

James Otis

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# The Life Savers

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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*Frontispiece.*

THE LIFE SAVERS.

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# THE LIFE SAVERS

## A STORY OF THE UNITED STATES LIFE-SAVING SERVICE

BY  
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## THE LIFE SAVERS.

# CHAPTER I.

## INTRODUCTORY.

The development of the American Life-Saving Service covers nearly a century.

"... The initiatory movement was the organization by a few benevolent persons of the Massachusetts Humane Society in 1786. In attempting to alleviate the miseries of shipwreck on the Massachusetts coast, small huts were built; and in 1807 the first life-boat station was established at Cohasset. The Society depended upon voluntary crews, but so much was accomplished of value that some pecuniary aid was received, as time wore on, from both State and general governments.

"The magnificent work of the Coast Survey, begun in earnest in 1832, absorbed the resources of Congress for a decade and a half, during which period nothing was attempted in the way of life-saving except through voluntary societies. A few public vessels were, indeed, authorized in 1837 to cruise near the coast for the assistance of shipping in distress, but it was through the movement in aid of commerce, which extended to the lighthouse system.

"In 1847, five thousand dollars were appropriated by Congress toward furnishing lighthouses on the Atlantic with the facilities for aiding shipwrecked mariners. The money, after remaining in the Treasury two years unused, was permitted to be expended by the Massachusetts society upon Cape Cod.

"In the summer of 1848, the Hon. William A. Newell, then a member of the House of Representatives from New Jersey, incited by some terrible shipwrecks on the coast of that State, induced Congress, through his eloquence, to appropriate ten thousand dollars for providing surf-boats and other appliances 'for the protection of life and property from shipwreck on the coast between Sandy Hook and Little Egg Harbor.' During the next session a still larger appropriation was obtained. Twenty-two station-houses were erected on the coasts of New Jersey and Long Island, and although no persons were paid or authorized to take charge of them, and they were manned by extemporized crews, their value in several cases of shipwreck was so great that Congress made further appropriations from year to year, and stations and life-boats gradually multiplied.

"Through the pressure of a shocking event in 1854--the loss of three hundred lives off the New Jersey coast--a local superintendent was employed, a keeper assigned to each station, and bonded custodians placed in charge of the life-boats, which had been repeatedly stolen; but the absence of drilled and disciplined crews, of general regulations, and of energetic central administration rendered the record of the institution unsatisfactory, and its benefits checkered by the saddest failures.

"In the year 1871, Sumner I. Kimball succeeded to the head of the Revenue Marine Bureau of the Treasury Department, under the charge of which were the life-saving stations. He made it his first business to ascertain their condition. Captain John Faunce was detailed to make a tour of inspection, and was accompanied a portion of the way by Mr. Kimball himself. The buildings were found neglected and dilapidated, the apparatus rusty or broken, portable articles had been carried off, the salaried keepers were often living at a distance from their posts, some of them too old for service, and others incompetent, and the volunteer crews were in a quarrelsome temper with each other and with the coast population.

"Then commenced that vigorous prosecution of reform which has crowned the humane work with unprecedented success. Making the most of slender appropriations, and in the face of perpetual discouragements, this one man, the chief of a bureau, pushed on by philanthropic impulses and guided by unerring judgment, brought a complete and orderly system into effect. It was not the work of a day, nor of a year. It required patience, sagacity, and rare powers of organization and government. He knew no office hours, working day and night at what many were pleased to consider a hopeless task. In his brain originated the idea of guarding the entire coasts of the nation through the planting of a chain of fortresses to be garrisoned by disciplined conquerors of the sea. It is a matter of public record, and generally known to the country, that through his practical devotion to the cause this has been so nearly accomplished.

"In reorganizing what there was of the Service, he prepared a code of regulations for its absolute control. The duties of every man employed were minutely defined. The lazy, the careless, and the unworthy were dismissed, and men chosen to fill their places with sole reference to integrity and professional fitness. Politics was abolished. That is, experts in the surf were regarded as of more consequence to drowning

victims than voters of any particular political ticket. The station-houses were repaired, and increased in numbers as fast as the means afforded by Congress would allow; the appliances for life-saving were restored, and improved from year to year through the best inventions and discoveries in this or any other country, and a rigid system of inspection and of patrol was inaugurated....

"The record of the first season on the New York and New Jersey coasts, where the new system first went into actual operation, showed that every person imperiled by shipwreck was saved. Consequently a commission, consisting of Mr. Kimball, Captain Faunce, and Captain J. H. Merryman, of the Revenue Marine, surveyed in 1873, by order of Congress, the vast and varied coasts of the oceans and lakes, investigating personally the characteristics of the dangerous localities, and holding consultations with underwriters, shipowners, captains of vessels, and veteran surfmen. The report of this commission placed before Congress a minute account of the disasters to vessels on every mile of coast for the previous ten years; a bill based upon it, prepared by Mr. Kimball, became a law June 20, 1874. It provided for the extension of the field of this great national work of humanity; for the bestowal of medals of honor upon persons risking their lives to save others; and empowered the collection and tabulation of statistics of disaster to shipping, which, by reference to the periodicity of marine casualties, aided in determining the points most needing protection, and in various other ways benefited both government and maritime interests....

"The life-saving stations on the Atlantic seaboard are now within an average distance of five miles of each other, each crew consisting of a keeper and six surfmen. At sunset two men start from each station, one going to the right and the other to the left. They are equipped with lanterns and Coston signals, and each pursues his solitary and perilous way through the soft sand, in spite of flooding tides, bewildering snowfalls, overwhelming winds, and bitter cold....

"The night is divided into four watches. The keeper is required to register in his log-book the name of each patrolman, his hours on patrol, ... the direction and force of the wind at sunrise, noon, sunset, and midnight, together with the events of each day. This record is sent to the chief of the Service at Washington at the end of every week....

"The stations consist of three classes, severally denominated life-saving stations, life-boat stations, and houses of refuge. Each of the twelve districts is provided with a local superintendent, who must be a resident of the district and familiarly acquainted with its inhabitants....

"The stations are visited frequently, and the men examined in the exercises of the apparatus drill, and obliged to give verbal reasons for every step in their operations. They are trained with their life-boats in the surf, in the use of the life-dress, in saving drowning persons by swimming to their relief, in the methods of restoring the partially drowned, and in signalling. When a wreck is attended with loss of life, a rigid examination follows to see if any of the men have been guilty of misconduct or neglect of duty. The keepers are empowered to protect the interests of the government from smuggling, and they guard all property that comes ashore from a wreck until its rightful owners appear. They are charged with the care and order of the stations, and the boats and apparatus; and they must keep accurate accounts of all receipts and expenditures, journalize all transactions, and maintain all necessary correspondence with superior officers. Thus it appears they must possess a certain amount of education and high integrity, as well as surfmanship, intrepidity, and commanding qualities...." --*Harper's Magazine*, February, 1882.

At the close of the year 1894 the total number of stations in the Life-Saving Establishment was 247. Of this number, 182 were situated on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, 51 on the coasts of the Great Lakes, 13 on the Pacific Coast, and 1 at the Falls of the Ohio, Louisville, Kentucky. Their distribution by life-saving districts was as follows:

First District (coasts of Maine and New Hampshire)	12
Second District (coast of Massachusetts)	24
Third District (coasts of Rhode Island and Long Island)	39
Fourth District (coast of New Jersey)	41
Fifth District (coast from Cape Henlopen to Cape Charles)	17
Sixth District (coast from Cape Henry to Cape Fear River)	29
Seventh District (coasts of South Carolina, Georgia, and Eastern Florida)	12
Eighth District (Gulf Coast)	8
Ninth District (Lakes Erie and Ontario, including Louisville Station)	12
Tenth District (Lakes Huron and Superior)	15

Eleventh District (Lake Michigan)

25

Twelfth District (Pacific Coast)

13

Total

247

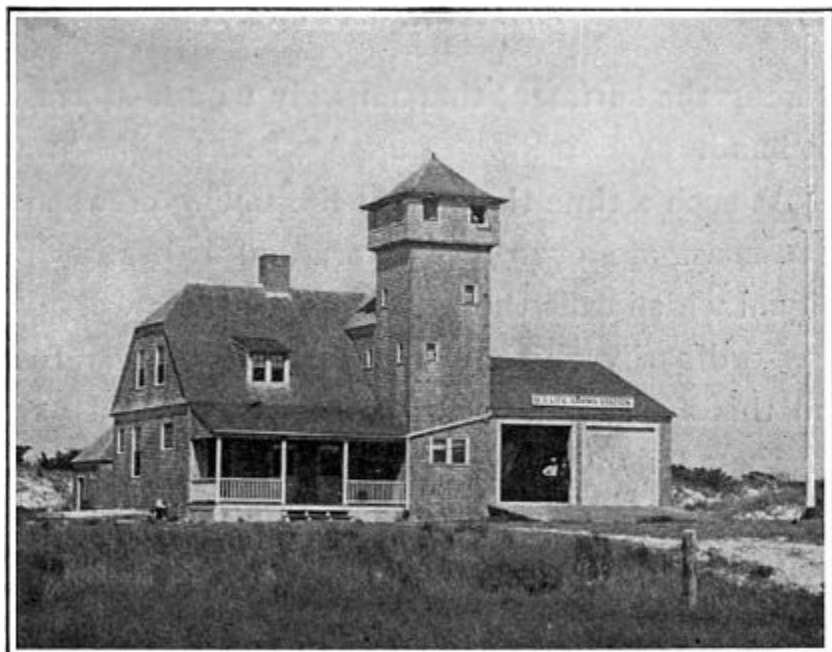
--Report of the United States Life-Saving Service.



