THE Pillar of Light

By Louis Tracy

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(To be continued)

"He's done it!" Jones heard him say. "He's ripped him. Oh, bully! May the Lord grant there's only one."

For a single instant they saw the dark hair and face of the man above the surface. The shark circled about and rushed. Brand sank again, and again the giant man-eater writhed in agonized contortions and the sea showed masses of froth and dark blotches. The flutterings of the birds became irregular and alarmed. Their wheeling flights partly obscured events below. The gulls, screeching their fright, or it might be interest, kept close to the water, and the cormorants sailed in circles aloft.

Jones was pallid and streaming with perspiration.

"I wouldn't have had it happen for fifty quid," he groaned.

"I wouldn't ha' missed it for a hundred," yelped Jim. "It's a fight to the finish, an' the cap'n 'll win. There ain't another sea-lawyer on the job, an' Brand knows how to handle this one."

Their mate's head reappeared and Jim relieved the tension by a mighty shout:

"He'll swim wild now, Brand. Keep out of his track."

Sure enough, the ugly monster began to thrash the water and career around on the surface in frantic convulsions. The second stab of the knife had reached a vital part. Brand, who perhaps had seen a Malay diver handling his life-long enemy, coolly struck out towards the stern of the boat. The shark, churning the sea into a white foam, whirled away in blind pursuit of the death which was rending him. The man, unharmed but somewhat breathless, clambered over the folds of the sail into the boat.

"Glory be," quavered Jones, who was a Papist.

Jim was about to chant his thanks in other terms when his attention was caught by Brand's curious actions.

In stepping across the after thwart he stopped as though something had stun ghim. His hesitation was momentary. Pressing his left hand to mouth and nose, he passed rapidly forward, stooped, caught a limp body by the belt which every sailor wears, and, with a mighty effort, slung it into the sea, where it sank instantly. So the shark, like many a human congener of higher intellect, had only missed his opportunity by being too precipitate, whilst the cormorants and gulls, eyeing him ominously, did not know what they had lost.

Then the man returned to the sail and peered beneath. Neither of the onlookers could distinguish anything of special interest under the heavy canvas sheet. Whatever it was Brand apparently resolved to leave it alone for the moment.

He shipped a pair of oars, and, with two vigorous sweeps, impelled the derelict away from the charnel-house atmosphere which evidently clung to it.

Then the shark engaged his attention. It was floating, belly upwards, its white under-skin glistening in the sunlight. Two long gashes were revealed, one transverse, the other lengthwise, proving how coolly and scientifically Brand had done his work. An occasional spasm revealed that life was not yet extinct, but the furtive attack of a dogfish, attracted by the scent of blood, which stirs alike the denizens of the air, land and ocean, was unresisted.

The rower stood up again, drove a boat-hook into the cruel jaws, and lashed the stock to a thorl-pin with a piece of cordage. This accomplished to his satisfaction, he looked toward the Gulf Rock for the first time since he drew the knife from its sheath, gave a cheery hand-wave to the shouting pair on the balcony, and settled down to pull the recovered craft close to the rock.

"He heaved the dead man overboard," he announced, "so there's a live one under the sail."

"Why do you think that?" said Jones, whose nerves were badly shaken.

"Well, you saw what happened to the other pore devil. Either him or the cap'n had to go. It 'ud be the same if thero was a funeral wanted aft. Them there birds— But come along, boss. Let's give him a hand."

They hurried down to the iron-barred entrance. Jones shot outward a small crane fitted with a winch, in case it might be needed, whilst the sailor climbed to the narrow platform of rock into which the base-blocks of the lighthouse were sunk and bolted.

Affording but little superficial space at low water, there was now not an inch to spare. Here, at sea-level, the Atlantic swell, even in calm weather, matter of activity. At this stage of the tide each wave lapped some portion of the granite stones and receded quickly down tht slope of the weed-covered rock.

The gulls and cormorants, filling the air with raucous cries, were rustling in rapid flight in the wake of the boat, darting ever and anon at the water or making daring pecks at the floating carcass.

Soon Brand glanced over his shoulder to measure the distance. With the ease o fa practised oarsman he turned his craft to bring her stern on to the landing-place.

