

THE PILLAR of LIGHT

... By ...
Louis Tracy,
Author of
"The Wings of the Morning"
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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—At daybreak an assistant keeper of the lighthouse, discovers in the distance a ship in distress. Stephen Brand agrees to swim out to it. In so doing he comes in contact with a shark which he kills and boards the ship. He finds on board the body of a dead man and a strange bundle under a sail. Jones the lighthouse keeper lowers a basket and hauls Brand and his strange bundle safely up. II.—The bundle contains a live baby of which which Jones assumes charge. Letters "ET" are found on child's clothing. Baby is placed in charge of nurse who has charge also of Stephen Brand's children. Child is named "Enid Trevilion." III.—Eighteen years later, Constance, daughter of Brand, and Enid go to the lighthouse with an old fisherman named Ben. They are caught in a storm and as they near the lighthouse hear the danger signal from the rock. They land safely and find that two men have been hurt. Brand sends the injured men back with Ben. IV.—Jackson and Bates are lowered into the boat and Ben takes them back to Penzance. The Daisy is met by Lieutenant Stanhope who is devotedly in love with Enid. He assists in caring for the wounded men. V.—Enid spies a boat approaching the rock. It is the Lapwing. Brand discovers that it is sailed by Stanhope. He signals for them not to land, and Stanhope returns to Penzance. The girls spend the night at the rock. VI.—During the night a furious storm renders sleep impossible. At dawn Brand makes out a ship in distress. VII.—A young American named Pyne throws a rope to Brand who makes fast to the lighthouse and by means of a pulley arrangement seventy-eight are saved before the ship goes down. VIII.—Mrs. Vansittart, Pyne's aunt, is strangely moved at sight of Constance.

feeling stone and iron trembling as every surge was hurled many feet above her head. At last she stood on the lowest floor. Beneath her feet was naught but granite and iron bars. Here was solidity. How grateful to know of this firm base, rooted in the very world. Her heart leaped to her mouth, but not with fear. She was proud of the lighthouse, strong in the knowledge of its majestic strength.

Nevertheless in this place, the source of her own sense of security, she found uneasiness among the men. They were all sailors in this lowest habitable region. Their preconceived ideas had been rudely reversed. The ship, the noble structure which defied the storm by yielding to its utmost fury, had for them no terrors. But the stark pillar which flinched from no assault bewildered them. It was impossible to believe that it could withstand the



"Who are you?" she whispered.

Telling the women of the plan to dry their underclothing in sections, she asked them to help her by arranging matters so that their garments should be divided into lots. Then she went to the second bedroom and made the same

suggestion. The case of the sufferers in the hospital required more drastic measures. The little girl she stripped with her own hands and clothed her in one of Brand's flannel shirts and a commandeered reef jacket.

Two of Brand's spare suits and a couple of blankets enabled the two injured women, who were able to walk, to get rid of their wet garments in the crowded room beneath, and the lockers of Jackson and Bates made it possible for the men who most needed attention to be made comfortable by the invaluable hospital orderly.

Constance was kept busy flying up and down to the kitchen, while Enid, having met all immediate demands in the matter of a hot beverage and something to eat, supplemented her labors.

Pyne worked like a Trojan. As each pile of sodden garments was delivered to him he squeezed out as much water as possible with his hands and then applied himself to the task of baking them dry. He did this, too, in a very efficient way, speedily converting the kitchen into a miniature Turkish bath.

At the end of an hour he had succeeded so well that more than one-half of the females were supplied with tolerably dry and warm underclothing. With their heavier garments of course nothing could be done.

Once, on the stairs, Enid detained Constance for a moment's chat.

"Mrs. Vansittart is old," she said.

Constance, so taken up was she with many errands, had forgotten the lady.

"How thoughtless of me," she cried. "Is she better?"

"Yes, but when I went in just now to give her her clothes she said to me, 'Are you the sister of the other—of Constance Brand?' It was no time for explanations, so I just said 'Yes.' She gave me such a queer look and then smiled quite pleasantly, apologizing for troubling me."

Constance laughed.

"Perhaps she knew dad years ago," she said.

"What do you think Mr. Pyne said about her?"

"How can I tell? Did you speak of her to him?"

"I told him she had fainted when you delivered his message. He said, 'Guess she can faint as easy as I can fall off a house.' Isn't he funny?"