THE LIGHTHOUSE NEAR THE STATION.

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## CHAPTER II.

### A BOY AND A DOG.

It was on the afternoon of December 23d, in the year 1893, that one of the life-saving crews in the First District was completely prepared for work, although neither vessel nor wreck was to be seen.

The wind was from the northeast and the driving sleet and snow shut out from view all that portion of the rocky coast save in the immediate vicinity of the station. During the afternoon the gale had increased in force until it was what a mariner would call "stiff"; the sea had risen with equal pace, and every indication confirmed the prediction made among the surfmen, that an ugly winter storm was at hand.

At such a time the gallant life-saving crews along the coast are ever ready for, and expecting, the signal which calls them to their perilous work; but not ordinarily do they stand by their apparatus as on this afternoon, for, fortunately, many a winter tempest fails in its harvest of death.

At noon on this day information was sent to the station that the patrol several miles down the coast had sighted a large ship so nearly inshore that, under the adverse condition of wind and sea, she could not tack, and there was not sufficient room to wear. Unless her course was speedily changed, so ran the information received,--and in the teeth of the fierce northeast tempest and the shoreward heaving of the tremendous sea that seemed impossible,--it was certain she must strike somewhere nearabout this particular station.

From the moment such information was received the patrol on the beach had been doubled, and, knowing full well how difficult it would be, under all the circumstances, for any craft to escape the perils to which it was said this ship was exposed, the crew were keenly on the alert for the first token of wreck.

At seven o'clock in the evening no further news of the vessel had been obtained; therefore the men whose mission it is to save life understood that the ship was still fighting against the gale, and knew full well every moment gained by her increased the chances of escape, even though it had seemed impossible she could weather the point.

Half an hour later Surfman Samuel Hardy, breathless and panting, literally burst his way into the station, as he cried:

"Joe Cushing has just lighted his signal!"

All members of life-saving crews carry, while patrolling the shore on the lookout for signs of danger to others, what is known as a "Coston signal," an ingenious contrivance which can be lighted by concussion, and, therefore, may be displayed regardless of the weather.

No further information was necessary; the crew knew full well that the ship previously reported as being in peril, and which had made such a gallant fight against the elements, had at last been conquered.

Before Sam Hardy could take his station at the beach-wagon, in which is transported all the apparatus necessary for the work of the crew when a wreck is close inshore, Joseph Cushing arrived:

"She has struck just off the west spit!"

"Then it is the ship?" Keeper Thomas Downey asked; and before the question could be answered he gave in rapid succession the orders necessary for beginning the work of rescue.

"Open boat-room doors!"

"Man the beach-wagon!"

"Forward!"

These commands were superfluous, for the crew, after long experience at such work, both during tempests when human life was to be saved, and at drill in fair weather, moved as if by instinct.

The last word had no more than been spoken before the heavy wagon rolled down the platform to the sand, every man fully aware of the fact that now had come the time when the span of many lives might be measured by seconds if they faltered or delayed.

From the official report is taken the following account of the disaster:

"It appears that the ship had been laboring heavily, the wind constantly heading her off after nightfall, and the master, although he kept up a stout heart, must have been well aware that he was constantly losing

more and more of the narrow margin that lay between possible safety and inevitable destruction. Whatever misgivings the crew may have experienced, the survivor states that the first intimation they had of their immediate proximity to the shore was when they saw the breakers, and the captain, who was below at the moment, rushed on deck with the ominous outcry, 'She has struck!'

"The boats were still on the bridge where they had been originally stowed for the voyage, their covers and lashings intact and the tackles unhooked, but Captain Clark instantly gave the order to clear them away, and, together with the men, set about the work. The ship lay with her starboard side to the waves, which the next instant lifted her farther shoreward and then fell crashing on board.

"The most of the sailors fled to the mizzen shrouds, but a few, more daring or desperate than the rest, still struggled to clear the boats.

"Another run of towering breakers was now about to leap on board, and the brave men were compelled to give over and quickly join their shipmates in the rigging. At this moment the red glare of the patrolman's signal gleamed through the darkness, and a cheer broke forth from the shipwrecked men.

"Up to this time the master had found no difficulty in controlling the movements of the crew, who appear to have been able and obedient sailors; but now there was no longer any occasion for the exercise of authority, and in the dreadful situation it behooved every man to look out for himself.

"Within ten minutes from the flash of the signal the great iron hull parted amidships, and the mainmast toppled over, carrying with it the mizzen-topmast. The entire ship's company, except the captain, were at this time in the mizzen-rigging, where they were able to hold on only a few minutes, when all were washed overboard together. The captain, when last seen was standing on the ladder at the quarter-deck, supporting himself with a hand on each rail.

"The beach-apparatus was on the ground and ready for service; but the ship was only now and then faintly visible, and there was little reason to believe the crew's efforts would be of any avail.

"However, the gun was aimed as well as possible in the direction of the wreck, which was discernible only as a black shadow that seemed a little darker than the surrounding gloom, and the shot was fired.

"That the line fell across the hulk there is no reason to doubt. That it lodged with considerable firmness somewhere was conclusive to the keeper in charge, for it resisted the slight strain put upon it to determine whether it was fast, but no pull or manipulation on the offshore end could be detected, and after waiting in vain some considerable time for that always welcome sign that the line has been found by the shipwrecked, the life-savers hauled hard on it until it finally parted under the heavy strain.

"The keeper was now satisfied that there was no living being on board the wreck. Nothing could be accomplished by additional efforts to effect communication by means of the gun, and the fury of the surf was so overwhelming that none of the men, familiar as they were with the conditions, of long experience on the coast, and brave as they had often proved themselves, even so much as entertained the thought of launching the boat. It was out of question, absolutely and beyond all possibility of cavil. The slatting of the distant sails is described as sounding like peals of thunder, and the crashing of blocks and chains as they were flung back and forth against the wire rigging and iron foremast, sent out volumes of blazing sparks that seemed like signals of distress.

"It is the custom on occasions of this kind to build a fire on the shore as a beacon of hope to encourage the shipwrecked, and although there was believed to be nobody on the vessel, this would nevertheless have been done, if possible. But the gale blew with such force that a fire could not be maintained, and, indeed, so terrific was its fury that the polished glass lantern on the beach-apparatus cart was converted into a good specimen of ground glass by the incessant beating of the driven sand upon its surface.

"Now and then a red signal was discharged to attract the attention of any poor fellow who might be washed ashore alive, and a faithful search-patrol was maintained along the beach by the entire crew."

That portion of the shore upon which the wind and the current would most likely cast up fragments of the wreck was thickly dotted with every available lantern from the station in the hope that these tiny rays of light might serve as beacons for some sailor whose life had not been crushed out of him by the fury of the surf, and with eager eyes the men peered into the foaming swirl of waters.

Five minutes passed, and no sign either of life or death came from the wreck.

"There is little chance the breath will yet remain in any who comes ashore now," Keeper Downey said to Joe Cushing, and the latter replied only with a mournful shake of the head, for it did not seem possible any living thing

could come through that mighty surge.

The words had no more than been spoken, however, when far away in the distance could be heard the cry of Sam Hardy, and without being able to distinguish the words, those who heard knew from the tone that he had sighted life in some form.

All the crew ran that way in hot haste, the keeper leading, and arriving at the spot just as Hardy, all regardless of his own life, had plunged waist-deep into the surf that he might seize upon a short spar to which was lashed a dark mass.

None save those who had been trained to the duty of saving life under such circumstances would have recognized the possibility that a human being might be concealed beneath what appeared to be only valueless wreckage; but the crew knew by long experience that amid this particular flotsam would be found, either alive or dead, some one from the ill-fated ship.

As Hardy had dashed into the surf so did the others, until a living chain had been formed, and by this means the spar was pulled on shore despite the heavy undertow which strove with giant force against the efforts of the life-savers.

Once the wreckage was beyond reach of the towering, roaring waves, few seconds were spent in learning whether the men had, by risking their own lives, saved a human being from death, or if it was but a corpse which had been wrested from the angry waters.

From amid wrappings of what appeared to be the fragment of a sail was seen the head of a child; the face was pallid as if death had already set its seal upon it, and not so much as a tremor of the lips could be distinguished in the faint light cast by the lanterns.

