

The Pillar of Light

BY LOUIS TRACY

Author of "The Wings of the Morning"

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CHAPTER VII.—(Continued).

"The telephone!" shouted Brand to Constance. She darted away to bring it, and when she returned she found the first mate had thrown a coil successfully, Brand took the instrument.

"Why don't you come this way? The others will follow," he yelled.

"There are women and children down below. They must be saved first, and they cannot climb the mast," was the reply.

"All right, but send up a couple of sails. We are short-handed here."

"Right-o," said the other cheerfully, though he wondered why three men should anticipate difficulty.

Down he went. Without waiting, Brand and the girls hauled lustily at the rope. It was no child's play to hoist a heavy pulley and several hundred feet of stout cordage. More than once they feared the first rope would break, but it was good hemp, and soon the block was hooked to the strong iron stanchions of the railing. To make assurance doubly sure, Brand told Enid to take several turns of the spare cord around the hook and the adjacent rails.

Meanwhile, Constance and he saw that the rope was moving through the pulley without their assistance. Then through the whistling wind beneath they made out an ascending figure clinging to it. Soon he was close to the gallery. Catching him by arms and collar they lifted him into safety. He was one of the junior officers, and Constance, though she hardly expected it, experienced a momentary feeling of disappointment that the first man to escape was not the handsome youth to whom she had been so devoted.

"Thanks," he said. "Close shave. Have you a light? We must signal after each arrival."

End brought the small lantern, and the stranger waved it twice. The rope traveled back through the pulley, and this time it carried a sailor who said that one would stoop to tie his boot-lace.

"How many are left?" inquired Brand of the officer.

"About eighty, all told, including some twenty women and children."

"All wet to the skin?"

"Yes, some of them unconscious, perhaps dead."

"Can you hold out?"

"Yes. A nip of brandy."

"I'll send some. We must leave you now. These with me are the last of the crew. As for the rest of the crew, self-possession was broken. The man looked from one to the other of the seeming light-house-keepers.

"Well, I'm," he blurted out in his surprise. "That American youngster wondered what the trouble was."

A shapely bundle hove in sight. It contained two little girls, and a third, a tiny, pale, and shivering child, who said that she was the plan for dealing with the helpless ones.

Brand instantly divided his force. Enid he dispatched to make hot cocoa in the quickest and most lavish manner possible. Constance was to give each new arrival a small quantity of stimulant (the light-house-keepers had a stock of brandy, rum, and whiskey) and act as escort. The women and children were to be allotted the two bedrooms. Any bad case of injury or complete exhaustion could be disposed of in the visiting officer's room, whilst all the men fit to take care of themselves were to be distributed between the entrance, the coal-room, the workshop and the stairways. The two store-rooms and service-room were to be kept clear, and the store-room door locked. Eighty! Brand was already doing problems in simple arithmetic.

A similar problem, with a different point to be determined, was occupying the active mind of the "American youngster" who had solved the knotting proposition put forward during that eventful night.

He watched the forwarding of the shrieking, shuddering, or inanimate women. He timed the operation by his watch, as the red light from the lamp was quite sufficient for the purpose.

Then he approached the captain.

"Sir, eighty," he cried. "How long do you give the remains of her to hold out?"

"It is not high-water yet," was the answer. "Perhaps half an hour. Forty minutes at the utmost."

"Then you'll have to boost this thing along a good deal faster," said the cheerful one. "They're going up now. That's thirty in half an hour. Fifty of us will travel a heap quicker at the end of that time if your calculation holds good."

The captain, who appeared to be in a stupor of grief, roused himself.

A few short and sharp orders changed the aspect of affairs. Frightened and protesting ladies were securely tied together, and hoisted, four at a time, like so many bags of wheat. When it came to the men's turn even less ceremony and greater expedition were used.

Indeed, already there were emphatic warnings that each valuable time had been lost in the early stage of the rescue. Though the wind was now only blowing a stiff gale, the sea, lashed to frenzy by the hurricane, was heavier than ever. The ship was vanishing visibly. A funnel fell with a hideous crash and carried away a life-boat. The rest of the spar deck and nearly the whole of the forward cabin were torn out bodily. By repeated clumping on the roof the vessel had settled back almost onto an even keel, and the fore-mast, which had so providentially spared the summit of the light-house, was now removed far beyond the possibility of a rope being thrown.

The survivors on deck worked with feverish energy. The time was drawing short. They did not know the water would devour them utterly.

"Now, Mr. Payne, you next," cried the chief officer, addressing the young Philadelphian, who, minable dion, had found and lighted a cigar.

fourteen injured persons, including two women, one of them a stewardess, and a little girl.

Most of the sufferers had received their wounds either in the saloon or by collision with the cornice of the light-house. The worst accident was a broken arm, the most alarming a case of cerebral concussion. Other injuries consisted, for the most part, of cuts and bruises.

Unfortunately, when the ship struck the surgeon had gone aft to attend to an engineer whose hand was crushed as the result of some frantic lurch caused by the hurricane; hence the doctor was lost with the first batch of victims. Enid discovered that among the few stowaway passengers saved was a man who had gained some experience in a field-hospital during the campaign in Cuba. Aided by the plain direction supplied with the medicine chest of the light-house, the ex-hospital orderly had done wonders already.

"All I want, miss," he explained, in answer to Constance's question, "is some water and some linen for bandages. The list outfit in the chest is not half sufficient."

She managed to return quickly with a sheet and a pair of scissors.

"Now," she said to Mr. Payne, "if you come with me I will send you back with a pail of water."

