he continued his work of making ready by taking off his coat and vest, and wrapping one end of the line with an old coat.

“There’s no need of your goin’ out yet a while, Sammy,” Captain Eph said as he noted the first assistant’s movements.

“I was allowin’ that we’d better give the contrivance a try while we had time, so’s to make certain it would work smooth.”

This seemed a reasonable precaution, and Captain Eph knotted the padded rope around the first assistant’s body, after which the window overlooking

the eastern side of the ledge was opened, and Mr. Peters clambered up on the sill.

The keeper and Uncle Zenas, sitting near each other, hauled the line taut as it ran through the block, and when Mr. Peters swung himself off the sill of the window, they lowered him slowly to the rocks below.

Sidney, standing near by, could see the first assistant as he went boldly into the surf, and, as the waves carried him from his feet, the two men in the kitchen readily pulled him backward and upward until it was possible for him to regain his footing.

“It’s a good plan, Uncle Zenas,” Captain Eph said approvingly; “but I allow that Sammy stands a chance to get more or less skin scraped off of him if we’re called upon to do the job in a hurry.”

“He won’t know it until the job is done, an’ then we’ll have plenty of time to patch him up. Sonny, s’pose you get the glasses, an’ keep your eye on the dory.”

When Sidney returned to the kitchen with the glasses in his hand, Mr. Peters had just been hauled up through the window, and was standing by the stove while the water, unheeded by Uncle Zenas, ran in streams from his garments to the floor.

It was now possible to see the oncoming dory plainly with the naked eye, for she was hardly more

than a mile away, and drifting rapidly toward the ledge; but by the aid of the glasses the lad could make out plainly the forms of the two occupants, one of whom appeared to be crouching in the bow with his head above the rail as if watching, while the other lay without movement in the stern.

“She couldn’t make a better course for this ’ere ledge if the best sailor who ever walked a plank was steerin’ her,” Captain Eph said as he looked seaward. “She’ll strike nearabout the cove, an’ the question is whether Sammy can get that far before bein’ knocked down.”

“Don’t be in too big a hurry to pull me out, an’ I’ll get mighty near to those fellows, if so be the dory strikes anywhere near where we’re expectin’,” Mr. Peters said as he came toward the window. “We won’t be havin’ any too much time, if I start now,” and he stepped out of the window, clutching the sill until the two at the rope were ready to lower him away.

Sidney no longer held the glasses to his eyes. It was possible to see everything plainly by this time, and, breathing heavily because of his excitement, the lad watched intently the movements of the boat, which now seemed to be close upon the rocks.

The man in the bow was standing up, having seen Mr. Peters’ descent from the window, and under-

standing how a rescue was to be effected, if indeed such should prove to be the case.

Tossing on the crest of a wave, and then disappearing entirely in the trough of the sea, the dory pitched and staggered onward, coming as straight as an arrow for the tower, despite the plunging and rolling.

The man in the bow stepped toward the stern and appeared to be trying to drag the other to his feet; but it was as if he clutched one from whom life had already departed, and, with a gesture of despair, he went forward to the extreme bow.

Mr. Peters had made his way over the rocks to the very line of surf, and stood there until the moment should come for the supreme effort, while Uncle Zenas and Captain Eph watched his every movement closely, prepared to slacken the rope or haul in as should be necessary when the battle with the waves was begun. Nearly in the center of the room, but where he could see all that took place, Sidney stood, his eyes fixed on the boat while his hands were clenched as if by much straining of the muscles he might aid in the coming struggle.

Then the dory was raised high in the air by a huge comber, and Mr. Peters ran swiftly forward, knowing when that crest of water fell, the frail craft would be dashed upon the rocks.

There was an instant of agonizing suspense, and then the brave light keeper was lost to view amid the swirl of water and foam.

While one might have counted ten, neither men nor boat could be distinguished in the turmoil, and then came a sudden jerk on the line as the undertow carried Mr. Peters seaward, when Captain Eph shouted hoarsely:

“Haul ! Haul for your life, Zenas !” and Sidney grasped the line, putting forth all his strength with the keepers, that their comrade might the more quickly be drawn to the surface.

The strain upon the rope seemed to be enormous ; it was quite as much as the three could do to gather in any of the length, and Captain Eph was muttering half to himself that the line was not sufficiently large to bear the weight, when Uncle Zenas cried excitedly :

“He’s got one of ’em ! He’s got one, an’ what’s more, the little runt looks as if he was all right. Sammy Peters isn’t anybody’s fool, an’ that’s a living fact !”

Now the rope came in more readily, and as the three hauled, more gently after a time lest their comrade be dragged too roughly across the jagged rocks, Mr. Peters staggered to his feet as he held close to his breast the man whose life he had saved at the peril of his own.

