

# THE Pillar of Light

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There was a clatter of feet down the iron stairs. The men of the watch were hustling to unbar the iron door. A solidly built, circular raft had been lowered from the Trinity tender.

An assistant-keeper, wearing a cork jacket, with the rope about his waist, was clinging to a stumpy mast in the center. Two stout guide-rope were manipulated from the deck of the vessel, and the flat, unwieldy object of timber was slowly drifting nearer the lighthouse with the tide.

The door of the column opened towards the east wind, with its pelting sheets of spray, was almost in the opposite quarter, and the stout granite shaft itself afforded some degree of protection for the entrance.

The scheme signalled from the steamer was a good one. None but a lunatic would endeavor to approach the rock itself, but there was a chance that the raft might be made to drift near enough to the door to permit a grapple to be thrown across the rope held by the gallant volunteer on the raft.

It was his duty to attach the two ropes and thus render it possible for a stronger line to be drawn from the vessel to the raft, and in this way another way. The lighthouse did not possess a rope of sufficient length to be drawn back by the raft without the intervention of some human agency.

This was precisely the puny, half-despairing dodge that the reef loved to play with. "Cat-like," it permitted the queer flatterer to drift to approach almost within hail. Then it shot forth a claw of furious surf, the heavy raft was picked up as if it were a floating feather, turned clean over, and flung many fathoms out to sea, whilst both of its guiding cables were snapped with contemptuous ease.

The assistant-keeper kept afloat by his jacket, was hauled, half-drowned, back through the choking froth, whilst the wave which overwhelmed the raft carried it a safe distance away and almost succeeded in dragging out several of the men stationed in the doorway.

With a clang the iron shutter was rushed into its place, and when the sailor was rescued the Trinity boat steamed away to try and secure the ropes.

No joyous hope gave way once more to dark foreboding, and the only comfort was the faint one to be extracted from the parting signal.

"Will try again next tide."

CHAPTER XIII.  
BEFORE THE DAWN

Discipline slackened its bonds that night. For one thing Mr. Emmett fell ill. Although inured to hardship in the elemental strife, being of the stocky mariner race which holds the gruff Atlantic in no dread, he had never before been called on to eat sodden bread, to drink condensed steam flavored with vanilla, and to chew sustenance from the rind of raw bacon. These drawbacks, added to the lack of exercise and the constant rain, were not yet dry, placed him on the sick list.

Again, there were ominous whispers of unfair division in the matter of the food. The fact shifted in support of accomplishment that the pursur Constance, End, and others who helped to apportion the eatables could treat with a slight bias, and to others in quality if not in quantity. The unfortunate ones growled and talked of favoritism.

A crisis was reached when the second officer mustered the night watch.

When one sheep leads the others will follow. The German from Chicago asked bluntly:

"Vere de goat of blayin' at moun'-in' gart? Dere is von ying ton to kart, und dat is mekchaniel twis in me and mummiky of interest caused many to humdly closer to him. Here was one who dared to say what they all thought. The officer, faithful to his trust, was tempted to fell the man, but he thought the circumstances warranted more gentle measures.

"Why are you dissatisfied?" he sternly demanded. "What do you suspect? Are you fool enough to imagine that you are being cheated by people who are dividing their last crust with you?"

"How do you know dat? Dose girls dey are chokin' mit Mr. Pyne all day. Dey can't do dat und be hungry, no us."

"You unmilitated ass!" said the disgusted officer. "There is food here for three people. They have fed eighty-one of us for two days and will keep us using several more days. Can't you figure it out? Isn't it a miracle? Here! Who's for guard and who not? Let us quit fooling."

And the doubters were silenced for the hour.

The hymn-singer endeavored to raise a chorus. He was not greeted with enthusiasm, but a few valiant spirits came to his assistance. A couple of lyrics were feebly rendered—and again—silence.

"Why when," observed Pyne calmly when he entered the service-room to find Brand trimming the spare lamp.

"Not to-night," said Brand.

"Why not? Hell may break loose at any moment downstairs. I think and lost her hubby on a ranch in California. Anyhow, the old man is dead stuck on her, and they ought to hit it together. The Vanstittart you know didn't happen to marry a relative of yours?"

"No. He was a mere acquaintance."

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"It's raining. No more canvas whiskey. Get a hustle on with every man you can get to help."

He need not have been in such a whirl, however.