"Lower a basket!" he cried to Jones, and, whilst the others wondered what the urgency in his voice betokened, there reached them the deep strong blast of a steam-whistle blown four times in quick succession.

Each and all, they had forgotten the Princess Royal. She was close in, much nearer than mail steamers usually ventured.

At first they gazed at her with surprise, Brand even suspending his manoeuvres for a moment. Then Jim, knowing that a steamship trumpets the same note to express all sorts of emotion, understood that the officers had witnessed a good deal, if not all, that had taken place, and were offering their congratulations.

"Blow away, my hearties!" crowed Jim, vainly apostrophizing the vessel. "You'll have somethin' to crack about when you go ashore to-night or I'm very much mistaken. Now, cap'n," he went on, "take the cover off. It's alive, I suppose. Is it a man, or a woman?"

CHAPTER II.

A CHRISTENING.

Brand was slow to answer. For one thing, he was exhausted. Refreshing as the long swim was after a night of lonely vigil, itself the culmination of two days of hard work, the fierce battle with the shark had shocked into active existence the reserve of latent enrgy which every healthy animal unconsciously hoards for life-and-death emergencies.

But there was another reason. Het had scarce gained the comparative safety of the boat before he was, in the same instant, horrified and astounded to a degree hitherto beyond his experience. Not even the stiff pull of two hundred yards sufficed to restore his senses. So Jim's question fell on his ears with the meaningless sound of the steamer's siren.

"What is it, mate?" repeated his fellow-keeper, more insistently. "You ain't hurt anyways, are you?"

"It is a baby," said Brand, in a curiously vacant way.

"A baby!" shrieked Jones, whose crudely developed nervous system was not proof against the jar of incredulity induced by this statement. Had Brand said "a tiger," he could not have exhibited greater concern.

"Yes, a baby—and it is living. I heard it cry," murmured the other, sitting down rather suddenly.

Indeed, a faint wail, suggestive of a kitten, now came from beneath the tumbled canvas quite near to Jim. But the Royal Navy does not encourage neurosis. The lighthouse keeper felt that a minor crisis had arrived. It must be dealt with promptly.

The evil odor which still adhered to the boat told him that Brand had exchanged one Inferno for another, when he clambered out of reach of the blindly vengeful shark.

He looked up at Jones.

"Lower away," he said, promptly. "Swing the derrick until I grab the tackle, and then hoist me aboard."

This was done. Ungainly in his walk owing to his wounded limb, Jim, clinging to a rope, had the easy activity of a squirrel.

"Now, lower a jug with some brandy. He's dead beat," he added.

Whilst Jones hastened for the spirit, the sailor stooped and threw back the sail.

Lying in the bottom of the boat, wrapped in a blanket which unavailing struggles had rumpled into a roll beneath the arms, was an infant whose precise age it was impossible to estimate forthwith owing to the emaciated condition of its body.

With the rocking of the boat, the foul bilge-water washed around the child's limbs and back. Instinct alone had saved it from drowning. Perhaps, during the first hours of vigor after abandonment the little one might have rolled over in infantile search for food and human attendance, but the rush of salt water into eyes and mouth must have driven the tiny sufferer to seek instantly the only position in which life was possible.

So far as the man could judge in a first hasty glance, the child's clothing was of excellent quality. Yet he gave slight heed to such considerations. Jim was the father of three lusty youngsters who were snugly in bed in Penzance, and the sight of this forlorn little sea-waif made his eyes misty.

He reached down, unpinned the blanket, which was secured with a brooch, and lifted the infant out of its unpleasing environment. It was piteous to see the way in which the shrunken hands at once strove to clasp his wrists, though they were all too feeble to achieve more than a gentle clutch which relaxed almost as soon as the effort was made.

Jones, also a husband and father, bethought him when he reached the store-room. Hence, when the windlass lowered a basket, there was not only a supply of brandy within, but also a bottle of fresh milk, which reached the Gulf Rock, by arrangement with a fisherman, whenever weather permitted.

Jim handed the jug to his exhausted companion.