"I think he is splendid," said Constance.

The wreck was now wholly demolished. The first big wave of the retreating tide enveloped the lighthouse and smote it with thunderous malice. Screams came from the women's quarters.

"Go, Enid," said Constance. "Tell them they have nothing to fear. They must expect these things to happen for nearly two hours. Tell them what dad said. Twenty-five years, you know."

"Brave hearts! What infinite penetration inspired the man who first said, 'Noblesse oblige!'"

Constance looked in at the kitchen. Pyne loomed through a fog of steam.

"Pay no heed to these"—she was interrupted by another mighty thump and cataract roar—"these blows of Thor's hammer," she cried.

"Play me for an anvil," he returned.

She descended to the depths to reassure the men. Talking with shrill cheerfulness at each doorway was easy. It helped her to go down, down,

1907 JANUARY 1907

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

"You speak as if the Chinook were nearly as old as this lighthouse, yet I have never even heard her name before."

"You know her well enough all the same," said the other ruefully. "This is her maiden voyage since she was altered, and they rechristened her, too—always an unlucky thing to do, I say. Bless your heart, man, she is the old Princess Royal. Eh? What's that?"

He guffawed mournfully at Brand's involuntary exclamation.

"Certainly! Well, surely I ought to know. I have passed most of my service with the company in her, and when I took a crew to Cramp's to navigate her to New York after she was smartened up I little imagined I would see her laid by forever the next time we saw the lights of old England. My goodness, even what was left of the old girl ought to know her way better'n 'bat."

"But what did really happen?"

"Drivin' her, I tell you—drivin' her full pelt to land the mails at Southampton twelve hours ahead of schedule. With that awful sea liftin' her and a shaft twenty feet longer, what could you expect? Poor Perkins! A rare hard worker too. Now he's gone down with his ship and over 200 passengers an' crew."

"Judging by the number saved I feared that more were lost."

"It's the off season, you know. The passenger list was light. For the Lord's sake, think of what it might have been in May or June!"

"It is bad enough as it is. All has not ended with the disappearance of the vessel."

The sailor shot a sharp glance at Brand.

"You can't be thinkin' any one was to blame"—he commenced. But Brand waved aside the fancied imputation.

"Blame!" he said. "With a broken shaft! In that whirlwind! No, no. I sent for you to talk over the new difficulty which has to be faced. There are food, water and fuel here for three men for two months. If you do a little sum you will find that the available stores on the basis of full rations will maintain eighty-one people for two days and a quarter."

"But we're only six miles from the mainland," Mr. Emmett had not yet grasped the true meaning of the figures.

"I have been here more than once for six weeks at a stretch, when, for all the assistance we could receive, we might as well have been within the arctic circle."

Again the sailor jerked his thumb toward the reef.

"Is it as bad as all that?" he queried anxiously.

"Yes."

"But six weeks! Good Lord!" Mr. Emmett had done the little sum.

"That is exceptional. A week is the average, unless the unexpected happens, after a gale like this. And a week will test our endurance to the limit."

Mr. Emmett whistled softly. A grisly phantom was creeping at him. He shivered, and not from cold.

"By Jove!" he said. "What's to be done?"

"In the first place you must help me to maintain iron discipline. To leave the rock today or tomorrow will be an absolute impossibility. On the next day, with luck and a steady moderation of the weather, we may devise

some desperate means of landing all the active men or getting fresh supplies. That is in the hands of Providence. I want you to warn your officers and others whom you can trust, either sailors or civilians. Better arrange three watches. My daughters will have charge of the stores. By going through the lists in the store-room I can portion out the rations for six days. I think we had better fix on that minimum."

"Of course I will back you up in every way," said Mr. Emmett, who felt chillier at this moment than at any time during the night. "I know you are acting wisely, but I admit I am scared at the thought of what may happen—if those days pass and no help is available."

Brand knew what would happen and it was hard to lock the secret in his heart. He alone must live. That was essential, the one thing carved in stone upon the tablet of his brain, a thing to be fought out behind barred door, revolver in hand.

Whatever else took place, if men and women, perhaps his own sweet girls, were dying of thirst and starvation, the light must shine at night over its allotted span of the slumbering sea. There on the little table beside him lay the volume of rules and regulations. What did it say?