“The waves won’t bother him now; don’t do any more than take in the slack!’ Captain Eph cried, and, raising his voice, he shouted as the wind lulled for an instant, “What about the other one, Sammy?”

“He was the same as dead before the boat struck, so this fellow tells me, leastways, I didn’t see anything of him,” Mr. Peters replied as he staggered onward toward the tower, and when he reached the base it could be seen that he was unfastening the rope from his body.

“What’s goin’ on now?” Captain Eph demanded.

“I’ll send this man up first, for I ain’t sure as he has got strength enough left to make himself fast,” Mr. Peters replied, and a moment later he gave the word, “Haul away!”

“Stand by to fend off, Sonny,” Uncle Zenas cried, and just as Sidney stepped to the window in obedience to the command, the head of the rescued man appeared above the sill.

Sidney screamed shrilly as if in terror, and the stranger gave every evidence of fear while he seemed to shrink back, until Captain Eph cried sharply:

“What’s the matter with you, Sonny? Why don’t you bear a hand? There’s nothin’ to be afraid of; you’ve seen sailors who were in worse shape than he is.”

"It frightened me because he looked so much like Mr. Sawyer," the lad said hesitatingly as he went to the window again, and the stranger cried hoarsely:

"Are you Sidney Harlow?"

"Hold hard, matey!" Captain Eph said, shaking the rope as if to attract the rescued man's attention. "I don't allow that it's the proper time, while you're strung up here on the end of a line, to do very much tongue-waggin', leastways, if it is, I'd rather somebody else held turn. Shin in, an' be quick about it, for we can't afford to let the only sound keeper we've got on this 'ere light freeze to death on your account."

The stranger clambered over the window-sill, unfastened the rope from his body, and flung the free end down to Mr. Peters, after which he took Sidney's face in both his hands, as he asked again:

"Are you Sidney Harlow?"

"Of course I am; but you can't be Mr. Sawyer?"

"Why not, lad?"

"Because he was drowned. I saw him sink!"

"Ay, lad, but he came up within reach of the wreckage we went out to look at. Again and again I yelled while you were cruising around expecting to see me come to the surface near where I had disappeared; but you didn't hear me, and then the fog shut down again. I gave myself up for lost; but

within an hour two fishermen in a dory blundered along, and took me to their vessel three or four miles away. There was no such thing as finding the *West Wind* while the sea was covered with fog so thick that it could almost be cut with a knife, and I've served an apprenticeship as fisherman, eating my heart out because the skipper wouldn't put into port until he had a full fare."

Then Mr. Sawyer, one-time mate of the schooner *West Wind*, lifted Sidney in his arms as if he had been a baby, and covered his face with kisses, while Captain Eph and Uncle Zenas, regardless of the shivering first assistant on the rocks below, stared at the two in open-mouthed astonishment.

"Do you mean to tell me you're the sailorman who fell out of the motor boat, leavin' Sonny alone?" the old keeper cried as soon as the stranger had ceased caressing the lad.

"I'm the same one," Mr. Sawyer replied with a laugh, "an' it surely seems as if I wasn't born to be drowned, for this is the second time I've been rescued when the chances were big against me; but how does it happen that Sidney is here, and where is the *West Wind*?"

"If you people are countin' on spinnin' yarns, don't you think it would be a good idee to pull me in where I wouldn't freeze to death quite so soon?" Mr.

Peters cried from the ledge beneath the window. "I don't want to be fussy; but I'd rather be behind the stove than out here."

"I declare if I hadn't forgot all about poor little Sammy!" Captain Eph cried in a tone of contrition. "He must be chilled clean through to the bone by this time. Haul in, Uncle Zenas, an' stand by for squalls when he gets here, 'cause his temper ain't of the best jest now, an' there's good reason for losin' it."

Two minutes later Mr. Peters clambered through the window, looking around for a moment, and then he said that which gave his comrades to understand that he had heard all Mr. Sawyer said:

"I'm wonderin' how big a schooner I could pull inter the cove, if I hadn't anybody but two blessed old cripples to help me," and Uncle Zenas asked in surprise:

"What on earth do you mean, Sammy?"

"I was only tryin' to figger the thing out, 'cause after we've saved all hands belongin' to the *West Wind*, it will be a shame to let the schooner drift around instead of haulin' her up on the ledge," and having said this Mr. Peters slowly ascended to his own room that he might put on dry clothing.

This served to remind Captain Eph that Mr. Sawyer needed some attention, and he said to Sidney:

“S’pose you take the mate up-stairs, an’ give him anything of mine that he can wear, Sonny ? By the time he’s made a change, Uncle Zenas will have plenty of hot coffee, which I reckon he’ll be glad to drink.”