The cold was searching; the garments of the crew were already stiffening with ice, and if life was to be prevented from leaving that small body, all efforts must be made within the shelter of the station.

Acting upon the keeper's orders, the little form was released from the bonds of rope which held it fast to the spar, and with all speed carried to the building where could be found everything needful for the coming struggle against death.

It was a small boy, apparently ten or twelve years of age, who had been rescued, and as the kindly men with tender care removed the icy clothing, they were startled, almost alarmed for the moment, by seeing a very small dog, his long white hair soaked with water, leap from beneath the lad's tightly buttoned pea-jacket.

The animal shook itself, looked quickly around with a low whine, and, recognizing the boy, began eagerly licking his face, as if understanding that immediate aid of some kind was necessary.

The members of the crew had lost no time in taking such measures as were needful, and although the small dog growled furiously when they rolled the boy face downward, having previously laid him upon the floor of the station, the efforts at resuscitation were both skilful and vigorous.

Before the work had fairly begun the lad showed signs of life by opening his eyes, and his first glance fell upon the dog, which was standing near by, wagging its tail furiously as if to attract attention.

"I reckon he's coming around all right," Keeper Downey said in a tone of satisfaction, and then, noting the troubled look which suddenly came over the little fellow's face, he asked quickly, "What is it, my son? What are you wanting?"

"Is Mrs. Clark here?"

"Who is she?"

"The captain's wife."

"She hasn't come ashore yet; but you're not to trouble your head about anything except getting the best of the salt water you've taken aboard."

"You must be careful of Fluff until she gets here."

"Meaning this little bundle of hair?" the keeper asked with a laugh, laying his hand on the dog's head.

"Yes, sir; she thinks very much of him, an' I promised to keep him close in my arms if it so happened that we had to come ashore lashed to the spar."

"I reckon you couldn't have done different, tied together as you two were," Surfman Dick Sawyer said with a laugh, and the keeper added kindly:

"There's no need to fret about the dog; he shall have the run of the station, and there's nothing to harm him while

old Maje is in the boat-house--Maje is our dog," Downey added as he read the question in the boy's eyes. "He's large enough to swallow two or three like this little one here; but I'll answer for it your Fluff isn't in any danger, and to set your mind at rest he shall stay close by you till morning. We'll put you to bed now, I reckon; there's other work for us outside."

"I can take care of myself, sir," the lad said bravely, as he attempted to struggle to his feet, the dog meanwhile barking furiously as if cautioning his young master against being too venturesome.

"I thought you couldn't do it," Keeper Downey said, catching the boy in time to prevent a fall, and without further parley he carried him to the sleeping-room above.

When the rescued lad was tucked snugly between a generous supply of blankets, the dog curled himself up on the outside of the bed with his nose close beside the boy's cheek, and Keeper Downey muttered to himself as he descended the stairs:

"If all the ship's crew had been put away as safe and comfortable as those two, we should have done a night's work of which we might well be proud."

Then out into the howling, wintry blast went the men who had brought the lad and the dog to the station, and during the remainder of that terrible night every man did patrol duty, pacing to and fro along the rocky shore, or keeping faithful watch over the narrow strip of beach, in the faint hope that there might be other survivors, although there was little chance that such could be the case.

To continue the official report: "Only remnants of spars and cargo, however, were cast at their feet, and when daylight finally dawned all eyes were intently turned toward the wreck with a vague hope that, by some altogether improbable possibility, there might be some signs of living men on board. But there were none.

"The forward and after parts of the dismembered hull were seen to be from thirty to forty yards apart, lying at nearly a right angle with each other, the former head on, and the latter, on which no masts appeared, thrown on its beam ends, inclined toward the shore.

"The foremast and foretopmast, bowsprit and jib-boom, with most of the fore-rigging, were still in place, and the lower yard was crossed amid a confusion of tattered sails and tangled ropes. The waves ran high up the mast, breaking almost into the foretop, and shreds and fragments of the cargo of jute wrapped themselves like ragged garments around the shrouds and stays.

"A dead body was discovered entangled in the rigging on the after part of the wreck; but the keeper did not deem it necessary to make an attempt to go out with a boat while the surf was still extremely dangerous, therefore this mournful duty was postponed until the following day."

There was nothing to be learned by remaining where they were exposed to the full fury of the gale, which had not abated, and the weary crew, saddened because they had not been permitted to save more lives, returned to the station, each man's garments so thickly encrusted with ice that only limited movement was possible.

A large ship had foundered hardly more than half a pistol-shot distant from the building, and of all on board only a small boy and a tiny dog had been rescued from the merciless waves.

"We'll wait till the lad awakens, and then most likely he can give us a smattering of the details, although I don't allow he knows very much regarding the disaster, for he must have been lashed to that spar either just before, or immediately after, the ship struck," Keeper Downey said as he sought to refresh himself with the contents of a steaming bowl of coffee.



## CHAPTER III.

### BENNY'S STORY.

When, at a late hour next morning, the boy and the dog came down-stairs, the former appearing bewildered, and the latter hanging his tail as if doubtful of the reception he might meet with, only Keeper Downey and Surfman Sam Hardy were to be seen.

The other members of the crew were engaged outside in the effort to save such wreckage as the yet angry waters rolled in toward the shore.

A bright-looking little fellow was this survivor of the terrible disaster, although not seen at his best while clad only in his undergarments, and shivering in the frosty air despite the volumes of heat sent out by the glowing stove. The mercury in the thermometer had fallen below the zero mark, and the wind found every crevice and crack in the building, situated as it was on the open shore where nothing in the way of a shelter broke the force of the northeast gales.

"Well, lad, you're looking bright this morning," the keeper cried in a cheery tone. "Hungry?"

"I can take my share of breakfast when it's ready, and I guess Fluff won't turn up his nose at warm coffee."

"A dog drinking coffee!" Sam Hardy cried, with a laugh that had in it a note of the tempest.

"Yes, sir; Mrs. Clark always gave him a little out of her own cup. Has she come ashore yet?"

"No, lad," the keeper replied gravely. "None save you and the dog lived through last night."

"They can't be dead!" the boy cried in alarm, and as the full meaning of the words dawned upon him, the tears came. "Surely some of the men would have looked out for Mrs. Clark! She was coming ashore the same way I did."

"Had they lashed her to a spar before you were set adrift?"

"The captain had everything ready; but I was tied on first, 'cause she wanted to be certain Fluff would be tucked inside my coat properly. Surely she'll come soon?"

"You may as well know the truth at once, lad; I'm not a man who believes in keeping back bad tidings, because they must be told at some time. Even if Mrs. Clark was set adrift on a spar, she couldn't have lived through the night. You are the only survivor of the wreck."

"Where is the ship?"

"The waves have knocked her to pieces long before this, and our crew are out looking after the wreckage as it comes ashore."

While one might have counted ten the lad stood looking at the keeper searchingly, and then, gathering the dog in his arms, he gave vent to the grief that had so suddenly come into his heart.

"We'll leave him alone for a spell, Sam," the keeper whispered. "It'll do him good to have a good cry, and seeing's we've got little chance of sending in a report till after the storm clears up, there's no sense in bothering him with questions."

Then the two kind-hearted men tiptoed softly out of the station, lest the sound of their footsteps might add to the grief in the boy's heart, and the dog, pricking up his ears as if understanding every word spoken, apparently listened to the first outpouring of sorrow and utter desolation.

"It can't be possible, Fluffy, that every one has been drowned! It couldn't be, God would take Captain Clark and his wife, with all the crew, leaving only you an' me here! Why, Fluff! If the man told us the truth, what'll become of us? We're alone in the world, do you understand that? Nobody who'll help us anywhere! What'll become of you, my poor little man, and she loved you so dearly!"

As if in reply the dog licked the boy's face, and this evidence of affection appeared but to render more heavy the grief, for, throwing himself upon the floor, holding his dumb companion yet more closely, the poor lad gave way to the sorrow which had come with such cruel suddenness upon him.

He was yet in this position when the keeper and two of the crew entered the building an hour later.

In the boat-house, covered with flags, were the bodies of the captain and his wife, and near by lay three of the crew, all in the awful silence and stillness of death.

Keeper Downey laid his hand on the boy's shoulder to attract his attention, and the dog, mistaking this friendly touch for an attack, sprang up, barking furiously, until it seemed as if the volume of sound must shatter the tiny body.

Sam Hardy took it upon himself to make friends with the little animal, and since the keeper no longer attempted to touch the sorrowing lad, Fluff ceased his shrill yelps.

"Listen to me, lad," the keeper said, throwing a coat over the half-clad form. "It's cruel sorrow that has come upon you; but remember that there are others in this world who have been as cruelly afflicted,—that you are not alone in your grief. Somewhere are wives and children waiting for the return of the poor fellows who went down with the ship, and you must not be selfish in your sorrow."

The boy looked up with swollen eyes, inquiringly.