"The keepers, both principal and assistant, are enjoined never to allow any interests, whether private or otherwise, to interfere with the discharge of their public duties, the importance of which to the safety of navigation cannot be overrated."

There was no ambiguity in the words, no halting sentence which opened a way for a man to plead, "I thought it best." Those who framed the rule meant what they said. No man could bend the steel of their intent.

To end the intolerable strain of his thoughts Stephen Brand forced his lips to a thin smile and his voice to say harshly:

"If the worst comes to the worst, there are more than 3,000 gallons of colza oil in store. That should maintain life. It is a vegetable oil."

Then Constance thrust her glowing face into the lighted area.

"Dad," she cried cheerfully, "the men wish to know if they may smoke. Poor fellows! They are so miserable, so cold and damp and dreary down there. Please say 'Yes.'"

CHAPTER IX.

THE purser, faithful to his trust, had secured the ship's books.

He alone among the survivors of the Chinook had brought a parcel of any sort from that ill fated ship. The others possessed the clothes they wore, their money and in some cases their trinkets.

Mr. Emmett suggested that a list of those saved should be compiled. Then, by ticking off the names, he could classify the inmates of the lighthouse and evolve some degree of order in the community.

It was found that there were thirty-seven officers and men, including stewards, thirty-three saloon passengers, of whom nineteen were women, counting the two little girls, and seven men and one woman from the steerage.

"It isn't usual, on a British ship, for the crew to bulk so large on the list," said Mr. Emmett huskily, "but it couldn't be helped. The passengers had to be batted down. They couldn't live on deck. We never gave in until the last minute."

"I saw that," said Brand, knowing the agony which prompted the broken explanation.

"An' not a mother's soul would have escaped if it wasn't for young Mr. Pyne," went on the sailor.

"Is that the name of the youngster who climbed the foremast?"

"That's him. It was a stroke of genius, his catching on to that way out. He was as cool as a cucumber. Just looked up when he reached the deck and saw the lighthouse so near. Then he asked me for a rope. Planned the whole thing in a second, so to speak."

"He is not one of the ship's company?"

"No, sir; a passenger, navy of Cyrus J. Traill, the Philadelphia millionaire. Haven't you heard of T. all? Not much of a newspaper reader, eh? There was a lady on board, a Mrs. Vansittart, who was coming over to marry old Traill; so people said, and the wedding was fixed to take place in Paris next week. Young Pyne was actin' as escort."

"Is she lost? What a terrible thing!"

The chief officer glanced down the purser's lists and slapped his thigh with much vehemence.

"No, by gosh! Here she is, marked O. K. Well, that beats the band!"

"So the lad has discharged his trust to his uncle?"

Mr. Emmett was going to say something, but checked the words on his lips.

"Queer world," he muttered; "queer world."

With that he devoted himself to planning out the watches. Soon he and the purser betook themselves to the depths with a roll call. As they crept below gingerly—these sailor men were not at home on companion ladders which moved not when the shock came—they met Enid for the first time. She, coming up, held the swinging lantern level with her face. They hung back politely.

"Please come," she cried in her winsome way. "These stairs are too narrow for courtesy."

They stepped heavily onward. She flitted away. Emmett raised his lantern between the purser's face and his own.

"What do you think of that?" he whispered, awe stricken.

The man of accounts smiled broadly.

"Pretty girl!" he agreed, with crudely emphatic superlatives.

Emmett shook his head. He murmured to himself: "I guess I'm tired. I see things."

Enid handed an armful of dry linen to the damp, steaming women in the lower bedroom. She was hurrying out. Some one overtook her at the door. It was Mrs. Vansittart.

"Miss Braud," she said, with her all sufficing smile, "give me one moment."

They stood in the dark and hollow sounding stairway. The seas were lashing the column repeatedly, but the night's ordeal was nearly ended. Even a timid child might know now that the howling terror without had done its worst and failed. From the cavernous depths, mingling with the rumble

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of the storm, came the rhythm of a hymn. Those left in gloom by the withdrawal of Mr. Emmett's lantern were cheering their despondent souls.

Surprised, even while Enid awaited the other woman's demand, the listeners heard the words:

"Awake, my soul, and with the sun
Thy daily stage of duty run;
Shake off dull sloth, and joyful rise
To pay thy morning sacrifice."