Sidney did as he was bidden, the mate following at his heels, and when the two had disappeared from view Uncle Zenas said solemnly :

“The ocean does cut some queer capers now an’ then ; but the queerest I’ve ever heard of is that both them who left the *West Wind* in the motor boat should have drifted in here to Carys’ Ledge.”

And Captain Eph replied in quite as grave a tone :

“If this last one brings us as much comfort as the first has, we’ll be two mighty lucky old men, Uncle Zenas.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE INSPECTOR.

Sidney told the story of his rescue to Mr. Sawyer, while the two were up-stairs selecting such articles from Captain Eph's wardrobe as the mate needed, and dwelt at length on the care and affection which the light-house crew had bestowed upon him.

When they descended to the kitchen again a substantial meal was set before the rescued sailor, and after it had been eaten, he explained how he chanced to be adrift in the dory with neither food nor water.

He, with one of the men from the fisherman, had been sent out to set trawls, and while they were thus engaged a white squall struck them. To make any effort at battling against it was out of the question, and they allowed their boat to drift before it, doing no more than to keep her head on to the seas, believing the fishing schooner would be able to pick them up.

Their story was not unlike the many which we read of from time to time, among the disasters to the fishing fleet. During the remainder of that day, and all the night, they scudded before the wind, and when

morning came, with nothing to be seen on the angry waste of waters, they exhausted themselves in the effort to row the dory back whence they came, believing the schooner had been hove to.

When another night approached they were no longer able even to guide the boat. Both suffered bitterly with thirst and hunger, and as the wind continued to blow with great fury, it looked as if they were doomed to a lingering death, with but the faintest hope of a rescue. Mr. Sawyer's companion gave up the unequal struggle in despair, refusing to raise a hand in his own behalf.

“From that moment,” Mr. Sawyer said as he concluded the sad story, “he remained aft in the bottom of the boat, and I was unable to arouse him. How long we drifted after that, I cannot rightly say; but when I saw you making preparations to aid us, I tried to pull him to his feet, that he might be in shape to help himself in some slight degree. I believe he was already dead, and, knowing that I could not get ashore through the surf burdened with his lifeless body, I gave no further heed to him. Even as it was, I came near drowning Mr. Peters, for the two of us were rolled over and over half a dozen times before you pulled us to our feet, and then I was so dazed that but for his grip on my collar I must have fallen back into the surf.”

“If Sammy once got hold of you it was a case of your comin’ out,” Uncle Zenas said with a laugh. “He’s so stubborn that nothin’ short of bein’ really choked to death would have made him give up.”

Then the conversation turned upon the possibilities of Mr. Sawyer’s being able to gain the mainland, and before it had come to an end Mr. Peters and Sidney were forced to go into the lantern to light the lamp.

Captain Eph was determined to return to his own room, and once more he was half-dragged, half-carried up-stairs; but this time the task was accomplished with less pain to him because of the assistance Mr. Sawyer was able to give.

Next morning the wind showed signs of abating, and the old keeper predicted that within eight and forty hours it would be possible to make a landing on the ledge.

“Then we shall see the tender again, if it so be the inspector wants to get some word to us, an’ you can go back in her,” Captain Eph said as if there was no question in his mind as to what would happen; and Mr. Sawyer asked concerning Sidney’s plans for the future.

The lad himself explained that he proposed to remain on the ledge, unless his father should send instructions to the contrary, and Mr. Sawyer said in a matter-of-fact tone:

“ I’ll tell the captain how comfortably you are situated here, and even if he has made arrangements for you to go elsewhere, there’s little doubt but that he’ll change them.”

“ Do you expect to see father very soon ? ” Sidney asked in surprise.

“ Ay, lad, if I can get ashore, and am lucky enough to find a vessel ready to sail for Porto Rico, I’m hopin’ to get there before he leaves. I’d offer to take you with me; but in case my plan shouldn’t work exactly as I’ve figgered, you would be in a bad fix.”

“ Sonny had better stay where he is,” Captain Eph said emphatically, and Uncle Zenas added:

“ We couldn’t let him go while two of us are crippled, for we wouldn’t be able to run the light without him.”

Before night came the wind and sea had so far subsided that there was no longer any question about its being possible for the tender to send a boat ashore in case she came out to the reef within the next twenty-four hours, and Mr. Peters and Sidney worked like beavers to put the interior of the tower in the best possible shape for the reception of visitors.

When another day dawned the weather was all the veriest fresh-water sailor could have asked for, save that the sea still ran in long, heavy swells which

might have caused any but seasoned sailors considerable discomfort, and from the time breakfast had been eaten all hands kept watch for the approach of the steamer.