"Yes, my boy, you are selfish to give way to all that's in your heart when it is possible you can be of service to others."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Sad as the news will be to many, it is necessary they should learn of what happened last night, and you are the only one who can tell the story. I must make a report on the wreck, and am looking to you for the information. There is yet something to be done—the last in this world—by friends and relatives for such of the bodies as come ashore, and if you give way to selfish sorrow, the word cannot be sent out from here."

The lad was on his feet in an instant, and, choking back the sobs as best he might, while the dog nestled contentedly in his arms, he asked:

"Tell me what you want, sir."

"First, the name of the ship."

"She was the *Amazonia*, from Calcutta to Boston, David Clark, master."

"Do you know how much of a crew she carried?"

"Twenty-five, all told."

"Any other women except the captain's wife?"

"No, sir."

"What is your name?"

"Benjamin H. Foster; but Mrs. Clark always called me 'Benny,'" the lad replied, and at mention of the woman's name his grief overwhelmed him once more.

The eyes of the keeper and his comrades were not free from a certain moisture, and more than one furtively passed the sleeve of his rough coat across his face as all waited for the lad to recover his composure in a measure.

"I'll try not to cry again, sir," Benny said piteously, after struggling a moment to force back the tears.

"It is well you should grieve, lad; don't think I blamed you for doing what is only natural. When it is possible you shall tell all you know about the ship and her voyage, giving the names of those members of the crew that come to mind."

Two hours or more passed before Benny had concluded the sad story, and then Keeper Downey was in possession of such facts as were necessary for the proper making up of his official report.

According to Benny's tale the *Amazonia* had sailed from Calcutta, India, on the 15th of February, and, because of previous disasters, the voyage had consumed almost ten months, during which time the ship had covered a distance equal to one half the circuit of the globe.

She was loaded with ten thousand bales of jute; while crossing the Indian Ocean she had run into a cyclone and been dismasted. Under jury-rig the ship was worked to Port Louis, Mauritius, where, after being unloaded, she was thoroughly overhauled and repaired. Not until the middle of September was the voyage resumed, and nothing of note occurred until the vicinity of the Bermudas was reached, when frequent squalls set in, following the vessel until she made the coast of the United States.

Captain Clark had not been able to take an observation for several days, and, therefore, was forced to rely upon what mariners term "dead reckoning." Two days prior to the wreck he spoke a New York pilot-boat, from which he learned his whereabouts, but after passing George's Shoal, about one hundred miles to the eastward of Cape Cod, he determined to shape his course straight to the westward until sighting the land.

Notwithstanding the lack of observations to determine his situation, the captain might easily have discovered his

danger by sounding, but instead of doing so he held his course steadily without recourse to the lead, until the dark, gloomy outline of the land loomed up, ominous and forbidding.

It was evident from Benny's story that Captain Clark realized at once the impossibility of working the ship off from that lee shore, because to the best of the lad's belief it must have been half an hour before the ill-fated craft struck the rocks when he was lashed to the spar, while at the same time preparations were being made to care for the captain's wife in similar fashion.

"It is only in case anything should happen that this is being done," Mrs. Clark said to the boy, with the evident purpose of strengthening his courage. "It may be that all will go well with us, and then you and your Fluff will only have had a little disagreeable experience."

Twice before the final crash came did one of the crew speak words of cheer to the lad, who was unable to see what might be going on around him, and from the nature of such remarks he believed all hands felt certain the *Amazonia* must strike the coast.

That, in substance, was all the information Benny could give regarding such matters as must be embodied in the keeper's report; but the men, curious to know how he chanced to be aboard the ship, plied him with questions, and when they had been answered the story of Benny Foster's life was told.

When quite young, he and his mother had sailed in the ship *West Wind*, of which his father was the captain, on what the lad believed was to be a long voyage; but he failed to remember the port to which the ship was bound. However, so far as concerned him, that was of no particular importance.

At some time--Benny thought he might have been six years of age just then--his father was taken ill in the port of Calcutta, and it was necessary to provide a new master for the ship.

Captain Foster and his family took lodgings ashore, and within a year Benny was both motherless and fatherless. From that time on he had been cared for in haphazard fashion by such acquaintances as his parents had formed, and he believed some efforts were made toward learning if he had any relatives in the United States.

Whether anything was accomplished in that direction he could not say; but simply knew that in January of this same year Captain Clark sought him out for the purpose of carrying him to Boston, having learned of his condition from an American merchant in Calcutta.

On board the *Amazonia* he performed any light tasks which would have come within a cabin-boy's line of duty; but was treated by Mrs. Clark as a friend rather than a servant, and so intimate an acquaintance had sprung up between himself and Fluff that he came to consider it his especial duty to care for the little Angora terrier, whose bright pink eyes gleaming out from amid the fluff of silken white hair gave him the appearance of being a remarkably intelligent animal.

"And he's just as bright as he looks," Benny said, as he concluded the poor story of his own life, while he hugged the dog yet closer to his bosom. "Fluff knows almost everything I say to him, and what he don't just understand he guesses at. Why, before we had been out a week, Mrs. Clark let him sleep with me in my berth, and when it was heavy weather this poor little fellow would almost the same as talk to me, scolding because the jumping of the ship made him feel badly. His name was Fluff Clark, of course; but now that he hasn't got anybody in all this wide world but me, I'm going to adopt him, and he'll be Fluff C. Foster after this."

"It strikes me there's need of some one adopting you, lad," Keeper Downey said with a grave smile. "I'm not certain but that Fluff is better able to care for himself than you are."

"He's too good a dog to need much caring for. Why, all he'd eat in a day wouldn't amount to a cent's worth, though he's mighty particular about having things fixed up just such a way, and his pink nose will wrinkle quick when there's nothing but salt beef left over for him. We always had lump sugar to give him for a treat; but he'd get along without that if he knew I couldn't afford to buy it for him. It would surprise you to see how much that dog knows."

Then Benny, eager that his pet should be duly appreciated, exhibited the dog in his various tricks, and the members of the crew, seeing that by such means the lad's thoughts were kept from his great loss, applauded the performance until Fluff had shown himself half a dozen times over in his various acrobatic feats.

Keeper Downey rewarded the dumb performer, who certainly sustained the reputation which his young master had given him, and it was almost as if those cold, silent forms in the boat-room had been forgotten.

Benny's clothing was thoroughly dried, and while Fluff entertained the crew, the lad fully dressed himself, donning an old pea-jacket many sizes too large, which had been wrapped about him when he was lashed to the spar.

Keeper Downey set about making his report to the Department, based on information supplied by the only survivor of the *Amazonia*, and the men resumed their duties of watching for wreckage from the ill-fated ship, leaving

the homeless boy and his only friend comparatively alone.

During the remainder of this day every man took good care that Benny should not find his way into the boat-room, and all seemed to believe it their duty to prevent the lad's thoughts from straying back into the past.

A toy full-rigged ship, which one of the crew had fashioned during his hours of leisure, was brought down from its shelf that Benny might make a critical examination of it, and each in turn had some odd souvenir or curious memento of the sea to attract the lad's attention, until, from the appearance of the mess-table, one would have said a party of children were being entertained.

Despite all their efforts, however, Benny's mind would go back to the terrible evening just spent, and many times while the kindly hearted men were doing their best to cause forgetfulness, the big tears overflowed his eyelids, although the boy did his best to repress them.

When evening came, and supper had been served, both Benny and Fluff were ready to retire, and after the lad was tucked snugly in Sam Hardy's bed with the dog's pink nose resting over his arm, such of the crew as were not on duty came together to discuss the future of these waifs who had been thrown up by the sea into their keeping.

There was no formality attending this conference. From Keeper Downey to Surfinan Sawyer, all appeared to believe that the lad and the dog were under the especial protection of the crew attached to this station, and not one made any effort to shift the responsibility to another's shoulders.

"It stands to reason that the captain of the *Amazonia* did not know anything about the lad's people, otherwise he or his wife must have said something that Benny would have overheard," Keeper Downey began, by way of opening what all tacitly understood was a meeting of the "board of guardians." "It may be that when the story of the wreck is told in the newspapers, as will be done by to-morrow, some one comes forward to claim the lad, though I doubt it. Now there is nothing in the Service as provides for such as he, except so far as giving food and shelter to the shipwrecked until they can be removed to other quarters."

"And I allow it wouldn't be according to regulations for us to keep him here?" Joe Cushing said interrogatively, and Keeper Downey replied emphatically:

"Not unless we have permission from headquarters. But whether that can be gained or not goes beyond me."

"Suppose we don't keep him? Allow that we send him away?" Henry Robbins asked. "Where could a boy like him be put?"

"There's no other place but the poorhouse, if it so be he hasn't any relatives."

"He sha'n't go there, if I have to pay for his keeping out of my own pocket," Sam Hardy said decidedly, whereat the other members of the crew applauded, taking care to make but little noise lest the sleeper in the chamber above should be awakened.

