

THE CRAFTSMAN;

AND

CANADIAN MASONIC RECORD.

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THE LOST CHILD.

A MASONIC STORY.

CHAPTER I.

Faster and faster spread the flames, and now the ship was enveloped in a fiery sheet. Men and women rushed madly over the side, to meet a quicker but less painful death.

The boats, with one exception, had been overladen and capsized. There were hasty prayers, and heartrending cries of misery and distress. Death hovered, vulture-like, over the victims. Some clung desperately to the vessel's side, some supported themselves in the water by articles snatched hastily from the burning ship, and with which they had leaped wildly into the sea. The captain sung through his trumpet:

"Take heart and sustain yourself as long as possible. A ship is coming to our relief."

James Durant stood upon the almost deserted deck, with his only child but four years of age, folded closely in his arms. His eyes swept the horizon in search of the ship to which the captain had alluded. He discovered it at last, but it was at least four miles off. Before the ship could arrive they must be burned to death; or, if he sprang, as others had, both he and the child would be drowned, for he was no swimmer.

The little arms were twined about his neck, the pale cheek rested confidently against his own, but the brave child did not tremble.

"O my God, is there no help?" cried the despairing father, as the flames swept nearer, and he felt that his present position could be held but a little longer.

"Here, give the child to me, and I will save her," and turning quickly, Mr. Durant stood face to face with a stranger who had a life-preserver in his hand.

"Quick! there is no time to be lost! The child can have my life-preserver, and it will float her easily. Yonder is another ship; I have been watching it for the last five minutes. It will reach us in half an hour at the most. There, that is fastened securely. Now, little girl, I am going to throw you into the water. You are not afraid?"

"No, no; but papa?"

The father caught her frantically in his arms.