"Here, cap'n," he said, cheerfully. "Take a couple of mouthfuls of this. It'll warm the cockles of your heart. An' the sooner you shin up the ladder and get them soaked rags off you the better. Can you manage? It's a near thing for the kid, if not too late now."

Brand needed no second bidding. He did not wish to collapse utterly, and the soft breeze, rendered chilly by his wet gasments, had revived him somewhat.

The resourceful sailor did not attempt the foolish process of pouring even the smallest quantity of milk into the baby's mouth. He produced a handkerchief, steeped a twisted corner in the milk, and placed it between the parched, salt-blackened lips.

This rough expedient for a feeding-bottle served admirably. The child's eagerness to gulp in the life-giving fluid was only matched by the tender care of the sailor in his efforts to appease its ravenous hunger.

He was so intent on this urgent task for a little while he paid no heed to Brand. Jones, forty feet overhead, took the keenest interest in the baby's nurture.

"Mind you don't let it suck the handkerchief into its little throat," he cried. "Not too much, Jim. It's on'y a young 'un. 'Half milk, half water, an' a lump of sugar,' my missus says. Pore little dear! However did it come to live, when that man must ha' been dead for days? Now, Jim, slow an' sure is the motter. S'pose you shove it into the basket an' let me hoist it up here? A warm bath an 'a blanket is the next best thing to milk an' water."

"All right, skipper. Just hold on a bit. She's doin' fine."

"Is it a he or a she?"

"I dunno. But I guess it's a gal by the duds."

The baby, in the sheer joy of living again, uttered a gurgling cry, a compound of milk, happiness and pain.

"There! I told you!" shouted Jones angrily. "You think every kid is a hardy young savage like your own. You're overdoin' it, I say.

"Overdoin' what?" demanded the sailor. "You don't know who you're talkin' to. Why, when I was on the West Coast, I reared two week-old monkeys this way."

Soon these firm friends would have quarreled—so unbounded was their anxiety to rescue the fluttering existence of the tiny atom of humanity so miraculously snatched from the perils of the sea.

But Stephen Brand's dominant personality was rapidly recovering its normal state.

"Jim," he said, "Mr. Jones is right. Her skin is raw and her eyes sore with inflammation. The little food she has already obtained will suffice for a few minutes. Send her up."

The "Mr. Jones" was a gentle reminder of authority. No further protest was raised, save b y the infant when supplies were temporarily withheld, and Jones was too pleased that his opinion should be supported by Brand to give another thought to his subordinate's outburst.

"Now, back up to the rock," said Brand. "I will dress and rejoin you quickly. The boat must be thoroughly examined and swabbed out: Jones will signal for help. Meanwhile, you might moor her tightly. When the tide falls she will be left high and dry."

The sailor's momentary annoyance fled. There was much to be done, and no time should be wasted in disputes concerning baby culture.

"Sure you won't slip?" he asked, as Stephen caught hold of the ladder.

"No, no. It was not fatigue but sickness which overcame me. The brandy has settled that."

Up he went, as though returning from his customary morning dip.

"By jingo, he's a plucked 'un," murmured Jim, admiringly. "He ought to be skipper of a battleship, instead of housemaid of a rock-light. Dash them sea-crows! I do hate 'em."

He seized an oar and lunged so hard and true at a cormorant which was invetigating the shark's liver, that he knocked the bird a yard through the air. Discomfited, it retired, with a scream. Its companion darted to the vacant site and pecked industriously. The neighborhood of the rock was now alive with sea-gulls. In the water many varieties of finny shapes were darting to and fro in great excitement. Jim laughed.

"They'd keep me busy," he growled. "When all's said an' done, it's their nater, an' they can't help it.'

Unconscious that he had stated the primordial thesis, he left the foragers alone. Hauling the sail out of the water, he discovered that the sternboard was missing, broken off probably when the mast fell. His trained scrutiny soon solved a puzzle suggested by the state of the cordage. Under ordinary conditions the upper part of the mast would either have carried the sail clean away with it or be found acting as a sort of sea-anchor at a short distance from the boat.

But it had gone altogether, and the strands of the sail-rope were bitten, not torn, asunder. The shark had striven to pull the boat under by tugging at the wreckage.