Then Keeper Downey continued, much as if some motion had been put, seconded, and carried:

"Since we are all agreed that Benny and Fluff are on our hands until a better home can be found for 'em, the question comes as to how we'll divide the expense."

"Let the cost be put equally among the crew," Joe Cushing suggested. "It can't take such a terrible amount of money to keep this little shaver and his toy dog."

"We'll let every man contribute according to his wages," Keeper Downey said, in the tone of one who has finally settled the question. "That will be the fairest way, and, as Joe says, we never shall miss it in the long run. It's where we can keep him that is going to be the hardest thing to settle on."

"If we pay his bills and he don't cost the Government a cent, what's to prevent having him with us all the time?" Dick Sawyer asked. "I'll guarantee that if we fix up a letter to the General Superintendent of the Life-Saving Service, giving the particulars, and explaining that the boy can help us a good bit in the way of washing dishes, trimming lanterns, and that sort of work, there won't be a question raised as to his sharing a bed with one of us. I'll take him in with me, when it comes to that."

"But would it be right to keep the lad out here?"--and it was as if Tom Downey asked the question of himself. "According to his own story, he hasn't had over much schooling, and nowadays a boy who ain't considerable of a scholar cuts a pretty poor figure."

"It won't do any harm if that sort of business is held off for another year,"--and Joe Cushing leaned forward eagerly as if fearing lest his companions might disagree with him. "I think on these long winter days it will be mighty pleasant to have a little shaver like him toddling round here with his dog, and now the spring is so near at hand he wouldn't get much of a whack at schoolin' before vacation-time comes. Besides, it would be cruel to send him off just now, for he's



beginning to get acquainted with us, and if you put him among strangers suddenly all of last night's business would come back to him harder than ever."

It could readily be seen that every member of the crew was as eager to keep Benny and Fluff with them, for a time at least, as was Joe Cushing, but Tom Downey insisted that they had no right to thus deprive the boy of the opportunity to attend school, and a long discussion followed, the result of which was extremely satisfying to Joe Cushing.

"It's agreed that we keep the lad here until next fall, if it so be permission is given by the Department," Keeper Downey said at length, summing up the result of the arguments, "and if the rules of the Service won't allow his staying, we'll look around for a boarding-place as near to the station as may be; but I reckon there ain't much need of figgerin' on that, because the United States Government can't make any kick about giving shelter to a little shaver like Benny, especially when it don't cost a cent."

"Suppose you start the letter now?" Joe Cushing suggested. "If it goes in with your report I allow it'll have greater weight, seein' that the whole story will be fresh in the minds of the officials."

The remainder of the crew believed Joe's suggestion was timely, and Keeper Downey did not need much urging to set him about the task immediately.

After referring the Superintendent to the official report of the wreck, Downey gave briefly the story Benny had told concerning himself, making the request that the boy be allowed to remain at the station during such time as the crew were willing to provide for his wants, and concluding with the following statement:

"It won't take a cent out of the government, for we, as a crew, have agreed to pay his bills till he can manage affairs for himself, and the little he costs will be more than balanced by what labor he can perform. He appears to be a willing lad, and there's many an odd job he can do when we have a long spell of hard work. It will be a good trade for us, whichever way you look at the matter, and surely the people of this big country won't begrudge the giving of a shelter to a boy who has been in such hard luck, especially when there'll be absolutely no outlay on his account."

"If that don't fix things, then the Life-Saving Service is run under different rules and regulations than I've always reckoned on," Joe Cushing said in a tone of satisfaction. "I allow we can count on having Benny and Fluff with us so long as we pay their bills, and I'm going to make first-class surf men out of them both, or know the reason why."



## CHAPTER IV.

### ON PATROL.

When Benny and Fluff came down-stairs next morning after the meeting of the "board of guardians," all the crew were in the mess-room, and Keeper Downey greeted the lad right cheerily as he said:

"It stands to reason, Benny, that you have been troubled more or less about what's to become of you, seein' 's you've got no relatives that you know about, an' no friends, except it may be them as are before you, this side of India. You must have something to eat, and enough clothin' to keep the frost out, to say nothing of providin' a home for the dog."

Benny looked about him piteously. This broaching the subject which had been present in his mind almost constantly since he realized his desolate condition, seemed much like the preface of some disagreeable communication.

"Have you got to send us away right off, Mr. Downey?" he asked, pressing Fluff's pink nose against his cheek as if the contact gave him courage.

"I don't reckon that's got to be done, lad; but you must understand that something ought to be settled within a reasonably short time, and chiefly for your own good. It's not benefiting a boy to allow him to remain idle----"

"But I'm willing to work, Mr. Downey, and I was thinking when we came down-stairs that I'd ask you if there wasn't some town near by where I might find a job."

"I allow the town's there, Benny, but whether a lad of your size and build could get a job big enough to pay for the little he and the dog would eat is another question. If it so be you was minded to stay in the country, say out on the sea-shore, I shouldn't be surprised if a piece of work could be scared up that would fix things smooth, so far as it comes to board and lodging. I ain't allowin' there'd be very much more than that in it, 'cause you see, Benny, my lad, it don't stand to reason you're worth any more."

"I'd do anything, Mr. Downey, anything that would pay for our living, and I'm sure Fluff wouldn't mind it so very much if he didn't get sugar when he knew I couldn't earn any money to buy it with."

"Well, my son, this 'ere job I've got in my eye would likely pay enough so that you could afford to keep Fluff C. Foster in sugar. Leastways, I reckon it wouldn't take much bargaining to bring it around that way."

"When shall I go to work?"

"It ain't well to lose any time, so me and my mates have agreed that you'd better start right in this morning as soon as you've had breakfast."

Benny looked around upon the weather-beaten, kindly faces, and a big lump came up in his throat which caused him no slight effort in the swallowing of it. He had known these men hardly more than twenty-four hours, and yet in that time they had shown themselves as well disposed as if they had been his best friends, and the thought of leaving them to go among strangers brought the boy genuine sorrow.

He buried his face in Fluff's silken hair for an instant, and then, looking up, said with a brave effort to prevent his lip from quivering, although he could not choke back the tremor in his voice:

"I am ready to go now, sir."

"According to the looks of things you ain't mightily pleased at the prospect of leaving,"--and Thomas Downey glanced meaningly at his comrades.

"You've all been very good to me, sir, and if you'd ever known how lonesome it is to be alone, same's Fluff and I are now, you couldn't wonder that we was a little mite sorry to go away from such a nice place; but I'll----"

Again Benny buried his face in Fluff's coat that he might have time to choke back the rebellious sobs, and Sam Hardy whispered in a voice that was not remarkable for its steadiness:

"It's too bad to keep the little duffer in suspense, Tom."

"He's showing what he's made of now."

"And he's got grit," Joe Cushing added.

By this time Benny had conquered his emotions once more, and looking up said with a feeble attempt at a smile:

"You've all been awful good to Fluff and me, and we sha'n't forget it. Unless we're going too far away, both of us would like to come back once in a while to see you."

"But you don't want to leave before breakfast?" Tom Downey suggested, and Benny, manfully struggling with this new grief, replied:

"I ain't hungry; but if you'll give Fluff a little something,--'cause he's a dog an' don't really know all that's happening----"

"I reckon we needn't keep this up any longer, lad. You've got a job, an' we're hoping there won't be any call to leave this 'ere station; but if it can't be fixed as we've reckoned on, you shall live close by. There's nothing in the rules to prevent your comin' here every day, for regulation number one, nought, seven, regarding the conduct of keepers, says that they must be 'courteous and polite to visitors,' but it don't state how often a visitor may come."

The members of the crew expressed their satisfaction in various ways at the keeper's astuteness in thus discovering a means of at least partially carrying out their desires, in case the head of the Department disapproved of their taking on an assistant; but Benny looked about him in perplexity. He failed utterly to understand the proposition which Tom Downey believed had been made exceedingly plain, and Sam Hardy took it upon himself to explain what they, as a crew, proposed doing.

"It's just like this, Benny," he began in a paternal tone: "It kind of seems as if you and Mr. Fluff C. Foster was thrown on your beam ends, so to speak, with the wind and tide both against you. Now the government hires us to assist crafts in distress, and, of course, you comin' under that head, we're bound to do all we can, else there'd be danger of losin' our job. See?"

A look of perplexity still remained upon the lad's face, and Joe Cushing proceeded to perform his part in making plain the situation of affairs.

"It's like this, Benny: Tom and Sam mean all they say, but don't just give it to you in a way that can be understood. Now a good, willing boy what will tend out right sharp on such odd jobs as are layin' round the station, can earn his way here; an' when the Superintendent of the Life-Saving Service hears how we, as a crew, have put this thing, it don't stand to reason he's going to make any kick. 'Cause why? 'Cause there ain't anything in the revised regulations of the service as says a word against it. So while we've got to wait a spell for the proper authority, according to my way of thinking, an' the rest of us are pretty much the same mind, it's as good as fixed already."

