

A CANADIAN HEROINE.

On the north shore of Lake Superior, not very far from Prince Arthur's Landing, was a large granite rock, about twenty square yards in area, which stood directly in the line of steamers and coasters passing up and down the lake. It stood only a few feet above the water level, and as eight or ten ships had struck against it on dark nights and in thick weather, going almost immediately to the bottom, the Dominion Government decided to build a lighthouse upon it. The building was made of stout oak timber and the whole structure was secured to heavy stringers, which were bolted and fastened to the rock as firmly as architectural skill could devise. The top of the lantern was made of heavy sheets of copper, riveted firmly together; the bars of hammered steel and the panes, which were diamond shaped, were of glass nearly half an inch thick. The light was a revolving red-and-white, flashing one a minute, and the machinery was built of steel, brass, and Swedish iron, the whole, weighing eight or ten tons, stood on the top floor of the tower.

That part of the coast where the island lay was so dangerous and the sea ran so high over the rocks in a gale that the government sought long for a keeper and could not find one with courage enough to undertake so perilous a duty. But at last Joshua Alcott accepted the government's offer, taking with him his daughter Gypsy, who was just sixteen years old, and all his worldly goods, out to the desolate rock. The lighthouse lay about three-quarters of a mile from the shore, but there were not many days in the fall that a small boat could land at the rock. Gypsy Alcott and her father moved there in August when the weather was calm; nevertheless, when the wind rose at night during the first month's residence there and the sea whooped and boomed about the base of the tower, the father and daughter trembled with dread.

One day late in September the light keeper and his daughter got into their little boat and rowed to the nearest settlement. The father had some business to do a couple of miles distant in the settlement, and as they hauled the boat up the dock he said to his daughter:

"Now, Gypsy, I shall be back in a couple of hours, so do not be far from here when I get back. We cannot trust the weather, and it isn't looking very well now." Then he hurried away, and Gypsy ran off to visit some of her friends. She visited three or four houses during the next hour and then the sky grew dark. Great armies of clouds gathered to windward and trooped across the heavens, and up the lake the storm had struck the water, turning the blue, drowsy surface into racing white caps.

When Gypsy noticed this she started up and exclaimed:

"Oh, the storm is rising and papa cannot get back before it is too rough to cross to the lighthouse. I will row over alone. Someone come and help me to launch the boat." Her friends advised her to remain until her father came, but she said it was going to be a wild night and the lamps must be lighted.

Three or four of the villagers followed her down the dock, but when they reached there the wind was whistling and shrieking and the lake between the shore and the island had been already roused by the wind. One of the villagers said:

"My girl, your boat can't live to reach the island now; look at those white caps. Better wait until your father comes back."

"But it will be worse soon; I want to get off at once; will not one of you," looking appealingly at the group, "row across with me, four oars are so much quicker than two?" But no one responded to her request, and two of them were moving away homeward, when Gypsy cried out passionately:

"I suppose you will help me launch my boat?" Still they made no sign to assist her, and running impetuously at the boat, she gave it a strong push, which sent it down the spruce ways and into the boiling surf.

"Look here, girl," shouted the oldest man in the party, "no skiff can live out in that sea now; wait for your father."

"It will get worse, and by the time papa comes it will be impossible to go over; I must be there to light the lights," and saying this she pushed the boat out with her

pole, then sat upon the thwart, seized her sculls, and rowed out into the angry water. She made a very brave picture with the drift of the spray driving over her like a rainstorm, her hair loosened in the wind like a dark flag. The waves rolled so as to strike the boat on the side, so when she saw a billow larger than the rest she pulled her little skiff around to meet it head on, and the tiny cockle mounted the roaring crest like a water fowl. She had had much experience in rowing on the lake in smooth as well as pretty rough water, so now in the teeth of this fierce gale, she handled the oars with a sure, steady grip and the boat responded to every pressure of her wrist. The fishermen stood together as they saw the brave girl move further and further out through the roaring storm and drift. They felt ashamed of themselves for their cowardice for refusing to go in the boat with this young lion-hearted girl; but they shuddered as they saw the great white-topped billows rolling toward the little boat and every minute threatening to swamp it.

As for Gypsy she had no fear, though the foam swept over her boat in a constant stream, and it was half full of water. Any faltering of her nerves would now be fatal, and she kept constantly watching the seas, which every minute were growing more furious, and swinging her skiff around to meet them head-to. The sun had set, and in the gloom which began to gather over the noisy water she could see the rock and the lighthouse not far away looming darkly through the spray. Two or three shipments of water over the low quarter and then the girl was in the shelter of the rock.