It was Captain Eph who first saw her in the distance, and he said, after making known the fact that she was heading for the ledge:

“The inspector must have got it into his head that things have been goin’ wrong in this ’ere tower, else he’d never come so soon again jest to bring a message from Sidney’s father.”

There is no need of saying that all hands were considerably excited by the time the little steamer slowed down on the western side of the ledge that a boat might be lowered, and Mr. Peters said, as he and Sidney went to the cove that they might meet whosoever was coming ashore:

“There’s no sense of our gettin’ into a stew before hand, Sonny. If so be we’ve done wrong without knowin’ it, we’ll hear about it soon enough, an’ if it’s a message from your father, there ain’t any call to feel bad. Wa’al, I declare, if that ain’t the inspector himself gettin’ into the boat!’ the first assistant added as he saw the officer. “This ain’t the time for his reg’lar visit, an’ I reckon we’re goin’ to be overhauled in great shape, though what it can be about beats me !”

Five minutes later the small boat was entering the cove, and a kindly-faced gentleman in the stern-sheets cried out :

“ Well, Mr. Peters, I hear that the crew of this light have been distinguishing themselves. So that is the new assistant you have taken on ? ” and he nodded toward Sidney. “ How are Captain Downs and Mr. Stubbs getting on ? ”

“ Uncle Zenas is so he can ’tend to the cookin’ all right, sir ; but he can’t amble ’round very lively. Cap’n Eph is likely to be lame quite a spell yet.”

“ Who is the stranger in the doorway ? ” and the inspector looked curiously toward the tower.

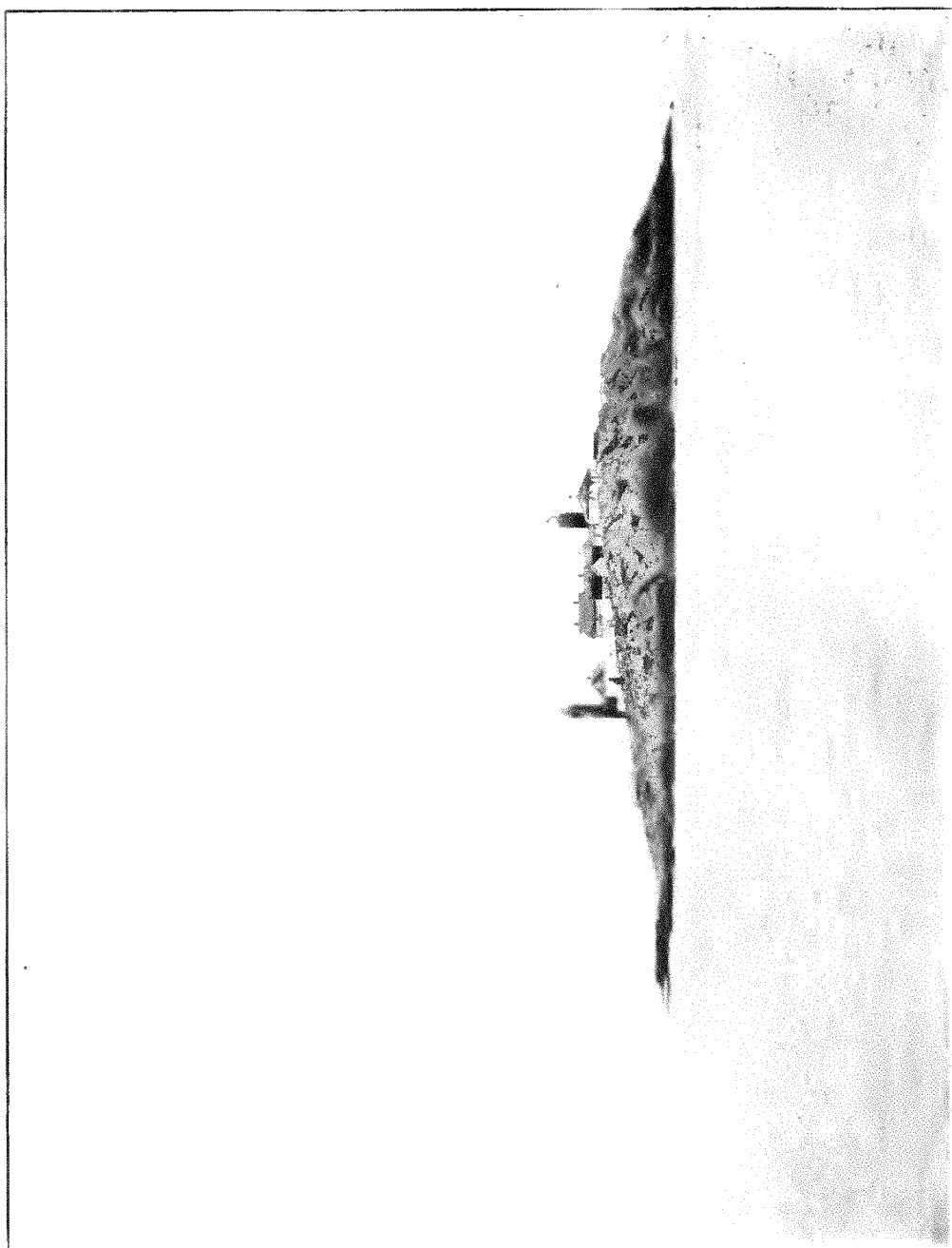
“ He’s a sailor we picked up day before yesterday, sir ; drifted here in a dory.”

