

The PILLAR OF LIGHT

By LOUIS TRACY.
Author of "The Wings of the Morning"

(Continued from page 1)

companion and came back with a glass. He poised it with the precision of a Blaise Pascal and began to speak again. "Stove in forward, above the water line. Wouldn't live two minutes in a sea. Somethin' lyin' in the bows. Can't make it out. And there's a couple of cormorants perched on the gunwale. But she'll pass within 200 yards on her present course, an' the tide'll hold long enough for that."

The other man looked around. From that elevated perch, 130 feet above high water mark, he could survey a vast area of sea. Excepting the approaching steamer—which would fit past a mile away to the south—and a few distant brown specks which betokened a shoal of Penzance fishing smacks making the best of the tide eastward—there was not a sail in sight.

"I think we should try to get hold of her," he said.

Jim kept his eye glued to the telescope.

"Tain't worth it, cap'n. The salvage 'll only be a pound or two, not but what an extra survivin' comes in."

At last the lighthouse keeper heard ascending footsteps. This was not Stephen Brand, but Jones, Jim, whose rare irritated moods found safety in stolid silence, neither spoke nor looked around when his chief joined him, binoculars in hand.

Jones, a man of whitewash, polish and rigid adherence to framed rules, found the boat instantly and recapitulated Jim's inventory, eliciting grunts of agreement as each item was ticked off.

A clang of metal beneath caught their ears—the opening of the stout doors, forty feet above high water mark, from which a series of iron rungs sank in the granite wall led to the rocky base.

"Brand's goin' to swim out. It's hardly worth while signalin' to the Land's End," commented Jones.

No answer. Jim leaned well over and saw their associate, stripped to his underclothing, with a leather belt supporting a sheath knife slung across his shoulders, climbing down the ladder.

This taciturnity surprised Jones, for Jim was the cheeriest nurse who ever brought a sufferer a plate of soup.

"It's nothing for a good swimmer, is it?" was the anxious question.

"No. It's no distance to speak of." "An' the sea's like a mill pond?" "Aye, it's smooth enough."

"Don't you think he ought to try it? Every fine mornin' he has a dip off the rock."

"Well, if it's all right for him an' you it's all right for me."

Jim had urged his plea to the man whom he chiefly concerned. He was far too sporting a character to obtain the interference of authority, and Jones, whose maritime experiences were confined to the hauling in or paying out of a lightship's cable, had not the slightest suspicion of lurking danger in the blue depths.

A light splash came to them, and, a few seconds later, Brand's head and shoulders swung into view. After a dozen vigorous breast strokes he rolled over on his side and waved his right hand to the two men high above him.

With a sweeping side stroke he made rapid progress. Jones, unincumbered by knowledge, blew through his lips.

"He's a wonderful chap, is Brand," he said contentedly. "It ticks me what a man like him wants messin' about in the service for. He's dedicated up to the top notch, an' he has money too. His lodgin's cost the whole of his pay, the missus says, an' that kid of his has a hospital nuss, if you please."

Jones was grateful to his mates for their recent attentions. He was inclined to genial gossip, but Jim was watching the boat curving toward the lighthouse. The high spring tide was at the full. So he only growled:

"You can see with half an eye he has taken on this job for a change. I wish he was in that blessed boat."

Jones was quite certain now that his subordinate harbored some secret fear of danger.

"What's up?" he cried. "He'll board her in two ticks."

On no account would the sailor mention sharks. He might be mistaken, and Jones would guffaw at his "deep sea" fancies. Anyhow, it was Brand's affair. A friend might advise; he would never tattle.

The head keeper, vaguely excited, peered through his glass. Both boat and swimmer were in the annular field. Brand had resumed the breast stroke. The swing of the tide carried the broken bow toward him. He was not more than the boat's length distant

The occulting hood, too, must be helped when the warning click came or it would jam and fall to fall periodically, thus changing the character of the light, to the bewilderment and grave peril of any unhappy vessel striving against the exterior turmoil of wind and wave.

So Jones passed four hours with his head and shoulders in the temperature of a Turkish bath and the lower part of his body chilled to the bone.

He thought nothing of it at the time. This was duty. But at intervals throughout the rest of his life the aching nerve would remind him of that lonely watch. This morning he was convalescent after a painful immobility of two days.

Watching the boat, Jim centered her in the telescope field and looked anxiously for a sharp arrow shaped ripple on the surface of the sea. The breeze which had vanquished the fog now kissed the smiling water into dimples, and his keen sight was perplexed by the myriad wavelets.

