

# WRECKS of the MASSACHUSETTS COAST

By PERCY M. CUSHING

## HEROIC BATTLES OF THE LIFE-SAVING SERVICE

**I**F YOU run through the history of the United States life saving service, you will find that, with the exception of occasional widely separated years, the coast of Massachusetts lays claim to more disasters than any stretch of seaboard within the scope of beach patrol, Long Island and New Jersey not excepted. This is partly on account of the particularly heavy sea-traffic in the vicinity, but it is chiefly due to Cape Cod. It is this crooked finger of land that has beckoned a thousand ships to their doom and which in the hollows of its dunes holds many a tragic story of lives snuffed out in desperate grapple with wave and wind.

The night of Tuesday, March 11, 1903, was wild and storm-striven. Running up along the coast, the ocean-going tug Sweepstakes was making bad weather with her tow of the two big barges, Wadena and John C. Fitzpatrick. For hours the triple-expansion engines of the tug had been churning her screw in the drift of the heavy head sea and shortly before daylight her captain discovered that she was making no headway. He then decided to lie to and, while feeling about for an anchorage in the gloom, the barges ran aground on the edge of Shoveloff Shoal, off the southern end of Monomoy Island, Massachusetts.

When daylight came, the crew of the Monomoy life saving station boarded the barges, but finding it impossible to float them on the flood tide, took their crews ashore.

It was six days later that the disaster occurred. Wreckers sent from Boston were at work on the barges. The tug Peter Smith was on the ground, having replaced the Sweepstakes. On the night of the 16th the weather thickened and a gale swept in from the sea.

The night passed without incident, but early on the morning of the 17th Keeper Eldridge of the Monomoy station received a telephone from the captain of the Smith asking him if everything was all right on the Wadena. This alarmed Eldridge, as he did not know any one had been left on the barge all night. He started at once for the point of the island, three miles away, to look over the situation. The Wadena lay half a mile off shore from the point. She seemed to be riding easily on the bar, but the distress was flying from her rigging. This was a signal Eldridge could not ignore.

It was a terrific pull through the breakers that rolled in across the shoals to the Wadena, but the life-savers accomplished it and put their boat under the lee of the barge at about noon. Keeper Eldridge then directed the men to get into the surfboat and told them that he would take them ashore. The rail of the big barge was a dozen feet from the water and it was here that the trouble began.

The men on the barge lowered themselves over-side on a rope, but as Captain Olsen, a very large man, was halfway down, he lost his hold and fell on the second thwart of the lifeboat, breaking it, and making it impossible for the rowers to use it. In addition, the boat was crowded and the wind, which had been momentarily increasing, was tumbling huge combers into the windward of the barge. It was into this maelstrom of breakers that it was necessary for the hand-capped crew of the life-saving station to pull their overloaded boat, and they made a swift and able attempt to accomplish it. At the instant the starboard oarsmen were swinging the head of the life-boat to meet the sea, a giant comber lifted under the quarter and dashed a barrel of water over-side. That was the signal for a panic among the rescued men that, before it subsided, cost twelve lives.

The Portuguese wreckers, in a frenzy of fear, stood up in the boat, rocking it to and fro in their endeavors to escape the momentary inrush of water, and though the life-savers fought to force them into the bottom of the craft, this could not be done before the next shouldering wave caught the bow of the boat, swung her broadside and turned her over.

Then ensued a desperate struggle for life. A hundred yards to leeward the breakers were smashing themselves into white foam on the bar. There was just one chance in a million that the boat could be righted before the sea carried her into them. Once she reached them it would be all over. Hampered by the wreckers, the life-savers fought desperately in those few minutes left before the combers should be reached. Three times they righted the boat and strove heroically to ball her, but each time she was again overturned. They were fighting the last tragic fight when they were swept into the smothering foam of the bar.

At that instant seven men, including all from the Wadena, went to face their maker. Five of the hardest of the life-savers still clung to the capsized boat. They were Keeper Eldridge and Surmen Ellis, Kendrick, Foye and Rogers. By a superhuman effort Kendrick crawled to the bottom of the overturned craft, but the next sea swept him to join the seven who had gone a moment before. Foye was the next. "Good-by, boys," he gasped as a smother of foam took him. That left Ellis, Rogers and Eldridge the keeper, and Eldridge was fast losing strength.

