

SAVED AT SEA.—A LIGHTHOUSE STORY.

By the Author of "Christie's Old Organ," "Little Dot," etc.

CHAP. VIII.—(Continued.)

There were four men in the boat. They were sailors, and strangers to me. One of them, the one whose voice we had heard, got out to speak to my grandfather.

"Something's wrong," said my grandfather, before he could begin; "something's wrong with that poor lad."

"Yes," said the man, "we've got him here," and he pointed to the boat.

A cold shudder passed over me as he said this, and I caught sight of something lying at the men's feet at the bottom of the boat.

"What's wrong with him? Has he had an accident? Is he much hurt?"

"He's dead!" said the man solemnly.

"Oh dear!" said my grandfather, in a choking voice. "However shall we tell his wife? However shall we tell poor Mary?"

"How did it happen?" I asked at length, as soon as I could speak.

"He was getting a sack of flour on board, over yonder," said one of the men in the boat, "and it was awful thick and foggy, and he missed his footing on the plank, and fell in; that's how it happened!"

"Yes," said another man, "and it seems he couldn't swim, and there was no boat nigh hand to help him. Joe Malcolmson was there, and saw him fall in; but before he could call any of us, it was all over with him. We got him out at last, but he was quite gone; we fetched a doctor, and took him into a house near, and rubbed him, and did all we could; but it wasn't of no good at all! Shall we bring him in?"

"Wait a bit," said my grandfather, "we must tell that poor girl first. Which of you will go and tell her?"

The men looked at each other and did not speak. At last one of them, who knew my grandfather a little, said, "You'd better tell her, Sandy; she knows you, and she'll bear it better than from strangers; we'll wait here till you come back and then we can bring him in."

"Well," said my grandfather, with a groan, "I'll go then! Come with me, Alick, my lad," he said, turning to me; "but no, perhaps I'd better go by myself."

So he went very slowly up towards the lighthouse, and I remained behind with the four men on the shore, and that silent form lying at the bottom of the boat.

I was much frightened, and felt as if it was all a very terrible dream, and as if I should soon

wake up to find it had all passed away.

It seemed a long time before my grandfather came back, and then he only said in a low voice, "You can bring him now, my lads; she knows about it now."

And so the mournful little procession moved on, through the field and garden and court, to the Millars' house, my grandfather and I following.

I shall never forget that night, nor the strange, solemn feeling I had then.

Mrs. Millar was very ill; the shock had been too much for her. The men went back in the boat to bring a doctor to the island to see her, and the doctor sent them back again to bring a nurse. He said he was afraid she would have an attack of brain-fever, and he thought her very ill indeed.

My grandfather and I sat in

grasped it very tightly, as he said this. "Yes," he said again, "it might have been me; and, if it had, I wonder where I should have been now!"

I didn't speak, and he went on: "I wonder where Jem is now, poor fellow; I've been thinking of that all night, ever since I saw him lying there at the bottom of that boat."

So I told him of what Jem Millar had said to me, the last time I had seen him.

"On the rock!" said my grandfather. "Did he say he was on the rock? Dear me! I wish I could say as much, Alick my lad."

"Can't you and I come as he came, grandfather?" I said. "Can't we come and build on the rock, too?"

"Well," said my grandfather, "I wish we could, my lad. I begin to see what he meant, and



"PUFF, PUFF!" SAID LITTLE TIMPEY.

the Millars' house all night, for the nurse did not arrive until early in the morning. The six children were fast asleep in their little beds. I went to look at them once, to see if my little Timpey was all right; she was lying in little Polly's bed, their tiny hands fast clasped together as they slept. The tears came fast into my eyes, as I thought that they both had lost a father, and yet neither of them knew anything of their loss!

When the nurse arrived, my grandfather and I went home. But we could not sleep; we lighted the kitchen fire, and sat over it in silence for a long time.

Then my grandfather said: "Alick, my lad, it has given me such a turn as I haven't had for many a day. It might have been me, Alick; it might just as well have been me!"

I put my hand in his, and

what the old gentleman meant too. He said, 'You're on the sand, my friend; you're on the sand, and it won't stand the storm; no, it won't stand the storm.' I've just had those words in my ears all the time we were sitting over there by Mrs. Millar. But dear me, I don't know how to get on the rock; I don't indeed."

The whole of the next week, poor Mrs. Millar lay between life and death. At first the doctor gave no hope whatever of her recovery, but after a time, she grew a little better, and he began to speak more encouragingly. I spent my time with the poor children, and hardly left them a moment, doing all I could to keep them quietly happy, that they might not disturb their mother.

One sorrowful day only, my grandfather and I were absent for several hours from the lighthouse; for we went ashore, to

follow poor Jem Millar to the grave. His poor wife was unconscious, and knew nothing of what was going on.

When, after some weeks, the fever left her, she was still very weak and unfit for work. But there was much to be done, and she had no time to sit still, for a new man had been appointed to take her husband's place; and he was to come into the house at the beginning of the month.

We felt very dull and sad the day that the Millars went away. We went down to the pier with them, and saw them on board the steamer—Mrs. Millar, the six little children, and the servant girl, all dressed in mourning, and all of them crying. They were going to Mrs. Millar's home, far away in the north of Scotland, where her old father and mother were still living.

The island seemed very lonely and desolate when they were gone. If it had not been for our little sunbeam, as my grandfather called her, I do not know what we should have done. Every day we loved her more, and what we dreaded most, was, that a letter would arrive some Monday morning, to tell us that she must go away from us.

"Dear me, Alick," my grandfather would often say, "how little you and me thought that stormy night, what a little treasure we had got wrapped up in that funny little bundle!"

The child was growing fast; the fresh sea air did her great good, and every day she became more intelligent and pretty.

We were very curious to know who was appointed in Jem Millar's place; but we were not able to find out even what his name was. Captain Sayers said that he did not know anything about it; and the gentlemen who came over once or twice to see about the house being repaired, and put in order for the new comer, were very silent on the subject, and seemed to think us very inquisitive if we asked any questions. Of course, our comfort depended very much upon who our neighbor was, for he and my grandfather would be constantly together, and we should have no one else in the world to speak to.

My grandfather was very anxious that we should give the man a welcome to the island, and make him comfortable on his first arrival. So we set to work, as soon as the Millars were gone, to dig up the untidy garden belonging to the next house, and make it as neat and pretty as we could, for the new comers.

"I wonder how many of them there will be!" I said, as we were at work in their garden.

"Maybe, only just the man," said my grandfather. "When I came here first, I was a young unmarried man, Alick. But we shall soon know all about him!"