Having made the canvas ship-shape, Jim settled the next pressing question by seizing an empty tin and sluicing the fore part. Then he passed a rope under the after thwart and reeved it through a ring-bolt in a rock placed there for mooring purposes in very calm weather like the present.

When the Trinity tender paid her monthly visit to the lighthouse she was moored to a buoy three cables' lengths awa yto the northwest. If there was the least suspicion of a sea over the reef it was indeed a ticklish task landing or embarking stores and men.

Close-hauled, the boat would fill forword as the tide dropped. This was matterless. By the time all her movable contents—she appeared to have plenty of tinned meat and biscuits aboard, but no water—would be removed to the store-room.

The sailor was sorting the packages—wondering what queer story of the deep would be forthcoming when the recent history of the rescued child was ascertained—when Brand hailed him.

"Look out there, Jim. I am lowering an ax."

The weapon was duly delivered.

"What's the ax for, cap'n?" was the natural query.

"I want to chop out that shark's teeth. They will serve as mementoes for the girl if she grows up, which is likely, judging by the way she is yelling at Jones."

"Wot's he a-doin' of?" came the sharp demand.

"Giving her a bath, and excellently well, too. He is evidently quite domesticated."

"If that means 'under Mrs. J.'s thumb,' you're right, cap'n. They tell me that when he's ashore——'

"Jim, the first time I met you you were wheeling a perambulator. Now, load the skip and I will haul in."

They worked in silence a few minutes. Brand descended, and a few well-placed cuts relieved the man-eater of the serrated rows used to such serious purpose in life that he had attained a length of nearly twelve feet. Set double in the lower jaw and single in the upper, they were of a size and shape ominously suggestive of the creature's voracity.

"It is a good thing,' said Brand, calmly hewing at the huge jaws, "that nature did not build the Carcharodan galeidae on the same lines as the alligator. If this big fellow's sharp embroidery were not situated so close to his stomach he would have made a meal of me, Jim, unless I carried a torpedo."

"He's a blue shark," commented the other, ignoring for the nonce what he termed "some of the cap'n's jaw-breakers."

"Yes. It is the only dangerous species found so far north."

"His teeth are like so many fixed bayonets. Of course you would like to keep 'em, but he would look fine in the museum. Plenty of folk in Penzance, especially visitors, would pay a bob a head to see him."

Brand paused in his labor.

"Listen, Jim,' he said earnestly. "I want both you and Jones to oblige me by saying nothing about the shark. Please do not mention my connection with the affair in any way. The story will get into the newspapers as it is. The additional sensation of the fight would send reporters here by the score. I don't wish that to occur."

"Do you mean to say—"

"Mr. Jones will report the picking up of the boat, and the finding of the baby, together with the necessary burial of a man unknown—"

"What sort of a chap was he?" interrupted Jim.

"I—I don't know—a sailor—that is all I can tell you. He must have been dead several days."

"Then how in the world did that baby keep alive?"

"I have been thinking over that problem. I imagine that, in the first place, there was a survivor, who disappeared since the death of the poor devil out there—" he pointed to the sea. "This person, whether man or woman, looked after the child until madness came, caused by drinking salt water. The next step is suicide. The little one, left living, fell into the bilge created by the shipping of a sea, and adopted, by the mercy of Providence, a method of avoiding death from thirst which ought to be more widely appreciated than it is. She absorbed water through the pores of the skin, which rejected the salty elements and took in only those parts of the compound needed by the blood. You follow me?"

"Quite. It' a slap-up idea."

"It is not new. It occurred to a ship's captain who was compelled to navigate his passengers and crew a thousand miles in open boats across the Indian Ocean, as the result of a fire at sea. Well, the child was well nourished, in all likelihood, before the

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accident happened which set her adrift on the Atlantic. She may have lost twenty or thirty pounds in weight but starvation is a slow affair, and her plumpness saved her life in that respect. Most certainly she would have died to-day, and even yet she is in great danger. Her pulse is very weak and care must be taken not to stimulate the action of the heart too rapidly."