In a brief lull in the wash of the sea, Ellis crawled to the bottom of the boat. Below him, a foot away, was the keeper, a friend since boyhood. At the risk of his own life, Ellis dropped into the water again, pushed Eldridge up on the bottom with his last strength, and again crawled out himself. The next second a sea washed both off and the keeper, after losing and regaining his



grasp on the gunwale several times, disappeared in the maelstrom of water. That left Ellis and Rogers, a big and very strong man.

In this desperate moment Rogers threw his arms around the other surman's neck in a death-grip. For moments, while the sea battered and the foam strangled them, they fought the last grim fight for life, Ellis to break the grip of his frenzied comrade, Rogers to retain it. Suddenly, when it seemed that both must drown, Rogers' strength left him. His arms relaxed; his eyes glazed. "I'm going!" he gasped and sank.

A moment later the boat drifted inshore of the outer breakers and for a brief space was in smoother water. Ellis once more crawled out on the bottom and succeeded in pulling the center-board out so that he could hold on to it and better maintain his position.

Now, you will remember that at the time of the stranding of the Wadena, the John C. Fitzpatrick, her sister barge had also gone aground. She had gone over the outer bar and was lying between it and the inner breakers. On board her was Capt. Elmer F. Mayo, of Chatham, who was in charge of lightening her. The Fitzpatrick was so far away from the Wadena that Captain Mayo, and two other men who were with him, did not see the life-saving boat go out, nor did they have any knowledge of the grim tragedy that was being enacted, until, glancing over the rail, Captain Mayo saw an overturned life-boat with a single man clinging to it.

The capsized boat was some distance from the barge, but Mayo did not hesitate. "I'll get that fellow," he announced coolly.

On the deck of the Fitzpatrick lay a small twelve-foot dory, the only boat aboard, a totally unfit craft for the furious sea that was thundering across the shoals. Kicking off his boots, Mayo and the other men, who begged him not to go as it would be certain death, ran the dory over-side.

How the captain of the wrecking crew kept his fragile craft afloat, those who watched him from the Fitzpatrick could never understand. But he did keep her afloat, and the set of the tide and the gale carried him down toward the capsized life-boat to which Ellis clung now with the last of his ebbing strength.

The life-saver said afterward that he saw a dory thrown over the side of the Fitzpatrick as he drifted near her, but that a moment later the sea and the spindrift were driven so thick and ceaselessly before his eyes that he saw nothing, until suddenly out of the mist a tiny, bobbing boat loomed a dozen feet away. Then the occupant of this boat shot her skulked alongside the swamped life-boat and the exhausted surman toppled into her.

Mayo, with the half-conscious life-saver lying limp in the bottom of the dory, had kept his word to his mates on the Fitzpatrick.

Necessarily, the most thrilling stories of the coast-watchers are those in which loss of life is entailed, and therefore, in a measure, they are accounts of the failures of the men of the service. But they are stories of noble failures and behind some of them lie tragedies other than those of death.

Perhaps one of the greatest of these is woven about the career of Captain David H. Atkins, until November 30, 1880, keeper of the Peaked Hill Bar station, Cape Cod.

This man had followed the sea from boyhood, whaling, fishing and coasting. In 1872 he became keeper of the Peaked Hill Bar station.

Then came a wild day in April, 1879, and, as it appears in the chronicles of the department at Washington, "a blot fell across the record of Keeper Atkins."

On this April day the Schooner Sarah J. Fort stranded near Peaked Hill Bar. A terrific sea, coupled with an onshore hurricane and a temperature very low for the time of the year, faced Atkins and his crew as they discovered the schooner and took their apparatus to the beach.

Without hesitation the keeper ordered the surf-boat launched, but the sea was so heavy that it was thrown back on the beach. Time and again in the twenty hours of watching and battling with the storm that followed the keeper led his men into the breakers with the boat, but each time they were beaten back, drenched with the winter



sea which froze in their clothing, cut and bruised from the buffeting they received.