When the shower came it did not last very long, and there were many difficulties in the way of gathering the three blessed water. In the first place, the lighthouse was expressly designed to shoot off all such extraneous supplies. In the second, the total quantity obtained did not amount to more than half a gallon.

But it did a great deal of good in other ways. It brightened many faces. It caused the drunkards to be securely trussed like plucked fowls and dumped along the walls of the feather-bed; he was asleep in amazingly quick time. There is a supple-lunged hunker who keeps people awake at night with his language, and he, too, the crude artist, differs from the cultured one so greatly that the man who hummers of necessity cannot sleep too much.

Thus far, the inhabitants of the lighthouse had been given quite enough nutriment to maintain life. There was no reason why any more of the most delicate, should be in real danger during the next forty-eight hours. But scientific reasoning and the animal instincts of mankind came in at times; in that lay the danger whose sullen shadow was deepening the lines in the corners of Brand's eyes.

Every hour, the officer on duty and some men of the watch visited him to report that all was well below. Some of the less drunken nutcrackers were gently rebuffed, the others were maudlin. Beyond the few words exchanged on this and kindred topics, he was left alone with his thoughts throughout the night. He was not sleeping, he was glancing at times at the young, stalwart figure and firm, handsome face, Brand found himself reviewing the past, and the thought of the days when he, too, looked forth on the world with the same enthusiasm of triumphant youth. Long-forgotten ghosts were resurrected, shattered ideals built up again. He wondered, if the decades rolled back, would he decide, a second time, to abandon the pleasures of the sea, to stand with his feet on the shore, to the north of the Scilly Isles and runs into the tidal stream again exactly at this point. The result often is that whilst the pleasures boats can safely run out into the Bay from Ponce that there was a race over the boat that would break up a stranded battleship.

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## What is CASTORIA

Castoria is a harmless substitute for Castor Oil, Paregoric, Drops and Soothing Syrups. It is pleasant. It contains neither Opium, Morphine nor other Narcotic substance. Its age is its guarantee. It destroys Worms and allays Feverishness. For more than thirty years it has been in constant use for the relief of Constipation, Flatulence, Wind Colic, all Teething Troubles and Diarrhoea. It regulates the Stomach and Bowels, assimilates the Food, giving healthy and natural sleep. The Children's Panacea—The Mother's Friend.

## GENUINE CASTORIA ALWAYS

Bears the Signature of  
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In Use For Over 30 Years  
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should stop him. It means certain loss of life."

At last, becoming aware that his companions could not understand what was going on, he turned to them with the passionate explanation.

"That brave fellow Stanhope says that, with two others at the oars, he intends to row near enough to the lighthouse to get a good look at the lighthouse. I cannot persuade him that no man has ever yet succeeded in such a mad project. Look below, and see how each wave climbs around eighteen or twenty feet of the base. The thing is wildly impracticable. He will be swept off and smashed to pieces before our eyes, even if the boat escapes."

"If the boat can come near enough for that purpose, couldn't we heave a line aboard her?" asked one of the ship's officers.

"We can try. I shall signal them to that effect. Anything is better than to sanction an attempt which is foredoomed to failure, and must result in the death of the man who tries it."

Thereupon more energetic flag-waving took place. Finally Brand decried in sheer exasperation.

"I cannot convince him," he cried. "He has made up his mind. May the Lord preserve him from a peril which I consider to be a mortal one."

"Has he put forward any theory?" asked Pyne.

"Yes," explained Brand. "He believes that a strong boat, rowed to the verge of the broken water, might watch her opportunity and slip close to the ladder on the backwash of a big wave, allowing its successor to lift her high enough for an active man to jump onto the rocks. He must have attracted attention if anybody tried to do it."

"Did you say all that to the pursur?" he asked, suspending his labors and looking at her steadily.

"No. We could not remember exactly what proportion of the various articles there ought to be left in the boat. I am looking at her steadily."

"A quick flush came into her pale cheeks."

"You are not saying that without good cause?" she murmured.

"It has the best of reasons. If the least hint of such a thing goes round among the men there will be reactions."

Constance went to the door and closed it.

"End," she said, "I believe father and Mr. Pyne have got some dreadful plan in their minds which they dare not tell us about."

But the American was not to be cornered in such fashion. He opened the door again and went out, pausing on the threshold to say:

"I wouldn't venture to guess what might be the result of such a plan, but you can take it from me that what he says, goes. Talk about grasping a nettle firmly, I believe your father would grab a scorpion by the tail if he felt that way."