She took him to the kitchen, where Enid, aided by a sailor, pressed into service, was dispensing cocoa and biscuits. Payne, who remained in the stairway, went off with the water and Constance's lantern. The interior of the light-house was utterly dark. To move without a light, and with no prior knowledge of its internal arrangements, was positively dangerous. All told, there were seven lamps of various sizes available. Brand had one, four were distributed throughout the apartment tenanted by the survivors of the wreck, two were retained for transit purposes, and the men slaving in the entrance passage had no light at all.

Constance took Enid's lantern in order to discover the whereabouts of Mr. Emmett, the first officer, the tray-carrying sailor offering to guide her to the top of the dark, twisting passage.

When Payne came back he found Enid in the dark and mistook her for Constance.

"They want some more," he cried at the door.

"Some more what?" she demanded. It was no time for elegant diction. Her heart jumped each time the sea sprang at the rock. It seemed to be so much worse in the dark.

"Water," said he.

"Dear me, I should have thought everybody would be fully satisfied in that respect."

He held up the lantern.

"Well, that's curious," he cried. "I imagined you were the other young lady. The water is needed in the kitchen. The sailor who came back with you, being in reality very angry with herself for her stupidity, she gave him a full pail and he quitted her."

"He came for a second supply of water and nearly bit my head off."

"Oh, Enid! I am sure he did not mean anything. Didn't you recognize him?"

"He was climbing the mast and flung the rope to us."

"There!" said Enid. "I've gone and done it. Honestly, you know, it was I who was rude. He will think me a perfect idiot."

"That isn't what people are saying," explained Mr. Payne, whose approach was desired. "There's a kind of general idea floating round that this locality is an annex of heaven, with ministering angels in attendance."

In the half light of the tiny lamps he could not see Enid's scarlet face. There was a moment's silence, and this very self-possession spoke again.

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Nothing to Make an Old Man Feel Young Again Like a Box of Two of Dr. Pitcher's Tonic Tablets

Some men are old at forty, others are not. It depends on your system. Dr. Pitcher's Tonic Tablets, which you have the feeling and ambition of youth, or the despondency, weariness and despondency of old age.

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more than one-half of the females were supplied with tolerably dry and warm under-clothing. With their heavier garments, of course nothing could be done. Once on the stairs, Enid detained Constance for a moment's chat.

"Mrs. Vansittart is odd," she said. Constance, so taken up with the men, had not noticed the lady.

"How thoughtful of me," she cried. "Is she better?"

"Yes. But when I went in just now to give her her clothes, she said to me: 'Are you the sister of the other of Constance Brand?' It was no time for explanations, so I just said 'Yes.' She gave me such a queer look, and then smiled quite pleasantly, apologizing for troubling me."

Constance laughed.

"Perhaps she knew dad years ago," she said.

"No need to be afraid," she said. "I think he is splendid," said Constance. The wreck was now wholly demolished. The first big way out of the retreating tide enveloped the light-house and smote it with thunderous malice. Screams came from the women's quarters.

"Go, Enid," said Constance. "Tell them they have nothing to fear. They must expect these things to happen for nearly two hours. Tell them what dad said. Twenty-five years, you know."

Brave heart! What infinite penetration into the mind of the man who first said "Vobiscum elige!"

Constance looked in at the kitchen. Enid loomed through a fog of steam.

"What do you think Mr. Payne said about her?"

"How can I tell? Did you speak of her to him about your years—think?"

I told him she had fainted when you delivered his message. He said: 'Guess she can faint as easy as I can fall off a horse. I don't think it's a good idea to impart a sense of renewed power and force to the entire system. Price 35 cents a box at druggists or by mail. The Dr. Zina Pitcher Co., Toronto, Ont.

and clearly clouded. The eyes were large and lustreless, the mouth firm, the nose and chin those of a Greek statue. Just now there were deep lines across the base of the high forehead. The thin lips, allied to a transient, hawk-like gleam in the prominent eyes, gave a momentary glimpse of a harsh, perhaps cruel disposition. A charming smile promptly dispelled the distressing impression. Instantly Constance was aware of having seen Mrs. Vansittart before. So vivid was the fanciful idea that she became disconcerted.

"Do you want me?" asked the stranger, with a new interest, and still smiling. Constance found herself wondering if the smile were not cultivated to hide that faintly suggestive suggestion of the bird of prey. But the question restored her mental poise.

"Only to say that Mr. Payne—" she began.

"Charlie! Is he saved?"

Mrs. Vansittart certainly had the faculty of betraying intense interest. The girl attributed the nervous start, the quick color which tinged the white cheeks, to the natural anxiety of a woman who stood in such approximate degree of kin to the young American.

"The girl," said the girl, with ready sympathy. "Don't you know that all of you owe your lives to his daring? He asked me to go down to the water, and—"

"Why didn't you go?" she asked, and she looked so very angry with herself for her stupidity, she gave him a full pail and he quitted her."

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"That isn't what people are saying," explained Mr. Payne, whose approach was desired. "There's a kind of general idea floating round that this locality is an annex of heaven, with ministering angels in attendance."

Constance took Enid's lantern in order to discover the whereabouts of Mr. Emmett, the first officer, the tray-carrying sailor offering to guide her to the top of the dark, twisting passage.

When Payne came back he found Enid in the dark and mistook her for Constance.

"They want some more," he cried at the door.

"Some more what?" she demanded. It was no time for elegant diction. Her heart jumped each time the sea sprang at the rock. It seemed to be so much worse in the dark.

"Water," said he.

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