When Brand spoke in this way, Jim Spence was far too wary to ask personal questions. Sometimes, in the early days of their acquaintance, he had sought to pin his friend with clumsy logic to some admission as to his past life. The only result he achieved was to seal the other man's lips for days so far as reminiscences were concerned.

Not only Jones and Spence, but Thompson, the third assistant, who was taking his month ashore, together with the supernummeries who helped to preserve the rotation of two months rock duty and one ashore, soon realized that Brand—whom they liked and looked up to—had locked the record of his earlier years and refused to open the diary for anyone.

Yet so helpful was he—so entertaining with his scraps of scientific knowledge and more ample general reading—that those whose turn on the rock was coincident with his relief hailed his reappearance with joy. During the preceding winter he actually entertained them with a free translation of the twenty-four books of the "Iliad," and great was the delight of Jim Spence when he was able to connect the exploits of some Greek or Trojan hero with the identity of one of her Majesty's ships.

In private they discussed him often, and a common agreeement was made that his wish to remain incognito should be respected. Their nickname, "the cap'n," was a tacit admission of his higher social rank. They feared lest inquisitiveness should drive him from their midst, and one supernumerary, who heard from the cook of the Trinity tender that Brand was the nephew of a baronet, was roughly bidden to "close his rat-trap, or he might catch something he couldn't eat."

So Jim now contented himself by remarking dolefully that had his advice been taken "the bloomin' kid would be well on her way back to the Scilly Isles."

"You must not say that," was the grave response. "These things are determined by a higher power than man's intelligence. Think how the seeming accident of a fallen sail saved the child from the cormorants and other birds—how a chance sea fell into the boat and kept her alive—how mere idle curiosity on my part impelled me to swim out and investigate matters."

"That's your way of puttin' it," Jim was forced to say. "You knew quite well that there might be a shark in her wake, or you wouldn't have taken the knife. An' now you won't have a word said about it. At the bombardment of Alexandria, a messmate of mine got the V. C. for less."

"The real point is, Jim, that we have not yet discovered what ship this boat belongs to.'

"No, an' what's more, we won't find out in a hurry. Her name's gone, fore an' aft."

"Is there nothing left to help us?"

"Only this."

The sailor produced the brooch from his waistcoat pocket. It was of the safety-pin order, but made of gold and ornamented with small emeralds set as a four-leaved shamrock.

"Is the maker's name on the sail?"

"No. I fancy that this craft was rigged on board ship for harbor cruisin'."

Brand passed a hand wearily across his forehead.

"I wish I had not been so precipitate," he murmured. "That man had papers on him in all likelihood."

"You couldn't have stood it, mate. It was bad enough for me. It must ha' bin hell for you."

"Perhaps the baby's clothes are marked."

"That's the chance. She was well rigged out."

Brand cast the shark loose. The monster slid off into the green depths. A noiseless procession of dim forms rushed after the carcass. The birds, shrill with disappointment, darted off to scour the neighboring sea.

Beyond the damaged boat, bumping against the rock, and the huge jaws, with their rows of wedge-shaped teeth, naught remained to testify to the drama of the hour save the helpless baby on which the head-keeper was waiting so sedulously.

Already the signal "Doctor wanted" was fluttering from the lighthouse flagstaff. It would be noted at the Land's End and telegraphed to Penzance. The morning would be well advanced before help could reach the Gulf Rock from ashore.

When Brand and Spence entered Jones's bedroom they found him hard at work washing the child's clothing.

"She's asleep," he said, jerking his head towards a bunk. "I gev' her a pint of mixture. She cried a bit when there was no more to be had, but a warm bath with some boric in it made her sleepy. An' there she is, snug as a cat."

The domesticated Jones was up to his elbows in a lather of soap.

"Have you noticed any laundry marks or initials on her clothing?" asked Brand.

"Yes. Here you are." He fished out of the bubbles a little vest, on which were worked the letters E. T. in white silk.

"Ah! That is very important. We can establish her identity, especially if the laundry mark is there also."

"I'm feared there's nothing else," said Jones. "I've not looked very carefully, as it'll take me all my time to get everything dry before the tug comes. As for ironin', it can't be done. But my missus 'll see after her until somebody turns up to claim her."