And with this cryptic utterance he quitted them, intending to warn Brand at the first opportunity that the time was at hand when he must harden his heart and take the decisive step of cutting off communication between the service-room and the remainder of the building.

This could be done easily. The flanges of the uppermost iron staircase were screwed to the floor above and below. A bit of mitered labor would remove the screws; the steps could be lifted bodily into the service-room and there utilized to seal the well.

"What a howling manerger will break loose here when they find out!" thought Pyne. "It's a hard thing to say, but we ought to have the door open. Quite a stack of folks will need to be pitched outside."

A comforting reflection truly, yet his face bore no token thereof as he joined the lighthouse-keeper and several of the Chinook's officers and men on the gallery.

The wind had shifted another couple of points, and the sea, apart from a heavy unbroken swell, that was the tantalizing part of it. Any ordinary ship's boat, properly managed, could live in perfect safety in the open.

But the iron-toothed reef, with its totinous channels and battling currents, was a different matter. The tide, surrounded the pillar with an apparently impassable barrier, whilst the lighthouse itself offered as frowning a front as any of the black rocks which reared their weed-covered crests at low water.

Signals were being exchanged between the gallery and the Trinity tender. Brand seemed to be very emphatic in his answers to the communications made to him by Stanhope.

"No, no," he muttered aloud, whilst the anxious man near him wondered why he was so impatient.

"It is utterly impossible!" he said.

meanwhile, the three vessels had steamed close to the moorings, which, it will be remembered, lay in full view of the kitchen window. Constance gave them a casual glance. Being versed in the ways of the sea, she instantly discovered that some unusual event was afoot.

"They are lowering a boat, I do declare," she announced after they had watched the proceedings for a little while with growing curiosity. At the distance, nearly six hundred yards, it was difficult to discern exactly what was taking place.

"No boat can live if it comes near the rock," cried End. And then a loud shout brought her heart to her mouth.

"Oh, Connie!" she cried in a sudden access of terror, "I feel sure that Jack is doing something desperate to save us. Dad knows. They all know, but they would not tell us. That is why Mr. Pyne has not been near us for hours."

"It cannot be. No one would permit it. Father would never give his sanction. End, my dear one, why do you say such things? You frighten me!"

But Constance's lips were bloodless, and her eyes dilated with the fear which she, too, would vainly deny.

"The girls were perched so high above the sea that the dancing hillocks of green water could not woolly obscure the stoutly built craft which bobbed into starting prominence round the stern of the tender."

"It is, it is!" shrieked End. "Look, Connie! There is Jack kneeling in the bow. Oh, dear oh, dear! He cannot bear to look. Connie, tell me—shall I see him drowned before my eyes?"

The girl was distraught, and her sister was in little better plight. Fascinated, speechless, clinging to each other like panic-stricken children, they allowed the leaping boat with the gassy stare of those who gaze, open-eyed, at remorseless death, anyone who might be cast adrift in that dreadful sea.

The girls even in their dumb agony, were fully conscious of a score of feet up and down the stairs. What did it matter? They paid heed to naught save the advancing boat, now deep in the trough of a wave, now perched precariously on a lofty crest. Whoever the rowers were, they trusted wholly to the instructions given by the gallant youth who peered so boldly into the wilderness ahead. The flying foam and high-tossed spray gave to the lighthouse the semblance of alternately lifted and lowering its huge frame amidst the furious torrents that encircled it. Nerves of steel, strong hearts and true, were needed by those who would voluntarily enter that watery inferno.

Yet the men at the oars did not falter nor turn their heads. They pulled evenly and well, with the short, deep-stroke of a crew, now perched precariously on a lofty crest. Whoever the rowers were, they trusted wholly to the instructions given by the gallant youth who peered so boldly into the wilderness ahead. The flying foam and high-tossed spray gave to the lighthouse the semblance of alternately lifted and lowering its huge frame amidst the furious torrents that encircled it. Nerves of steel, strong hearts and true, were needed by those who would voluntarily enter that watery inferno.

Steadily the powerful tug-boat crept in the wake of the smaller craft, until the sailing block with its ghastly strain that watchful helpers, lashed in the vessel's bows, were manipulating another rope as a drag, thus having the sailing block's force to prevent his frail organ from being swamped by a breaking sea.

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