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FIRST RESCUE.

big for his age,
ear suit on a six-
t he though he was
than he was, and
he almost as big as
t he would be some
le he was growing!
ily—father, mother
ears old, going on

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seven—lived on a rock in the middle of the ocean, or at least, five miles from any other land. There was a tall lighthouse on the rock, and at the base of its tower was a tiny house with five rooms. This house was home, the only home Freddy ever knew.

The lighting of the great lamp of the lighthouse had always been a great attraction to Freddy. One day, when his father carried him up, up the winding stairs and showed how the lamp was lighted and how its rays spread far out over the tossing ocean, Freddy felt that his little world was the most wonderful that any body could imagine. Think of the

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hundred steps up the tall tower and the magnificent view from the top!

But as time added another year to Freddy's age, his little mind soared to greater achievements. He was accustomed to storms and rough weather. He knew that his father often went out in his little boat to help strange people who drifted near the shoals. Sometimes he brought them back in his boat, half dead and so white! His mother then worked hard to give them warm clothing and hot things to drink and eat.

Freddy at first was content to watch and help; then he wanted to do more. He wanted to go with his father in the lifeboat to pick up the shipwrecked people.

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"Some day, lad, when you get bigger," his father answered this request.

After that Freddy asked every little while, "Am I big enough now to go with you in the boat, papa?"

"Not yet—not quite yet," had always been the response.

So Freddy had been forced to wait and grow. How he counted the days and looked at his figure in the glass to see if he was growing! When he first donned his seven-year suit, he felt surely that he was almost big enough to help save shipwrecked people.

As chance would have it, his opportunity did come a few days after this important event. There had been a storm at sea, not a very heavy storm, but one which made the sea pretty rough off the shoals. The day after the storm, the sun came up bright and warm. The sea was rolling in long swells.

Not a mile away from the lighthouse something was drifting heavily, swinging slowly up and down with the waves. A quick glance through the telescope showed that it was a dismantled sloop, a small coasting vessel abandoned by its crew.

Mr. May quickly got his boat in the water, and was preparing to go to the derelicts when Freddy's lips faltered:

"Papa, am I big enough to go!"

There was a smile on the lightkeeper's lips, and, after glancing up at the weather and down at the sea, he said: "Yes, Freddy, you can go to-day. Jump in the stern."

Now there was no happier boy in all the world than Freddy May at that moment. He fairly tumbled down the steps and dropped snugly into the stern of the lifeboat. His eyes were bright and glowing. Wasn't he going to a real wreck?

The row to the dismantled sloop was not a long or rough one, and Mr. May pulled so lustily at his oars that they were alongside in not time. When they reached the sloop, Freddy gazed at it in awe. Would there be half-drowned people aboard, and would he be strong enough to help his father lift them into the lifeboat?

"Now, boy, you stay quietly in the stern until I come back," cautioned his father.

He tied the boat to the stern of the sloop, and then nimbly climbed aboard. He was gone a long time, so long that Freddy got worried. What would he do if anything happened to his father. Could he row back to the lighthouse? What if another storm should come up and make the ocean very rough?

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He was thinking of such dreadful things when Mr. May appeared above and shouted:

"Nobody aboard, Freddy. She's been deserted for a long time. We'll go back home now."

This announcement was not pleasant for our little mariner. What disappointment to go to a shipwreck and then find nobody aboard, and not even go aboard the wreck.

"But, papa, there might be somebody in—in—"

His father shook his head.

"No, lad, I've been everywhere."

Then noticing the disappointment in the little face, he added: "But if you want to come aboard and look, I'll let you. I forgot this was your first shipwreck. Here, now, hold fast to my hand, and I'll pull you up."

Freddy climbed up, with his father's assistance, almost as easily as if a veteran sailor. He stood on the deck of the old abandoned sloop in a moment. One glance showed him the awful desolation of the wave-swept craft. Mast and spars, sail and rigging were tumbled about, in a confused mass, and part of the cargo of lumber was shifted over to one side.

"Be careful, little man, and hold tight to my hand," his father cautioned. "I'll take you to the cabin, and show you what an abandoned boat looks like."

Freddy seemed to come natural into the use of his little sea legs. He did not lurch and roll with each toss of the boat, but walked steadily forward. When they came to the cabin, Mr. May threw open the door, and—

Suddenly both of them started. Something moved inside, and then there was a mild cry of some frightened animal. Out of the darkness a bundle of white appeared. It came directly toward Freddy, and mewed.

"It's a pussy cat, papa—a white pussy!"

Freddy took the frightened creature in his arms and stroked its soft fur. The kitten mewed and rubbed its nose in his face.

"Do you suppose he belongs to somebody, papa," asked Freddy, anxiously.

"It belongs to you, little man, if to any one. You rescued him, and I don't think anybody will take it away from you."

All the way back to the lighthouse home Freddy held the kitten in his arms and stroked and patted its head. In his affection for the shipwrecked cat, he even forgot to notice the waves or the condition of the weather. The one fact to impress his mind was that he had made his first rescue from a shipwreck, and he would always keep the kitten for his own. He wanted a playmate—a kitten or a dog—and now the sea had brought him one all for his own self.—St. Nicholas.

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