As if thinking it was necessary to make some reply, Benny nodded his head, but still continued to gaze inquiringly from one to the other, for as yet he failed to understand the alleged explanations, and Dick Sawyer took it upon himself to throw additional light on the subject.

"It don't appear to me as if everything was just plain to you, lad, an' yet Joe straightened up what Tom an' Sam didn't get at. We settled the whole thing last night after you'd gone to bed, an' the way I look at it is, that it'll be as much of a favor to us as to you an' the dog, so there's no need to feel as if you wasn't paying your way."

"Where is it Fluff and I are going to work?" Benny asked, after waiting an instant to learn if any other member of the crew had an explanation to make, and Tom Downey replied in a tone of authority:

"Why, right here, of course, lad. Ain't that what we've been telling you about? We're counting on keeping you in the station, if it so be authority is given from headquarters, and it don't seem as if there could be any objection. You can knock about pretty much as you please, though we count that you'll help the cook, and keep the lamps and lanterns trimmed."

"Fluff and I are to live right here?" Benny cried excitedly, in his excitement allowing the dog to drop to the floor, where the latter set up a shrill barking as if in approval of the plan.

"It looks as if you'd be glad to stay," Sam Hardy said in a tone of satisfaction.

"Glad!" Benny exclaimed. "Why, you men can't think how happy it will make Fluff and me! Of course we was ready to leave, and wouldn't have said a word against it, because we've got our living to earn; but you've been so good to us that it seems as if you was our own folks, an' we'd have been awful lonesome to go away where we didn't know anybody. And you sha'n't be sorry, either, if there's anything we can do to pay our way, 'cause I know how to take care of the lamps, and wait on the table, and--and--and I can wash dishes just as well as a woman. I did it on the *Amazonia* all the voyage."

"We're allowing that this 'ere is a case where you regularly attend to your share of the duties," Tom Downey said, speaking now in his official tone. "We don't believe in making paupers out of boys, no matter whatever bad luck they've fallen into; but besides the work you'll do, I reckon it will be kind of pleasant to have you and the dog laying round here,--makes it seem more like home. Now, Benny, you are to take hold from this out. Get up when the cook does; do what you can to help him; wash dishes and trim the lamps. After that the time will be pretty much your own, an' if it

so be that you can't sleep here, why we'll make a deal with Eph Hannaford's folks so they'll give you lodgings. But we won't talk about that part of it. Turn to for breakfast now, and then there'll be a chance to show how handy you are."

The lump which came into Benny's throat at the thought that he must leave the station had suddenly taken its departure, and in obedience to the keeper's orders the lad took his seat at the breakfast table alone, for the crew had already broken their fast.

Tom Downey observed that the boy moved the chairs away from his immediate vicinity before sitting down, and it was apparent to all that, according to Master Fluff's ideas, something had gone wrong, for the dog danced about excitedly, giving vent from time to time to a low yelp of what seemed to be disapproval.

"What's the matter with Fluff C. Foster?" Sam Hardy asked.

"He'll be all right after a spell," Benny replied. "He'll soon know the difference, 'cause I'll make him understand it."

"Understand what?"

"Why, you see, he always sat by the side of me on board the ship, and he thinks it's funny he can't do it now, I s'pose; but he's a good, sensible dog, and won't want to break over any rules after he gets a little used to it."

"Why don't you let him sit by your side now?"

"I was afraid it wouldn't be right. Mrs. Clark said she'd have a good deal of trouble to break him of the habit after they got ashore."

"Will he behave himself?" Keeper Downey asked.

"Fluff behave himself! Why, sir, he's just as nice an' polite at the table as any fellow you ever saw."

"Give him a show, and let's see what he'll do."

Benny pulled a chair by the side of the one in which he was sitting, and without waiting for further invitation the dog leaped into it, content at being by the side of his young master, and making no effort to get at the food before him.

The crew watched with interest what was to them very much like a performance gotten up for their especial benefit, and during all the time Benny remained at the table Fluff behaved himself with the greatest propriety.

When the boy had satisfied his hunger he poured a saucer one third full of coffee, broke into it a small portion of bread, and Fluff immediately got down from the chair, knowing that his meal was ready.

While the dog was eating Sam Hardy exclaimed, as if the proceedings filled him with surprise:

"Well, he's got more sense than I ever gave a dumb animal credit for havin', an' so far as I'm concerned, he's welcome to sit at any table where I am."

"We'll give him a regular place by Benny's side," Tom Downey added, and thus were the two officially and formally received into the family of the life savers.

The new member of the crew did not wait to be told how he might make himself useful, but immediately after the meal was ended he set about clearing the table, washing dishes, and setting to rights the interior of the station.

The men watched him curiously while he moved quickly but noiselessly to and fro, until, having swept the floor, he began dusting the different articles of furniture, when Sam Hardy exclaimed emphatically:

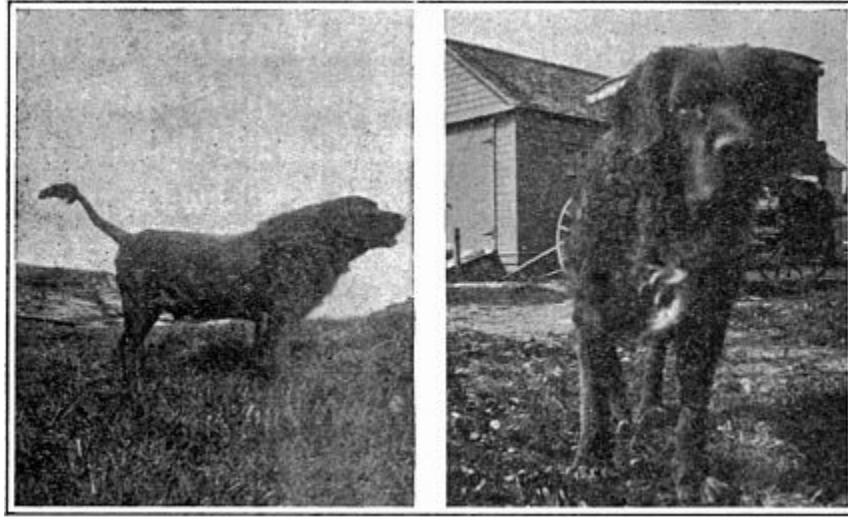
"Mark my word, that lad will be a big addition to this 'ere place! He's tidy, willing, an' quiet; what more could we want?"

"I reckon he'll do," Keeper Downey replied in a tone of content, and straightway the members of the crew set about their several duties, satisfied that they had made no mistake in assuming the guardianship of Benny and Fluff.

The building was cleanly, when viewed from a man's standpoint; but Benny, who had profited by the teachings of Mrs. Clark, saw very much which should be done, and from the time breakfast was over until late in the afternoon he did not spend an idle moment. As a matter of fact Fluff was equally busy; when not exhibiting his tricks for the amusement of the men, he was trudging to and fro at the heels of his young master as if superintending the labor, and blissfully ignorant of the fact that old Maje sat outside displaying no slight jealousy and anger because he had not been admitted to the mess-room according to custom.

"It stands to reason that the old dog will be a bit disagreeable at first," Joe Cushing said, as he called attention to Maje in front of the tool-house. "We must introduce the two before long, and once they are friends it'll be more lively for Fluff C. Foster."

A ring at the telephone which connected the station with the neighboring city called Keeper Downey into the adjoining room, and after receiving a certain message he summoned Sam Hardy.



"The bodies are to be taken away this afternoon, Sam. The coroner says the undertaker's team has already started, so we can count on its being here about sunset. Now there's no good reason why that little shaver should see all the dismal work, for it would only bring all the sorrow back into his heart."

"I go on patrol in half an hour; why wouldn't it be a good idea to take him with me?"

"I'm afraid the tramp would be too long. You see he's just come off shipboard, an' isn't in good trim for much walking."

"Joe Cushing will come along, I reckon, an' when the boy begins to tire, can come back with him."

"That's a good idea, Sam. See to it that he's wrapped up well, and give him a lift over the roughest places."

"Don't be feered but that I'll take good care of him. What about the dog? Old Maje will make short work of him if he ain't watched sharp."

"I'll attend to that part of it, if Ben doesn't want to take Fluff with him. Get ready, and don't let Joe bring him back until the work here has been finished."

The new member of the crew was scouring knives when Sam proposed that he go on the patrol, and from the expression on his face it could readily be seen that he was in favor of accepting the invitation; but after a brief time of hesitation Benny replied:

"I'd like to go, Mr. Hardy; but there's so much to be done here that I can't get away. It'll be a good while before I'm through with this job."

"Hark you, Benjamin: we count on your doing the odd chores about the station; but don't reckon every minute is to be spent working. You've done enough for one day, so get your duds together, an' we'll see what may be needed; it'll be a cold tramp along the coast while the wind is howlin' at this rate."

"I'll ask Mr. Downey----"

"Never mind that part of it, my son. I've spoken with the keeper, an' he thinks it'll do you good to take a spin out of doors. What about Fluff?"