Each minute the condition of affairs on board became more defined. Beneath some oars ranged along the starboard side he could see several tiza,

such as contain biscuits and compressed beef. The shapeless mass in the bows puzzled him. It was partly covered with broken planks from the damaged portion of the upper works, and it might be a jib sail fallen there when the mast broke. The birds were busy and excited. He did not like that.

Nearly half an hour passed. The Princess Royal, a fine vessel of yacht-like proportions, sprinting for the afternoon train, was about eight miles away, sou'west by west. According to present indications, steamer and derelict would be abreast of the Gulf Rock light simultaneously, but the big ship, of course, would give a wide berth to a rock strewn shoal.

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1906 DECEMBER 1906

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when he dived suddenly and the cormorants flapped aloft. A black fin darted into sight, leaving a sharply divided trail in the smooth patch of water created by the turning of the derelict.

Jones was genuinely startled now. "My God!" he cried. "What is it?" "A shark!" yelled Jim. "I knew it. I warned him. Eh, but he's game, is the cap'n."

"Why didn't you tell me?" roared Jones. Under reversed conditions he would have behaved exactly as Jim did.

But it was no time for words. The men peered at the sudden tragedy with an intensity which left them gasping for breath. More than 200 yards away in reality, the magnifying glasses brought this horror so close that they could see—the almost thought they could hear—its tensely dramatic action. The rapidly moving black signal reached the small eddy caused by the man's disappearance. Instantly a great sinuous, shining body rose half out of the water and a powerful tail struck the side of the boat a resounding whack.

Jim's first expletive died in his throat.

"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 whirled about and rushed. Brand sank, and again the giant man enter 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, screaming 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 have missed it for a hundred," yelled Jim. "It's a fight to a finish, and 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 lifelong enemy, coolly struck out toward 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 Baptist.

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 stung him. 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, while the cormorants and gulls, eying him ominously, did not know what they had lost.

Then the man returned to the sail and peered beneath. Neither of the on-lookers 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 channel house atmosphere which evidently clung to it.

Then the shark engaged his attention. It was floating belly upward, its white underskin 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 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 short 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.

Jim closed the telescope with a snap.

"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 there 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, while 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



A shining body rose half out of the water.

inch to spare. Here, at sea level, the Atlantic swell, even in calm weather, rendered landing or boarding a boat a matter of activity. At this stage of the tide each wave lapped some portion of the granite stones and receded quickly down the 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 of a practiced oarsman, he turned his craft to bring her stern on to the landing place.

"Lower a basket!" he cried to Jones, and, while 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 maneuvers 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 tonight 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.

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 energy which every healthy animal unconsciously hoards for life and death emergencies.

But there was another reason. He 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 200 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, stretched out over the crane above their heads.

"A what-a?" roared the sailor, 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.

(Continued on page 7)

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ORDINANCE 28.

AN ORDINANCE making certain specifications for sidewalk construction within the town of Gresham.

Be it ordained by the common council of the town of Gresham:

Section 1. That all sidewalks hereafter built or constructed within the town of Gresham shall conform to the specifications herein contained and by this ordinance established.

FIRST, PLANK WALKS.

All plank walks shall be five feet wide; there shall be laid three stringers, size 4 x 6; all planking to be of 2-inch plank not less than 8 inches in width, every eight feet a plank shall extend to outside of curb line, or seven feet from property line; there shall be a curb not less than 3 inches thick by 12 inches wide, set edgewise, said plank to be spiked with 20-penny nails, each plank to be spiked with not less than five spikes;

SECOND, GRAVEL WALKS.

All gravel walks shall have good packed foundations to within two inches of height of grade; gravel on this shall be coarse screened at least two inches deep. All gravel walks shall be full seven feet wide.

THIRD, CEMENT WALKS.

Cement walks shall have a curb not less than six inches wide and not less than 12 inches deep, made of one part cement to six parts gravel, cemented over by a coat one part cement and two parts sand on top and outside. All cement walks shall be five feet wide composed of gravel or dirt tamped to within three inches of grade; on top of this two one-half inches of concrete composed of one part cement and 12 parts gravel, well tamped; on this three-fourths inch of one part cement to two parts sand.

DRIVEWAYS.

Wherever driveways shall cross either plank or gravel walks same shall be planked with two-inch plank laid lengthwise full width of said walk with suitable approaches.

CROSS WALKS.

All cross walks shall be five feet wide, built of 3 x 12-inch plank, laid lengthwise on stringers 6 x 6 inches, spiked with 60-penny nails.

Adopted November 20, 1906. Approved November 23, 1906.

LEWIS SHATTUCK, Mayor.

Attest: H. L. ST. CLAIR, Recorder.

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