"That may be never."

"Surely we will get some news of the ship which was lost!"

"Yes, that is little enough to expect. Yet it is more than probable that her parents are dead. A baby would be separated from her mother only by the mother's death. There is a very real chance that poor 'E. T.' will be left for years on the hands of those who take charge of her now. The only alternative is the workhouse."

"That's so, cap'n," put in Jim. "You always dig to the heart of a subjec', even if it's a shark."

"In a word, Jones, you can hardly be asked to assume such a responsibility. Now it happens that I can afford to adopt the child, if she lives, and is not claimed by relatives. It is almost a duty imposed on me by events. When the doctor comes, therefore, I purpose asking him to see that she is handed over to Mrs. Sheppard, the nurse who looks after my own little girl. I will write to her. My turn ashore comes next week. Then I can devote some time to the necessary inquiries."

Jones made no protest. He knew that Brand's suggestion was a good one. And he promised silence with regard to the fight with the shark. Men in the lighthouse service are quick to grasp the motives which cause others to avoid publicity. They live sedate, lonely lives. The noise the rush, the purposeless activities of existence ashore weary them. They have been known to petition the Trinity Brethren to send them back to isolated stations when promoted to localities where the pleasures and excitements of a town were available.

Having determined the immediate future of little "E. T.," whose shrunken features were now placid in sleep, they guietly separated. Brand flung himself wearily into a bunk to obtain a much-needed rest, and the others hurried to overtake the many duties awaiting them.

Weather reports and daily journals demanded instant attention. The oil expenditure, the breakage of glass chimneys, the consumption of stores, the meteorological records—all must be noted. An efficient lookout must be maintained, signals answered or hoisted, everything kept spotlessly clean, and meals cooked. Until noon each day a rock lighthouse is the scene of unremitting diligence, and the loss of nearly an hour and a half of Spence's watch, added to the presence of the baby and the constant care which one or other of the two men bestowed on her, made the remaining time doubly precious.

About nine o'clock Brand was awakened from a heavy slumber by Jim's hearty voice:

"Breakfast ready, cap'n. Corfee, eggs an' haddick—fit for the Queen, God bless her! An' baby's had another pint of Jones's brew—Lord love her little eyes, though I haven't seen 'em yet. A minnit ago Jones sung down to me that the Lancelot has just cleared Carn du."

The concluding statement brought Brand to his feet. The doctor would be on the rock by the time breakfast was ended and the letter to Mrs. Sheppard written.

When the doctor did arrive he shook his head dubiously at first sight of the child.

"I don't know how she lived. She is a mere skeleton," he said.

Brand explained matters, and hinted at his theory.

"Oh, the ways of nature are wonderful," admitted the doctor. "Sometimes a man will die from an absurdly trivial thing, like the sting of a wasp or the cutting of a finger. At others, you can fling him headlong from the Alps and he will merely suffer a bruise or two. Of course, this infant has an exceptionally strong constitution or she would have died days ago. However, you have done right so far. I will see to her proper nourishment during the next few days. It is a most extraordinary case."

Jones managed so well that the child's garments were dry and aired. Wrapped in a clean blanket, she was lowered into the steamer's boat, but the doctor, preferring to jump, was soaked to the waist owing to a slip on the weed-covered rock.

The crew of the tug-boat bailed out the derelict and towed her to Penzance.

That evening a fisherman brought a note from Mrs. Sheppard. Among other things, she wrote that the baby's clothes were beautifully made and of a very expensive type. She was feverish, the doctor said, but the condition of her eyes and lips would account for this, apart from the effects of prolonged exposure.

Brand read the letter to his mates when the trio were enjoying an evening pipe on the "promenade," the outer balcony under the lantern.

"S'pose her people don't show up," observed Jim, "what are you going to call her?"

"Trevillion," said Brand.

The others gazed at him with surprise. The prompt announcement was unexpected.

"I have told you about the fabled land of Lyonnesse lying there beneath the sea," he went on, pointing to the dark blue expanse on whose distant confines the Scilly Isles were silhouetted by the last glow of the vanished sun. "Well, the name of the only person who escaped from that minor deluge was Trevillion. It is suitable and it accords with the initial of her probable surname."