"And then," says the Service Report of the occurrence, "the last time the launch was attempted the boat was hurled high on the shore, her crew were spilled out like matches from the box and the boat was shattered. And Captain Atkins and his men, having eaten nothing since the evening before, spent, faint, heart-sick, had been baffled and had to endure the mortification of seeing a rescue effected by an un-worn volunteer crew in a fresh boat brought from the town. The investigation revealed that the men upon the wreck might have been properly landed by the life-lines but for Keeper Atkins' failure to employ the Lyle gun which had recently been furnished the station, through a singular inapprehension of its powers."

It was a bitter pill for the service—the defeat of its men by a volunteer crew.

The night of November 30, 1880, was clear but windy. A heavy gale was piling the surf over the outer bar off the Peaked Hill Bar station. Surmen Fisher and Kelley left the station at four o'clock to make the eastward and westward patrol. Kelley started from the door first. As he did so he heard the slatting of sails and the banging of blocks above the wind. At the westward he saw the lights of a vessel close inshore. Shouting to Fisher to give the alarm, he ran down the beach, burning his Coston light. Keeper Atkins glanced at the surf and ordered out the boat. The men dragged it eastward until they were opposite the stranded vessel, which proved to be the sloop C. E. Trumbull of Rockport. The crew manned the boat.

The story of what took place out there under the darkness on Keeper Atkins' last errand of rescue is best told, perhaps, in the personal account of Isalah Young, one of the survivors. The narrative of this man, in his own words, is taken from the Life Saving Report of 1881. It reads:

"When we launched, the vessel was still some to the eastward. We went off in this manner to take advantage of the tide that was running to the eastward between the bar and the shore. It was low tide. The sea was smooth on the shore, but on the bar, where the vessel lay, it was rough enough to be dangerous.

"We hauled up from the boat until the bow lapped on to her quarter. Keeper Atkins called to them to jump in.

"We landed four persons. This trip could not have consumed more than fifteen minutes.

"When we pulled up again, after being thrown back, Taylor stood in the bow with the line ready to heave. I cautioned Keeper Atkins to have a care for the boom. He said, 'Be ready with the boat-hook; I will look out for the boom.' I was just taking up the hook when a sea came around the stern, threw the stern of the boat more toward the boom as the vessel rolled to leeward and the boom went into the water.

"As the vessel rolled to windward and the boom rose it caught under the cork belt near the stroke rowlock and threw us over, bottom up.

"We rolled the boat over, right side up, and I was the first to get into her. Others got in; I am not positive how many. She did not keep right side up more than two minutes when a sea rolled us over again. We got on again and were washed off two or three times before I struck out for the shore. I asked Mayo to strike with me, as I knew him to be an excellent swimmer; but he said that he could not hold out to reach the shore and he would stay by the boat. Keeper Atkins was holding by the boat.

"Kelley had already struck out. I heard Taylor groan near me as I started, but did not see him.

"I saw a gap in the beach which must have been Clara Bell Hollow, two miles from Station No. 7. When about three seas from the shore my sight began to fail and soon I could see nothing; but I kept swimming.

"I recollect Surman Cole saying, 'For God's sake, Isalah, is this you?' and of his taking me up. I knew nothing more until I found myself in the station, after being resuscitated. I should think that I remained by the boat half an hour before I struck out. The cork belt was all that enabled me to reach the shore. The cork belts in the boat are a good thing and should be kept on."

Thus Keeper Atkins died with his boots on, as he said he would die if necessary, in the performance of his duty.

# INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(By E. O. SELLERS, Director of Evening Department, The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)

## LESSON FOR AUGUST 4.

### THE WORTH OF THE KINGDOM.

LESSON TEXT—Matthew 13, 44-53.  
GOLDEN TEXT—"Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33.

We have studied some of the principles that are to obtain in the establishing and the working out of this new kingdom Jesus came to found, and the question naturally arises, "Is it of sufficient value for me to consider or seek to enter it, or to possess it?" In our lesson today there is set before us four parables (Jesus' favorite way of teaching) which he gave privately to his disciples and not to the multitude, that ought to answer any such questioning in our hearts.