“ Been doing more work as life-savers, have you ? ” the inspector asked in such a kindly tone that Sidney decided he had not come out to find fault.

By this time the officer had stepped ashore and was going toward the tower ; but, observing that Mr. Peters remained behind, he called :

“ I want to see you and Captain Downs together, Mr. Peters, and we may as well attend to the Department’s business first. Come in, please.”

“ Now there *is* trouble brewin’,” Mr. Peters whispered to Sidney, “ an’ it must be mighty serious, for this is the first time the inspector ever wanted me



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around when he was overhaulin' Cap'n Eph's accounts."

"He looks too friendly to be very fierce," Sidney replied, and the first assistant muttered:

"You can't allers tell by the look of a cat how far she'll jump. I'd rather have a man come at me hammer an' tongs, than be so terrible pleasant when he's gettin' ready to read the riot act."

When Mr. Peters and Sidney entered the kitchen the inspector was questioning Uncle Zenas as to how he had been injured, and the second assistant soon told the whole story, very briefly.

"I suppose Captain Downs is in his room," the inspector finally said. "We'll go there, and if it is possible for you to get up-stairs far enough to hear what is said, Mr. Stubbs, I shall be glad to have you do so."

"He's goin' to give all hands a wiggin'," Mr. Peters whispered, and Sidney felt strongly inclined to laugh outright, so comical was the expression of fear on the first assistant's face.

The crew of Cary's Ledge light was not long kept in suspense as to the reason for the inspector's visit. After assuring himself, by personal examination, that the keeper's injured limb had been attended to in a proper manner, he said abruptly as he took rather a bulky package from his pocket:

“Captain Nutter of the *Nautilus* reported to the Department, through me, that you two men, at great peril to yourselves, saved the lives of three of his crew and himself, all of whom would have unquestionably been drowned but for your heroic exertions. The Light-House Board has instructed me to say that they are proud to have such men in the service, and I have here a letter of commendation. The Treasury Department has sent these two gold medals on which are inscribed your names and the service rendered, in token that the Government holds you in especial esteem as brave men—such men as are needed in the light-house service.”

As the inspector spoke, the two keepers and Sidney gazed at him in open-mouthed astonishment, while from the head of the stairs could be heard the heavy breathing of Uncle Zenas, and when the cases containing the medals were being opened by the officer, the second assistant could remain silent no longer.

“You ain’t makin’ the littlest bit of a mistake, Mr. Inspector, when you call them two brave men ! I know what they did, an’ I’ll take my affidavit that you won’t find another couple of their age who’d put out in a dory sich a mornin’ as that when the barkentine laid on the shoal !”

“I am willing to say, judging from the statement made by Captain Nutter, that it was an exceptional

show of bravery, Mr. Stubbs, and am thoroughly well pleased to be able to put the medals in their hands. Why don't you look at them ?' he added as Captain Eph and Mr. Peters held the leather cases gingerly without offering to touch the heavy golden tokens.

"To tell the truth, sir, you've knocked the gimp all out of me !" the old keeper said as he brushed his eyes, and then threw his arms around Sidney as if on the verge of bursting into tears, while Mr. Peters choked and coughed, but spoke never a word.

Then the inspector, as if to break the silence which was becoming almost painful, said as he laid his hand on Sidney's head:

"It was because of you that we tried to land here the other day ; your father had requested that you be taken from the ledge, and a boarding-place be found for you on the mainland. Since having received your letter, however, he telegraphed, yesterday, that you be allowed to remain in the light until his return, and because of the assistance which I learn you have rendered the keepers, I see no reason why the Board will not grant his request."

"Then he's to stay, is he ?" Captain Eph cried, displaying a keener interest in the matter than he had in the medals, and the inspector repeated what he had already said.

“I’d rather have the little shaver with me for a year to come, than all the gold an’ letters the Board can send !” he cried, again holding Sidney very close to him, and the inspector quietly went down-stairs, leaving the two men and the boy alone.