"Oh, I see," piped Jones. His voice always high-pitched, became squeaky when his brain was stirred.

"That's O.K. for the 'T,'" remarked Jim, "but what about the 'E'?" Elizabeth is a nice name when you make it into bessie."

"I think we should keep up the idea of the Arthurian legend. There are two that come to my mind, Elaine and Enid. Elaine died young, the victim of an unhappy love. Enid became the wife of a gallant knight, Gawain, who was

"—ever foremost in the chase,
And victor at the tilt and tournament,
They called him the great Prince and man of men.
But Enid, whom her ladies loved to call
Enid the Fair, a grateful people named
Enid the Good."

"That settles it," cried Jim, brandishing his pipe towards Penzance. "I hope as how Miss Enid Trevillion is asleep an' doin' well, an' that she'll grow up to be both fair an' good. If she does, she'll be better'n most women."

Brand made no reply. He went within to attend to the lantern. In five minutes the great eyes of the Lizard, the Longships and the Seven Stones Lightship were solemnly staring at their fellow-warden of the Gulf Rock, whilst, in the far west, so clear was the night, the single flash of St. Agnes and the double flash of the Bishop illumined the sky.

CHAPTER III.

THE SIGNAL.

At the foot of a long flight of steps leading from the boat quay to the placid waters of Penzance harbor a stoutly built craft was moored. It had two occupants this bright January morning and they were sufficiently diverse in appearance to attract the attention of the local squad of that great army of loungers which seems to thrive in tobacco-blessed content at all places where men go down to the sea in ships.

The pair consisted of a weather-beaten fisherman and a girl.

The man was scarred and blistered by wind and wave until he had attained much outward semblance to his craft. Nevertheless, man and boat looked reliable. They were sturdy and strong; antiquated, perhaps, and greatly in want of a new coat; but shaped on lines to resist the elements together for years to come. Ben Pollard and his pilchard-driver, Daisy, were Cornish celebrities of note. Not once, but many times had they been made immortal — with the uncertain immortality of art—by painters of the Newlyn school.

The girl, an animated cameo, to which the shabby picturesqueness of Old Ben in his patched garments and old Daisy in her unkempt solidity supplied a fitting background, merited the tacit approval she received from the pipe-smokers.

Flaxen-haired, blue-eyed, with a face of a delicate, flower-like beauty which added to its mobile charm by the healthy glow of a skin brightened and deepened in tone by an abiding love of the open air, she suggested, by her attire, an artistic study of the color effects derivable from the daringly trustful little plant which gave the boat its name. She wore a coat and skirt of green cloth, lightly hemmed and cuffed with dark red braid. Her large white hat was trimmed with velvet of a tone to match the braid, and her neatly fitting brown boots and gloves were of the right shade. Beneath her coat there was a glimpse of a knitted jersey of soft white wool, this being a tribute to the season, though a winter in Lyonnesse can usually shrug its comfortable shoulders at the deceitful vagaries of the Riviera.

That she was a young person of some maritime experience was visible to the connoisseurs above at a glance. She was busily engaged in packing the spacious lockers of the Daisy with certain stores of apples, oranges and vegetables—ranging from the lordly new potato (an aristocrat at that time of the year' to the plebeian cabbage—and her lithe, active figure moved with an ease born of confidence in the arratic principles of gravitation as codified and arranged by a rocking boat.

Pollard, too, was overhauling his gear, seeing that the mast was securely stepped and the tackle ran free. Whilst they worked they talked, and, of course, the critics listened.

"Do you think the weather will hold, Ben?" asked the girl over her shoulder, stooping to arrange some clusters of daffodils and norcissus so that they should not suffer by the lurch of some heavy package when the boat heeled over.

"The glass be a-fallin', sure, missy," said the old fellow cheerily, "but wi' the wind backin' round to the norrard it on'y means a drop o' wet."

"You think we will make the rock in good time?"

"We'm do our best, Miss Enid."

[illegible]

"[illegible] you [illegible] tell me, Ben Pollard [illegible] preparations [illegible] run for [illegible] into Lamorna."