"May I take him with me?"

"Sure; but I can't say the wind won't blow him away; it's powerful strong, an' he don't carry much ballast."

"He'll be glad enough to stay in my arms most of the time," Benny cried gleefully as he went in search of his reefer, which Joe Cushing, having been given a hint by Tom Downey as to what was proposed, had hung in front of the fire.

Had Benny taken all the clothing his "guardians" offered to loan, it would have been literally impossible for him to walk. He did accept, however, a pair of rubber boots many sizes too large, a woollen muffler, and a pair of mittens, and when these had been adjusted according to the advice of all hands, he looked like an animated bundle of clothing rather than a living boy.

Fluff was disposed of under the large reefer, and the party set out, Joe Cushing leading the way, with Sam Hardy walking by Benny's side.

The boy observed that each of his companions put into his overcoat pocket a bar of wood, fashioned as if intended to be used as a handle, and three small packages looking not unlike sticks of soap, wrapped in paper. He afterward came to know that these last were Coston signals; that when a surfman finds it necessary to show a light, he inserts one of the packages or sticks into the wooden handle, and, striking it against a rock, or any hard substance, produces a brilliant light, many times more powerful than the ordinary "flare."

In addition to these signals the men hung over their shoulders round leathern cases which looked much like the covering of a small clock or a large watch, and Sam Hardy said as they left the station:

"I'm allowin', my son, you don't understand the meanin' of all this 'ere rigging; but keep your eyes open, an' you'll soon find out that we of the Service have more on hand than sittin' 'round taking our ease, as a good many people credit us with doing."

"Are you going out just for a walk?" Benny asked, finding it difficult to make his way against the strong, chilling wind which came in over the ocean.

"Yes, we're out for a walk," Joe Cushing replied with a hearty laugh; "but it ain't for pleasure, my son. No matter what the weather is, we're bound to be on the move from sunset until sunrise, watching for any craft that may be in distress."

"A vessel couldn't get into trouble on the coast to-night," Benny said, with the air of one who is familiar with the subject.

"Very likely not; but yet it is our business to be on the watch day and night, because there's never any telling when, or how, we may be needed, an' saving life in a storm ain't the only part of our work by a long ways, as you'll come to know. I reckon we're far enough from the station now, so there's no fear of old Maje, an' you can give Fluff C. Foster a little run."

Benny brought the dog out from under his coat, and instantly he was on the ground Fluff set off, barking joyously because of being free; but before he had been left to his own devices twenty seconds he began to howl as if in alarm.

The wind was literally blowing the little fellow along, and, despite all his efforts, he was unable to make headway against it.

"Can't hold his course," Sam said with a laugh, "and the worst of it is that there's no taking in sail with him. That long hair gives the wind a good hold, an' I reckon young Foster will be glad to get under your coat again, Benny."

Not until the dog had been blown landward over the slope of the bluff which bordered the sea, was his young master able to come up with him, and once more beneath the lad's coat the little fellow manifested his pleasure at having been rescued from what probably seemed to him a dangerous position, by half growling, half whining, which Benny explained was "the way Fluff talked."

"I counted on seeing heaps and heaps of snow," the new member of the crew said in a tone of disappointment as he trudged on between his companions. "Of course the winter in Calcutta isn't like what it is here, and I don't remember much about the drifts of which mother often spoke."

"There's snow and to spare, just back of the timbered land," Sam Hardy replied with a laugh, "an' when you're needin' a sight of it mighty bad you can go over the hill beyond the lighthouses. Down here on the point, where the wind has full sweep, it's mostly blown away. Now, for instance, lookin' up from the station, I reckon you won't see so much as would make a snowball of respectable size."

"But we find it in spots down here," Joe Cushing interrupted. "Back of the rocks the wind packs it into sheltered places, and although there's none to be seen from the station door, we often come upon drifts three or four feet deep. It's precious hard work draggin' the beach-wagon then."

Benny soon had an illustration of his companions' statements. They had been walking over land whereon not a single fleck of white could be seen, when suddenly, coming upon a gully which was sheltered from the wind by the cliffs, they were floundering in a deposit of snow so deep that only with the greatest difficulty could the boy force his way through.

"It's always a feast or a famine out here, lad," Sam Hardy said grimly. "No snow whatever, or too much of it."

Then he led the way across what might have been mistaken, save for the dead grass, for a summer landscape.

The little party were not far from the station when the men halted in front of a post to which was attached a small iron receptacle containing a key, fastened to a chain, and Sam said, as, removing his mittens, he took this out:

"Now you shall see, my son, the meaning of this 'ere bit of furniture we're obliged to carry. A dishonest surfman might go a short distance from the station, find a snug loafing-place, and spend his time of duty there instead of

patrolling the coast, if it wasn't for the little telltale inside this case. We must be at certain places in order to get at the keys which fit the lock--in this wise."

As he spoke Sam turned the key in what was seemingly a tiny lock on the leathern case.

"Inside is a sort of clock which makes a record whenever I turn the key. After we are back at the station Tom Downey can tell if I have visited all the points where the key is kept, and exactly what time I was there. It makes a record for him to look up, and is a satisfaction to me, because it proves I have done my whole duty."

At nearly every point along the rugged coast Sam and Joe had some story to tell of disaster, or of saving life from the raging waters by the crew of which Benny had good reason now to consider himself a member.

Here, a schooner, having been dismasted, was thrown up on the hidden reef which makes out some distance from the land, and, during a furious storm when the sleet and hail cut into the flesh like needles, the life savers were forced to drag their apparatus through the snowdrifts from two to four feet deep, after which, by aid of the gun and the breeches-buoy, every man was saved.

There, three boys, whose yacht had been capsized by a sudden squall, would have drowned but for the vigilance of the patrol and the activity of the men who manned the life-boat, for the crew arrived at the scene only barely in time to save them from being dashed against the rocky cliffs.

It was as if every headland and cove had its own particular story concerning the perils of the sea, and the two surfmen, bent on so occupying the attention of their companion that he should not note the passage of time, gave to each incident such details as could not fail of arresting the lad's attention, until to his surprise Sam Hardy said:

"I reckon, Joe, it's time for you to take the lad back. It won't do to give him too much of a tramp the first night. There's no need of spinning all our yarns, for he's like to be with us on many a tour of duty."

"I'm neither tired nor cold," Benny said, for this cutting short a most agreeable excursion was not to his liking, although he made no protest.

"It ain't just the thing to drag you along here when there's no real need of it, and I reckon you'd best turn back, my son. Joe will take you in behind the pines, where you can give Fluff C. Foster a chance to run, and by that time the frost will have a good firm hold on your nose."

Then with a cheery "good-night" Sam continued on his lonely, difficult way.

Joe fulfilled the promise made for him by his comrade, and when, at nearly eight o'clock, they arrived within sight of the station, the surfman began shouting, much to the surprise of his companion.

"It's all right; you can come in," Keeper Downey replied at length, and Joe Cushing knew that those silent forms which had been lying in the boat-room were no longer at the station.



## CHAPTER V.

### FROM THE "AMAZONIA."

Benny was astir very early next morning, eager to show the crew of the station that he appreciated to the utmost their generosity in thus giving him a home, and when the men came down to breakfast the cook declared that the boy had performed considerably more than half the work of preparing the meal.

"He's a handy lad around a kitchen, an' I'm thinkin' we'll be gettin' the best of the bargain in adoptin' him, providin' he holds out as he's begun," the cook said confidentially to Sam Hardy, and the latter replied emphatically:

"You mark my words, cookee; he ain't the kind of a lad who wears out quickly. I'm countin' on his growin' better every day, an' before next winter we'll make a surfman of him."

"Now don't take too many chances, Sam. That little shaver ain't of the right build to knock around in rough water with the likes of you, an' there's too much danger in it for him."

"I don't agree with you there, cookee. He's spry as a kitten, an' with grit enough to do anything another can."

"I'll admit he'd make a try for it; but I don't want to see him pushed too far."

Benny's entrance put an end to the conversation for the time being, and following him, as a matter of course, was Fluff C. Foster, who had become sufficiently well acquainted with the men to greet each in turn by sitting up and barking shrilly as he held out one paw.

Every man shook hands with the little fellow, after which he leaped up into the chair he had occupied the day previous.

"Knows his place like a little gentleman," Joe Cushing cried in a tone of admiration as he stroked the dog's silken hair, and Benny said apprehensively:

"I'm almost afraid Fluff will get so much petting that he'll forget his good manners. This very morning he acted as if the whole station belonged to him."

"What did he do, Benny?" Keeper Downey asked with a laugh.

"He was determined to walk straight out of doors, even though the big dog was sitting there waiting to teach him better manners."

"Hasn't he been out yet?"

"Oh, yes, sir. I carried him down by the shore where he could run around while I watched the other dog."