Springing lightly from the bow and carrying the painter with her she ran up to the windlass and drew her boat high out of the water and secured it as firmly as she could. The sea had already com-

menced to boom against the rock and at each shock columns of spray were flung up to half the height of the tower on the windward side. The evening was made so dark by the storm that Gypsy knew the light should be lighted at once; moreover she could just see about a half a mile to windward a ship whose course lay along by the island. She tripped lightly up to the tower, the wind shrieking by the building, and in a few minutes the ruddy light gleamed out upon the sea. Then as the darkness deepened, the ship showing her lights, passed safely by the ledge under close reefed sails and Gypsy felt herself all alone in the midst of this wilderness of raging sea. When the great iron weight was wound up and the lantern panes wiped, she set the fans of the balance wheels to regulate the revolution of the flashes and went down to the basement of the tower. There she laid upon the table some cold lake fowl, bread and butter and then brewed herself a pot of fragrant coffee.

As we know she was brave, so she did not mind the prospect of having to stay alone all night on this rock, but the sea grew more tumultuous every moment and the wind howled louder and louder. Before supper was ended she knew the maddened waters had burst over the rock and were striking the tower, for she could feel it quiver. She

sat there for nearly two hours reading a book, but the fury of the gale increased constantly and the tower shook so violently under the pounding of the thundering sea that she grew alarmed and, closing her book, took her brass lamp and went up to the lantern to look out to sea. She stood upon the trimming path or grated iron footway that ran around inside the lantern. The piercing light shining upon the sea revealed such a state of tumult that her heart almost stopped beating. The waves rolled and foamed and smoked one after another, moving in ranks toward the little rock like some terrible army. As each one struck it flung up its arms of cold, white spray, as if grabbing at the tower, then it recoiled backward, like a runner who retreats before making a spring, and reared up again, each time going higher and drawing nearer to the top of the tower. Hour after hour she sat there, spell-bound with terror, and the raving ocean seemed constantly to rise higher and draw nearer to her. Birds driven from their nook by the gale rose upon the murky tempest, flying headlong toward the streaming light, striking the lantern with sharp blows and falling backward stunned or dead. Other birds flew more cautiously toward the lantern and came peering through the pane with wild, affrightened eyes, gently fluttering their wings.

She had not now the courage to go down to the basement, but remained there on the trimming path, actually fascinated by the rampant sea. Higher and higher rose the waves till now they began to surge against the waist of the tower, and hogsheads of water were flung against the lantern. Under some of the onsets the building quivered from top to bottom, and sometimes fairly reeled. The machinery of steel and brass clattered under a heavy shock, and under the smaller ones rang

like a number of little bells. She stood there with her face white as one of the foamy waves, her hands against the heavy steel bars, looking seaward, and not moving except when she turned to trim a lamp or empty the burnt oil from a brimming save-all. She remained in the lantern till probably an hour before dawn; then the gale swelled into greater fury, and the storm went howling and bellowing past, as if ten thousand condemned spirits had burst loose and went floating by on the hurricane.

The swells grew longer and seemed to roll from the very bottom, and then ran nimbly and noiselessly up the rock, up the tower, and flung their cold, white arms with a swishy yet thunderous sound completely around the lantern, almost throwing the heavy machinery from its place at every sally. Then, as she still gazed to windward out into the gray drift, she uttered a great cry, "Oh, God, deliver me," for she saw a mighty wave towering nearly twice as high as any of the rest, rolling, foaming, and storming at its crest, moving toward the rock. As it drew nearer it grew larger, and when it had reached within twenty feet of the lighthouse it seemed as if the whole lake had gathered itself up for one onslaught upon the rock. She had very little time to wait, for the awful invader combed and curled several feet above her head, and then fell with a crash of terrible thunder upon the tower. Then the light seemed to go out of her eyes, and she felt as one does in some turbulent dream; she could not tell how anything happened; but the cold lake water gurgling at her lips brought her to consciousness. The Tower was in the sea.

It had broken away close at the base, the posts breaking off short, and leaving part of the floor still fastened to the rock. The upper part of the tower being heavy—



The Lion on
high is mightier than
the noise of many waters,
sea, than the mighty waves
of the sea

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