[illegible] induced a [illegible] table [illegible] Enid's pri- [illegible] when he [illegible]

"[illegible] as well as [illegible] stronger [illegible]"

"[illegible] slow, eh, Ben? Really, [illegible] the Daisy look more tubby [illegible] you."

[illegible], Pollard defended himself and his craft.

"Me an' Daisy 'll sail to Gulf Light quicker'n any two other tugs in Penzance, missy. Her be a long run at this time o' year, but you'm get there all right, I 'xpect. Wi' a norrard breeze we'm be safe enough. If the wind makes 'ee c'n zee et comin', 'ee knaw."

She laughed quietly. Any reflection on the spanking powers of his pilchard-driver would rouse Ben instantly.

"As if I didn't know all you could teach me," she cried, "and as if anyone in all Cornwall could teach me better."

The old fisherman was mollified. He looked along the quay.

"Time we'm cast off," he suggested. "Miss Constance be a plaguey long time fetchin' them wraps."

"Oh, Ben, how can you say that? She had to go all the way to the Cottage. Why, if she ran—"

"Here she be," he broke in, "an' she b'aint runnin' neither. Her's got a young man in tow."

What announcement would straighten the back of any girl of nineteen like unto that? Enid Trevillion turnen and stood upright.

"Why, it's Jack!" she cried, waving a delighted little hand.

"So it be," admitted Pollard, after a surprised stare. "When I look landward my eyes b'ain't so good as they was."

He stated this fact regretfully. No elderly sea-dog will ever acknowledge to failing vision when he gazes at the level horizon he knows so well. This is no pretence of unwilling age; it is wholly true. The settled chaos of the shore bewilders him. The changeful sea cannot.

Meanwhile, the dawdlers lining the wharf, following Enid's signals with their eyes, devoted themselves to a covert staring at the young people hurrying along the quay.

Constance Brand, being a young and pretty woman, secured their instant suffrages. Indeed, she would have won the favorable verdict of a more severe audience. Taller than Enid, she had the brown hair and hazel eyes of her fath er. To him, too, she owed the frank, self-reliant pose of head and clearly cut, refined features which conveyed to others that all-important first good impression. Blended with Stephen Brand's firm incisiveness, and softening the quiet strength of her marked resemblance to him, was an essential femininity which lifted her wholly apart from the ruck of handsome English girls who find delight in copying the manners an deven the dress of their male friends.

Her costume was an exact replica of that of Enid. She walked well and rapidly, yet her alert carriage had a grace, a subtle elegance, more frequently seen in America than in England. Her lively face, flushed with exercise, and, it may be, with some little excitement, conveyed the same Transatlantic characteristic. One said at seeing her: "Here is a girl who has lived much abroad" It came as a surprise to learn that she had never crossed the Channel.

The man with her, Lieutenant John Percival Stanhope, R.N., was too familiar a figure in Penzance to evoke muttered comment from the gallery.

A masterful young gentleman he looked, and one accustomed to having his own way in the world, whether in love or war. True type of the British sailor, he had the physique of a strong man and the adveneurously cheerful expression of a boy.

The skin of his face and hands, olive tinted with exposure, his dark hair and the curved eyelashes, which drooped over his blue eyes, no less than the artistic proclivities suggested by his well-chiseled features and long, tapering fingers, proclaimed that Stanhope, notwithstanding his Saxon surname and bluff bearing, was a Celt. His mother, in fact, was a Tregarthen of Cornwall, daughter of Cornwall, daughter of a peer, and a leading figure in local society.

One may ask: "Why should a youth of good birth and social position be on such terms of easy familiarity with two girls, one of whom was the daughter of a lighthouse-keeper, and the other her sister by adoption?

Indeed, a great many people did ask this pertinent question; among others, Lady Margaret Stanhope put it often and pointedly to her son, without any cogent answer being forthcoming.

If she were denied enlightenment, although her maternal anxiety was justifiable, the smokers on the pier, as representing the wider gossip of the town, may also be left unsatisfied.

(To be continued)

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Mr. D. M. McMartin, representing the Office Specialty Co., of Toronto, was in town on Wednesday and Thursday last.