Uncle Zenas was not disposed to keep secret Mr. Peters’ latest exhibition of bravery, and, calling upon Mr. Sawyer for confirmation, he told the story to the inspector in detail, concluding by saying:

“There are times when it’s terribly tryin’ to have Sammy pokin’ ’round the kitchen; but if any trouble comes up, you can count on him every minute of the day or night, no matter how many chances he may be takin’ of losin’ his own life. He an’ Sonny together have run the light, done the cookin’, an’ doctored Cap’n Eph and me up in great shape since we were laid by the heels.”

“I will report to the Board that which you have told us,” the inspector said gravely, and then announced that he intended to leave the ledge at once. “I wanted to give the medals into the hands of the keepers, rather than intrust the matter to others, and there is nothing now to keep me.”

“Don’t you want to see Cap’n Eph agin ?” Uncle Zenas cried, surprised that the inspector should even think of going away without informing the keeper of his purpose.

“It will be well to leave them alone for a time, and whatever business I may have in regard to the boy can be transacted when I next come out on a tour of inspection. Now, Mr. Sawyer, if you are ready, we will go aboard.”

Thus it was that when, ten minutes later, Mr. Peters and Sidney came into the kitchen, there was no one save Uncle Zenas to be seen, and the light-house tender was hardly more than a faint smudge in the distance.

“The inspector has gone, an’ took Sawyer with him !” Mr. Peters cried to the keeper when he learned of what had occurred.

“Gone ?” Captain Eph cried incredulously. “Why, that can’t be, for I haven’t had a chance to make a report about the way Uncle Zenas an’ I have neglected our duty.”

“He left jest the same as if he knew all about it,” the second assistant cried, and then, turning to Mr. Peters, he demanded, “What have you done with your medal, Sammy ?”

“We’ve put ’em both away in Cap’n Eph’s box. You don’t s’pose we’d keep the like of them knockin’ ’round loose, do you ?”

“Of course I s’pose it !” Uncle Zenas cried angrily. “I’m allowin’ that you’ll wear ’em all the time, so’s folks will see what you’ve done. I’d

like to know what medals are for, if not to wear."

"Wa'al, the ones that are upstairs will stay jest where they are, 'cept when you get ready to look at 'em. Do you allow, Uncle Zenas, that I'd look pretty cleanin' fish, or knockin' 'round over the ledge with a big lump of gold hangin' to my coat?"

The second assistant was by no means satisfied with this statement. He declared that if the medals were not to be worn daily, they should at least be kept where visitors would be certain to see them, and threatened that, unless some arrangement of that kind were made, he would resign his position of second assistant without delay, "rather than stay 'round with a couple of idjuts who didn't know enough to spread themselves when they had the chance."

Uncle Zenas carried his point finally, otherwise his comrades might have had difficulty in obtaining food, save by using force, and before he would consent to take the first step toward cooking dinner, the medals were hung conspicuously in the watch-room.

Sidney was woefully disappointed because he had not been able to send some message by Mr. Sawyer to his father; but Captain Eph consoled him by predicting that the mate would not succeed in getting to Porto Rico before the *West Wind* had taken her departure.

“He’s got to find a vessel bound for that port, an’ then coax the cap’n into givin’ him a passage, all of which takes time. It don’t stand to reason, Sonny, that he’ll get there, an’ your messages can be sent in a reg’lar letter, for of course your father wrote you an’ me ’bout the same time he telegraphed to the inspector. It seems to me everything has come ’round jest as we’d like to have it, an’ you’re to stay here with us !”

“But how am I to get the letter, if father wrote one ?” the lad asked anxiously, and Uncle Zenas replied:

“Don’t you fear but that it’ll be sent out here to you. The inspector is bound to come again before long, for he jest the same as said so, an’ all we’ve got to do is enjoy ourselves—that is, when Cap’n Eph can toddle ’round once more, an’ I’m able to move about without most killin’ myself.”

This conversation had been carried on with Uncle Zenas sitting on the stairs where he could look into the keeper’s room, for he had refused to go back to the kitchen, or allow any one else to do so, until the medals had been hung in the watch-room according to his instructions.

Now, however, he made ready to set about the work of getting dinner, and astonished his comrades by declaring that when he had cooked the best meal pos-

sible from the stores on hand, it should be served in the keeper's room, regardless of the additional labor such an arrangement would entail.

"You'll have to lug everythin', even to the dishes, up here, an' carry 'em back again !" Captain Eph exclaimed, and Uncle Zenas replied:

"I wouldn't care if the whole outfit was to be taken inter the lantern, it should be done. I'd like to know, Ephraim Downs, if we're ever likely to have so much reason for a thanksgivin' dinner as we've got this day ?"