The first two have to do with the great value of the kingdom, the second its mixed character and final separation, and the last, the great responsibility of those who possess its truths. In this entire group of parables found in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew are four that are for men who are careful to observe the outward development, and four others that are for those men of faith who see beneath the surface the hidden things of the kingdom. Those men who view the kingdom in each particular age as God sees rather than as man observes.

Today's lesson sets forth the purchase of things of great value, the acquisition and disposition of things of a mixed value, and lastly, the use of these values after coming into the possession of them.

I. The hidden treasure, v. 44. Perhaps more properly this should be termed the parable of the bought field. We need to remember that in all of these parables the Master himself is the important personage. He is the one who sows the seed, etc. Hence we understand that he is the one who discovers this great treasure hidden in the field. He has already told us that "the field is the world" (Matt 13:35).

#### Symbolism of Pearls.

II. The pearl of great price, vs. 45, 46. This parable is very much the same as the foregoing, yet it adds great strength and force to this study in values. We ought to be very clear in our study and application. The pearl of great price may perhaps be taken as a symbol of our salvation, but if so for us to interpret the merchantman as the commonality of man would be for the sinner to purchase his own salvation, a thing as far as possible for the New Testament teaching.

Why does Jesus speak of pearls to the Hebrews who did not esteem them at all? What is the symbolism of a pearl? The pearl is the one precious stone that is the result of a living organism; it is the result of an injury done to the life of the oyster. It has always stood for purity and for innocence. Is it then illogical for us to assume that Christ is the merchantman who gave all to redeem (e. g., buy back) the lost souls of mankind?

III. The drag net, vs. 47-50. This parable is another that deals with the mixed character of the kingdom here upon the earth and of the final separation incident thereto. It is noticeable that this is collective, not individual, fishing. There will be many movements that will ostensibly be for the gathering of men into this kingdom, but the principle here laid down is that one considered in the lesson of the wheat and the tares, viz., that ultimately there shall be cast out all things that do offend. In the finality of all things the kingdom shall be without spot or blemish. Hence we do not read into this parable emphasis upon any phase of evangelism.

#### Search the Scriptures.

IV. The household, vs. 51-53. In the first of these parables we had the Word as the seed of this new kingdom, in this the eighth of the kingdom parables we revert as it were to the matter of the Word. Jesus asks his disciples if they understand the Word he has spoken to them. Their response is, "Yes, we do." Then Jesus shows them what a burden of responsibility to possession rests upon them. Jesus refers to the Scribes whose work under the Jewish economy was to transcribe and to interpret and tells the disciples that they in a like manner are to interpret the kingdom to all men. They are to "bring forth" hidden treasures. We must remember that Jesus taught in parables that "hearing they might not hear," etc., hence we are to search the Scriptures and bring forth these hidden treasures of truth as we go about doing our part.

Are we willing to pay the price for the sake of the pearl? Are we willing to pay the price of the field that others may possess the great treasure of eternal life in Christ? He paid the price to purchase eternal life for us. Do not forget the kingdom is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17).

The treasure was discovered, the pearl sought after; both methods save their place and significance in our lives that are to be hid with Christ in God. We must reveal to the world great treasures.

**Boy Answered Collier.**  
John Muir, California's naturalist and explorer, relates the following story of Col. D. C. Collier, director general of the Panama-California exposition of San Diego:

While riding along a mountain road in San Diego, Cal., Mr. Collier came upon a dilapidated corral fence upon which hung a sign bearing the following announcement: "For Sale." A bright-looking small boy sat on the fence beside the sign, and Mr. Collier asked him, "When does this ranch sell?"

The small boy glanced up quickly at Mr. Collier, smiled, and said, "When some sucker comes along who can raise the wind." Mr. Collier doffed his sombrero, thanked the lad for his information, and rode on his way feeling greatly enlightened.—Hearst's Magazine.

#### Incredibles.

"Cholly told me solemnly yesterday that he once had a brainstorm."  
"Pooh, pooh! I'd just as soon believe that a jelly fish could have the backache."

Don't count on your excuses before they are hatched.

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