

# THE PILLAR of LIGHT

... By ...  
Louis Tracy,

Author of  
"The Wings  
of the Morning"

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(CONTINUED.)

Thompson that he had stated the primordial deed, he left the forgers alone. Healing the sail out of the water, he discovered that the stern board 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 shipshape, Jim settled the next pressing question by seizing an empty tin and slinging the fore part. Then he passed a rope under the after thwart and reeved it through a ringbolt 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 cable lengths away to 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.

Closehauled, the boat would fill forward as the tide dropped. This was matterless. By that time all her movable contents—she appeared to have plenty of tinned meat and biscuits aboard, but no water—would be removed to the storeroom.

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 bailed 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 mementos 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 Carcharodon galeidoe on the same lines as an 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 jawbreakers."

"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 a 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?"

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's 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 accident happened which set her adrift on the Atlantic. She may have lost a few pounds in weight, but starvation is a slow affair, and her plumpness saved her life in that respect. Most certainly she would have died today, 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 supernumeraries 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 looked the record of his earlier years and refused to open the diary for any one.

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 agreement 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 and 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 leafed 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

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was bad enough for me. It must have been worse for you."

"Perhaps the baby's clothes are marked."

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

Brand cast the shark loose. The monster slid off into the green depths.



"Ah! That is very important."

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 flag-staff. 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' bedroom they found him hard at work washing the child's clothing.

"She's asleep," he said, jerking his head toward a bunk. "I giv' her a pint of mixture. She cried a bit when there was no more to be had, but a warm bath with some boric acid 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 afore 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 subject, 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 quietly 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 9 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' brew—Lord love her little eyes, though I haven't seen 'em yet! A minut 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 had managed so well that the child's garments were dry and well 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 tugboat 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 goin' 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 Lyonesse 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."

(To be Continued)

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