The rough tones of the men were softened and harmonized by the distance. It was a chant of praise, of



"Miss Brand, give me one moment."

thanksgiving, the offering of those who had been snatched from death and from mortal fear more painful than death.

The singing ceased as suddenly as it began. Mr. Emmett and the purser were warning the first watch.

The interruption did not seem to help Mrs. Vansittart. She spoke awkwardly, checking her thoughts as though fearful she might be misunderstood or say too much.

"I am better," she explained; "quite recovered. I gave up my bunk to one who needed it."

"I am sure we are all doing our best to help one another," volunteered Enid.

"But I am restless. The sight—of your sister—aroused vague memories. Do you mind—I find it hard to explain—your name is familiar. I knew—some people—called Brand—a Mr. Stephen Brand—and his wife."

She halted, seemingly at a loss. Enid, striving helplessly to solve the reason for this unexpected confidence, but quite wishful to make the explanation easier, found herself interested.

"Yes," she said. "That is quite possible, of course, though you must have been quite a girl. Mrs. Brand died many years ago."

Mrs. Vansittart flinched from the feeble rays of the lantern.

"That is so—I think I heard of—of Mrs. Brand's death—in London, I fancy, but they had only one child."

Enid laughed.

"I am a mere nobody," she said.

"Dad adopted me. I came here one day in June, nineteen years ago, and I must have looked so forlorn that he took me to his heart, thank God!"

Another solemn chord of the hymn floated up to them:

"Let all thy converse be sincere,
Thy conscience as the noonday clear."

The rest of the verse evaded them. Probably a door was closed.

Mrs. Vansittart seemed to be greatly perturbed. Enid, intent on the occupation of the moment, believed their little chat was ended. To round it off, so to speak, she went on quickly:

"I imagine I am the most mysterious person living—in my early history, I mean. Mr. Brand saw me floating toward this lighthouse in a deserted boat. I was nearly dead. The people who had been with me were gone—either starved and thrown into the sea or knocked overboard during a collision, as the boat was badly damaged. My linen was marked 'E. T.' That is the only definite fact I can tell you. All the rest is guesswork. Evidently nobody cared to claim me, and here I am."

Mrs. Vansittart was leaning back in the deep gloom, supporting herself against the door of the bedroom.

"What a romance!" she said faintly.

"A vague one, and this is no time to gossip about it. Can I get you anything?"

Enid felt that she really must not prolong their conversation, and the other woman's exclamation threatened further talk.

"No, thank you. You—excuse me, I know. My natural interest"—

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But Enid, with a parting smile, was halfway toward the next landing, and Mrs. Vansittart was free to re-enter the crowded apartment where her fellow sufferers were wondering when they would see daylight again. She did not stir. The darkness was intense, the narrow passage drafty, and the column thrilled and quivered in an unnerveing manner. She heard the clang of a door above and knew that Enid had gone into the second apartment given over to the women. Somewhere higher up was the glaring light of which she had a faint recollection, though she was almost unconscious

when unbound from the rope and carried into the service room.

And at that moment, not knowing it, she had been near to Stephen Brand, might have spoken to him, looked into his face. What was he like? she wondered. Had he aged greatly with the years? A lighthouse keeper! Of all professions in this wide world how came he to adopt that? And what ugly trick was fate about to play her that she should be cast ashore on this desolate rock where he was in charge?

Could she avoid him? Had she been injudicious in betraying her knowledge of the past? And how marvelous was the likeness between Constance and her father! The chivalrous, high minded youth she had known came back to her through the mists of time. The calm, proud eyes, the firm mouth, the wide expanse of forehead were his. From her mother—the woman who "died many years ago," when she, Mrs. Vansittart, was "quite a girl"—the girl inherited the clear profile, the wealth of dark brown hair and a grace of movement not often seen in Englishwomen.

Though her teeth chattered with the cold, Mrs. Vansittart could not bring herself to leave the vaultlike stairway. Once more the hymn singers cheered their hearts with words of praise. Evidently there was one among them who not only knew the words, but could lead them mightily in the tunes of many old favorites.

The opening of a door—caused by the passing to and fro of some of the ship's officers—brought to her distracted ears the concluding bars of a verse. When the voices swelled forth again she caught the full refrain:

"Raise thine eyes to heaven
When thy spirits quail,
When, by tempests driven,
Heart and courage fail."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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