

## Lighting up the Beacon at Ragged Rocks.

Dave Sherman stood upon the shore and looked off towards the beacon at Ragged Rocks. Every night it was the duty of Skipper Ben Briggs, an old salt whose days of service at sea were over, to go in his boat to Ragged Rocks and at sunset kindle a lamp up on the beacon—a lamp that burned all night and helped bewildered mariners home. Dave Sherman was wondering, this particular twilight, where the lighter of the lamp at Ragged Rocks might be.

'Most sunset! The skipper ought to be here. He will lose his place if he don't look out. He will be complained of again. Ah! there is the 'Polly,' I think, away off, trying to make harbor. She will surely complain of Skipper Ben. Her skipper has said he would do it if Skipper Ben did not do his duty. Wonder where Skipper Ben is! Wonder if he has been taking too much and has got asleep somewhere.

The skipper had an infirmity—he loved drink. Lately he had been drinking more heavily than usual. There had been 'extra meetings' in the old school-house which the minister from the 'Center' of the town had conducted. They were a rebuke to Skipper Ben, and the greater the interest in the meetings, the more poorly Skipper Ben was doing. He not only drank harder, but did worse in every respect. He abused those who went to the school-house services.

'His conscience is troubling him,' the minister had told Dave, who was a kind of janitor at the services; and he had a 'door-keeper's' reward—the King of the feast, the Lord Jesus, made Dave one of those who sat down at the table of his bounties of grace every day. It was said of Dave that he 'had got religion.' No, religion 'had got' him. A humble, happy trust in the Saviour possessed his soul. Oh, how Skipper Ben railed at Dave!

'O, he's like the rest,' insisted the skipper, and he gave it the emphasis of an oath. 'It is all excitement. It don't amount to a thing. When I see Dave Sherman and all the other folks at the school-house a doin' suthin,' 'twill be time to allow it. Let him prove it is worth suthin.'

He abused Dave shamefully, and Dave had the blessing that Christ bestows upon those who are persecuted, against whom men, 'say all manner of evils falsely,' for the sake of the Saviour.

Standing on the shore, looking upon the uneasy water roughening in the rising wind between the shore and Ragged Rocks, Dave could see off the harbor's mouth the 'Polly' trying to round a point and reach safe moorings. The 'Polly' was an old boat, and her skipper, Jonathan Trefethen, did not like to have her caught outside when the wind was blowing from the present quarter. Once before, when the beacon had not been lighted and the aged 'Polly,' in an adverse wind, had almost been wrecked on account of Skipper Ben's negligence, the 'Polly's' captain had made the threat we have already recorded—that he would complain at headquarters of Skipper Ben. That meant a loss of salary. As Dave, looking off from the shore, recalled all these things, he noticed that the sun, shining sullenly through the clouds as if threatening bad weather, had almost reached the horizon. When it was going under the horizon the light on the beacon ought to be coming up.

'Where's Skipper Ben?' wondered Dave. The wind that had been busily travelling



In the  
Heavenly Kingdom  
he is  
**GREATEST**  
who is  
**BEST.**

along the coast now roughly blowing, brought no news of Skipper Ben's whereabouts. Indeed, it seemed to say, 'Booh—booh—let him go!'

It blew harder. 'Booh—booh—booh—he's your foe—let him go!'

'Love your enemies!' said a voice.

All the while that sullen, threatening sun was sinking, and the poor old Polly had a look of increasing helplessness, and it seemed to Dave as if he could see Skipper Jonathan hurriedly going to the bows of the 'Polly' and anxiously looking ahead.

'Booh—booh—don't go!' roared a fresh gust of wind.

'I'm going!' shouted Dave. He ran to his father's dory, and saw another boat near it. The second boat was untied. Dave knew every craft in the neighborhood, and this with its green striping was Skipper Ben's boat. Another sign of his ownership was a jug in the bottom of the boat. But why was the latter untied? Where was the skipper? Was he coming now? He could not be seen anywhere.

The sun was sinking and the 'Polly' was struggling through the darkening waters, and Dave could wait no longer. He sprang into his boat and began to pull vigorously for the beacon. The water was uneasy and the wind was vexing, but Dave was a good oarsman and he soon reached the beacon. He stepped out on the rocks, made his boat fast, and was about climbing the iron frame of the beacon surmounted by a lamp, when on the other side of the frame, stretched

along a shelf in the ledge, he saw a man. Dave could not have been more surprised if the man had got up and spoken to him, Dave could soon see his face.

'Skipper Ben! Fast asleep! Drunk, I know! Up, boy, up! Quick! Light that lamp!' was Dave's counsel to himself.

He climbed the beacon, reached the lamp, opened, lighted, closed it, and dropped down on the ledge again.

'Skipper Ben!' shouted Dave, going to the prostrate man.

Dave shook him, but there was no response.

'Skipper Ben!'

Still no answer came save an ill-natured grunt.

'It looks bad,' said Dave. 'What if the tide should come up—and—and—and'

He thought a moment longer.

'It's no time for ceremony,' he murmured.

He rowed his boat around to the skipper's side of the beacon, and stepped out again, scoop in hand. That would hold a quantity of water. Dave filled it with cold sea-water and dashed it in the skipper's face. It had an effect.

'What—what's—wanted?' muttered the skipper.

Dave lessened the dose and made another application.

'What yer doin'?'

The skipper was beginning to show anger—a good sign.

'Skipper Ben,' said Dave, solemnly, 'you