"You're right, Uncle Zenas, you're right, an' see-in's how the only way we can celebrate is by eatin', get to work, an' if dinner ain't ready till midnight, we'll turn to all the heartier for havin' waited so long."

"You'll have to bring up the table an' the dishes, Sammy," the second assistant said in a tone of authority, and Mr. Peters replied with a grin:

"I reckon that won't be any very hard job; but if you're countin' on my luggin' you too, the plan won't work, for nothin' short of a derrick would answer on sich a job as that."

"If I can't get 'round this 'ere tower without callin' on you for help, I'll stay in the kitchen, same's I've been doin'," Uncle Zenas replied sharply, and then he made his way down the stairs, a furious clat-

tering of pots and pans telling a few moments later that he had commenced work on the "thanksgiving" dinner.

* * * *

And here it is, while preparations for the celebration are in progress, that we must leave the crew of Carys' Ledge and their guest, for the very good reason that it would not be practicable to follow them day by day to the present time. The year which Sidney was to remain there does not come to an end until next October, and, therefore, it is impossible to say whether he will leave the crew when his father returns, or live so near them that daily visits may be possible.

More than once since that day when he delivered the medals has the inspector hinted that as a reward for their faithful services it was probable they would be transferred to a light-house on the mainland, and during his last visit he told Sidney as a very great secret that he believed the change would be made during this present summer.

When this has been done, the three light keepers will be stationed near Sidney's old home, and he believes that he will be allowed to live near, if not really with them, while attending school.

The motor boat was built as Mr. Peters had planned, and early in the spring after the wreck of

the *Nautilus*, she was taken to Cary's Ledge. During this summer she has been used for pleasure excursions, trips to the mainland, or for fishing on nearly every pleasant day, and that she is a seaworthy craft may be inferred from the fact that Uncle Zenas has been out in her a dozen times or more.

It would indeed be a labor of love to set down more concerning the lives of these three light keepers and the lad whom they call "Sonny"; and at some future day, if the young people so desire, the full particulars of Sidney's stay on Carys' Ledge, after the visit of the inspector with the medals, shall be written.



APPENDIX.

EXTRACTS FROM OFFICIAL REPORTS.

To the end that the modern light-house service may be the better understood and appreciated by whosoever reads this story of the Maine coast, the following extracts are taken from the last annual report of the Light-House Board, and from the work on the Light-House Service, prepared by Mr. Johnson, chief clerk of the Light-House Board, and published by the Government:

The famous Pharos of Alexandria, built about 285 B.C., is the first light of undoubted record. The light-house at Corunna, Spain, is believed to be the oldest existing light-tower. This was built in the reign of Trajan, and in 1634 it was reconstructed. The erection of the Eddystone Light-house, off Plymouth, England, formed an era in the construction of light-houses. The masonry was 76 feet 6 inches, and the top of the lantern 93 feet, above the foundation. It was completed in 1759. The various courses were so dovetailed into each other, and the whole fifty so secured together, that the tower was almost as solid as if cut out of the solid block. Immense difficulties had to be overcome from the first landing on the rock on April 5, 1756, to the laying of the first stone, June 12, 1757, and the last, on August 24, 1759. But

strong as it was, it became necessary to take it down and rebuild it on a neighboring rock, as that on which it was founded was weakened from the constant assaults of the sea. This was safely done within our own time.

The Wolf Rock Light-house, off Land's End, Cornwall, England, is the last great British work, and both in its structure and its illumination it combines all the refined improvements. A survey was made in 1861, and the foundation commenced in March, 1862. In the first season only eighty-three hours of work could be done, and between that and its completion, on July 19, 1869, there were in the eight working seasons two hundred and ninety-six landings on the rock, and the time occupied was equal to about one hundred and one working days of ten hours each. The cost was £62,726.

The great distinction between the later towers and their predecessors is that the stones of each course are dovetailed together laterally and vertically, so that the use of metal or wooden pins is needless. This method was first used at the Hanois Rock, Guernsey. On the upper face and at one end of each block is a dovetailed projection; and on the under face and at the other end is a dovetailed indentation. The upper and under dovetails are made just to fall into each other, and when the hydraulic cement is placed on the surface it so locks the dovetailing that the stones cannot be separated without breaking. Thus, when the cement is set and hardened, the whole of the base is literally one solid mass of granite. The lower courses for the first 39 feet of the Wolf

Rock Light-house have fillets on their outer edges, into which the upper course is stepped, and this prevents the action of the waves from penetrating the joint.

There is little doubt but that the early colonists recognized the necessity for beacons with which to guide their home-returning shallops to a safe anchorage, and that they took effective means to show the English and Dutch ships which should make their land-fall at night the safe way to the harbor. But the first authentic evidence of this being done at the public charge, is the record of the proceedings of the general court of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, from which it appears that on March 9, 1673, a petition came from the citizens of Nantasket, Massachusetts (now Hull), for the lessening of their taxes, because of the material and labor they had expended over and above their proportion in building the beacon on Point Allerton, the most prominent headland near the entrance to Boston harbor. At that session also it appears that bills were paid from Nantasket for making and furnishing ‘fier-bales of pitch and ocum for the beacon at Allerton Point,’ which “fier-bales” were burned in an iron grate or basket on the top of a beacon, for the building of which Nantasket had furnished 400 boat-loads of stone.

The first light-house on this continent was built at the entrance to Boston harbor, on Little Brewster Island, in 1715-16, at a cost of £2,285 17s 8½d. It was erected by the order and at the expense of the general court of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, and it

was supported by light-dues of 1d per ton on all incoming and outgoing vessels, except coasters, levied by the collector of imports at Boston.

The maritime colonies followed the example of Massachusetts, and when the United States by the act of August 7, 1789, accepted the title to, and joint jurisdiction over, the light-houses on the coast, and agreed to maintain them thereafter, they were eight in number, and comprised the following lights, all of which are still in existence, though so greatly improved that they are the same only in purpose and in site:

Portsmouth Harbor Light, New Hampshire; Boston Light, on Little Brewster Island; the Gurnet Light, near Plymouth, Massachusetts; Brant Point Light, on Nantucket, Massachusetts; Beaver Tail Light, on Conanicut Island, Rhode Island, in Narragansett Bay; Sandy Hook Light, New Jersey, entrance to New York harbor; Cape Henlopen, Delaware, at the entrance to Delaware Bay; Charleston Main Light on Morris Island, entrance to the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina.

The theory of coast lighting is that each coast shall be so set with towers that the rays from their lights shall meet and pass each other, so that a vessel on the coast shall never be out of sight of a light, and that there shall be no dark places between lights. This is the theory upon which the United States is proceeding, and it plants lights where they are most needed upon those lines. Hence from year to year the length of the dark spaces on its coasts is lessened or expunged entirely,

and the day will come when all its coasts will be defined from end to end by a band of lights by night, and by well-marked beacons by day.

In the first century of its existence the light-house establishment of the United States cost about ninety-three and a quarter millions of dollars.

In 1791 the amount expended by the Government in support of its light-house establishment was \$22,591.94. In 1890 the expenditures amounted to \$3,503,994.12.

The average yearly sum paid for maintaining an average light-station of each class is:

For a first-order light-station.....	\$ 3,842.00
For a second-order light-station	2,711.12
For a third-order light-station.....	1,568.77
For a fourth-order light-station	1,107.83
For a fifth-order light-station.....	635.05
For a sixth-order light-station.....	552.17
For an outside light-ship of recent build	7,078.28
For an inside light-ship of old build	3,546.32
For an average fog-signal, operated by steam or hot air	2,260.59
For a steam tender of recent build.....	15,126.83

There are under the control of the light-house establishment the following named aids to navigation:

Light-houses and beacon lights.....	1,423
Light-vessels in position	46
Light-vessels for relief.....	8
Gas-lighted buoys in position.....	130
Fog-signals operated by steam, caloric, or oil engines, about	197
Fog-signals operated by machinery, about.....	233
Post-lights, about.....	1,868
Day or unlighted beacons, about	668
Whistling buoys in position, about.....	88
Bell-buoys in position, about.....	139

Other buoys in position, including pile buoys and stakes in
fifth district and buoys in Alaskan waters 5,088

In the construction, care, and maintenance of these
aids to navigation there are employed:

Steam tenders.....	40
Steam launches	7
Sailing tenders	1
Light keepers, about.....	1,525
Officers and crews of light-vessels and tenders, about ...	1,279
Laborers in charge of post-lights, about.	1,600

LIST OF MEMBERS OF LIGHT-HOUSE BOARD, JULY 1st, 1904.

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MAJ. HARRY F. HODGES, Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army.

DR. HENRY S. PRITCHETT, Institute of Technology.

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Partial list of appropriations made at the second session of the Fifty-Eighth Congress for the Light-House Establishment:

Supplies of light-houses.....	\$475,000
Repairs of light-houses	740,000
Salaries of light keepers	815,000
Expenses of light-vessels.....	525,000
Expenses of buoyage	550,000
Expenses of fog-signals.....	205,000
Lighting of rivers	300,000
Survey of light-house sites.....	1,000
Oil houses for light-stations.....	10,000
Porto Rican light-house service	75,000
Maintenance of lights on channels of Great Lakes ...	4,000
Pointe au Pelee light-vessel, Lake Erie	4,000