"We must introduce him to Maje after breakfast," Sam Hardy said, as he slyly gave Fluff a bit of meat, and laughed until the tears came into his eyes as he watched the little fellow trying to eat it without betraying the fact to Benny. "Fluff C. Foster has rights around this station as well as Maje, an' they must be respected."

"Don't let the introduction take too long," Keeper Downey said warningly. "It is beach-apparatus drill day, and too much time must not be wasted, because I'm counting on getting the boats out to have a look at what is left of the----"

He ceased speaking very suddenly as his gaze rested on Benny; but the crew understood that it was the keeper's purpose to overhaul such portions of the *Amazonia* as yet remained upon the rocks, although it was hardly probable anything of value would be found.

After breakfast the cook would have excused Benny from the task of washing dishes, so eager were the men to witness the first meeting of the dogs; but the new member of the crew begged permission to perform his regular duties before indulging in what was very like play.

Not until the kitchen was put in proper order did Benny consider that he was at liberty to go out of doors, even though all the men, save the keeper himself, insisted that there was no good reason why he should not take advantage of the cook's proposition.

Then, with Fluff under his arm, he went out back of the station buildings, where, in a spot sheltered from the wind, the crew was impatiently awaiting his arrival.

Maje was present, appearing calmly indifferent to the unusual amount of interest suddenly displayed in him, but he pricked up his ears ominously on seeing the white-haired visitor.





"Do you think there's any danger he'll hurt Fluff?" Benny asked solicitously.

"Don't worry about that part of it," Sam Hardy replied confidently. "Maje knows as well as we do that it's his duty to be polite to strangers, an' if he shows signs of forgettin' it, we'll give him a lesson that won't soon be forgot."

"Please don't whip him, for then he'd always remember that Fluff got him into trouble, an' never would be friendly."

"Let young Foster down, an' I'll look after Maje," Joe Cushing said as he grasped the big dog's collar.

There was a look of anxiety on Benny's face as he gave Fluff his freedom, and saw the little fellow walk directly up to Maje in the most reckless fashion.

The big dog condescended to sniff at the impudent visitor, and then he turned his head away, as if to say that such small game was entirely beneath his notice. Nor was it possible to persuade him into paying any further attention to the guest, and after several fruitless efforts Joe Cushing said with just a shade of disappointment in his tone:

"Your introduction hasn't turned out much of an affair after all, Sam. I allowed we might see some sport."

"I reckon Maje has seen Fluff too often, for I've caught him looking in when the doors were open. Most likely he's made up his mind that young Foster has come to stay, an' don't intend to pay any attention to him. You can let your dog have the run of the station from this out Benny."

It did really seem that there was no reason to fear Maje might be tempted to do mischief, and Benny turned to go into the building, for the lamps and lanterns were yet to be trimmed.

The men arose to attend to the varied duties of the day, and for an instant the attention of all was diverted from the animals.

It was as if Maje had been waiting for just such an opportunity. In a twinkling, and with an agility that one would hardly have given him credit for, he seized Fluff by the neck, tossing him like a ball several feet in the air.

This done, he walked away quickly, evidently knowing what would be the result if he lingered there many seconds.

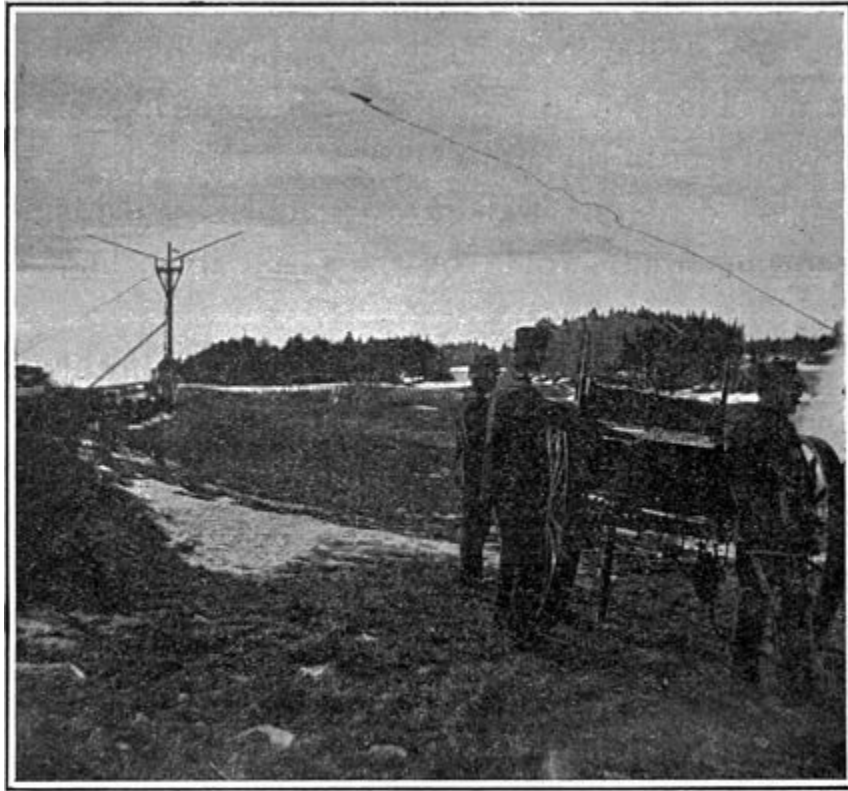
Fluff howled dismally while he was yet in the air, and, once on his feet again, ran to Benny for protection, grumbling and whimpering as if making complaint against such uncourteous treatment.

Sam Hardy and Joe Cushing turned instantly to pursue Maje; but Benny, holding Fluff tightly in his arms, begged of them not to punish the big dog.

"Of course he's jealous, an' it'll only make him worse if you whip him. Please let him alone; I'm certain Fluff isn't hurt any."

"He howled as if his throat was cut," Sam said laughingly, as he relinquished the pursuit in accordance with Benny's request, and Joe Cushing set about examining Fluff.

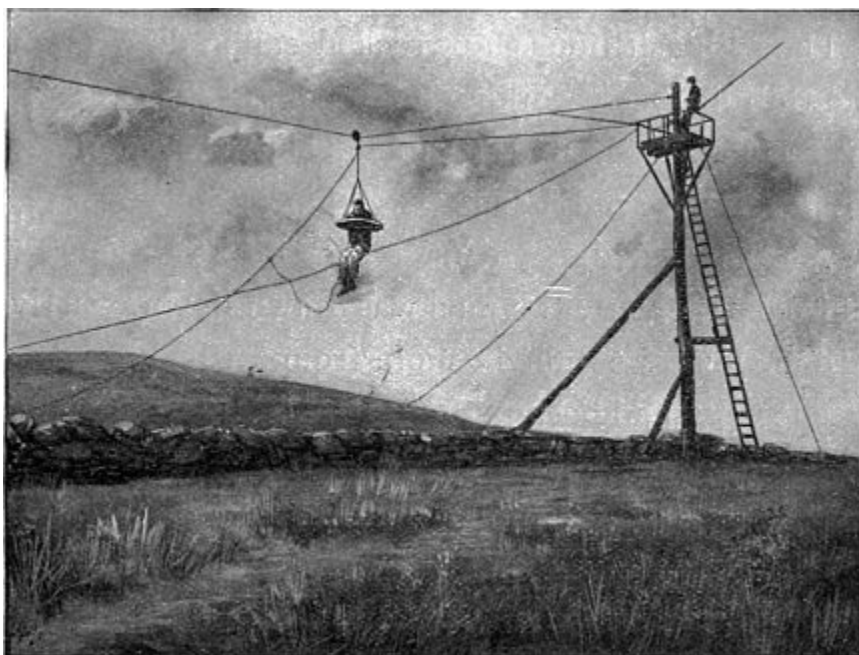
"He hasn't got so much as a scratch," was the report. "I reckon the worst that came to him was a big scare, an' I don't wonder at his bein' a bit afraid after such a rough handling."



"It'll teach him to keep out of Maje's way, and perhaps it's a good thing, for he always was too inquisitive and impudent," Benny replied, but he took good care his pet should not receive another lesson that forenoon, for he set his dog in a chair, sternly commanding him to remain there until further orders.

The cook was determined his assistant should have ample opportunity of witnessing the beach-apparatus drill, and as soon as the men had taken their stations he insisted upon Benny's going into the boat-room, where everything was in readiness.

The beach-wagon is a two-wheeled vehicle not unlike a huge push-cart, and on it are loaded all the implements necessary for sending out to a wreck and hauling the distressed mariners ashore.



Both the boy and the dog appeared to be deeply interested when the wagon was drawn out on the level ground in the rear of the station, where was erected an imitation of a ship's mast. A short distance from this spar the wagon was brought to a standstill, and out of it taken a small cannon. The crew loaded the weapon with powder and a missile to which was attached a thin line that had been wound on pegs in a wooden case known as a faking-box, in such fashion that it would unwind without resistance or snarling.

The cannon was aimed at the imitation mast, and discharged, the shot carrying the line directly across the top, where was a man standing to represent a mariner in distress.

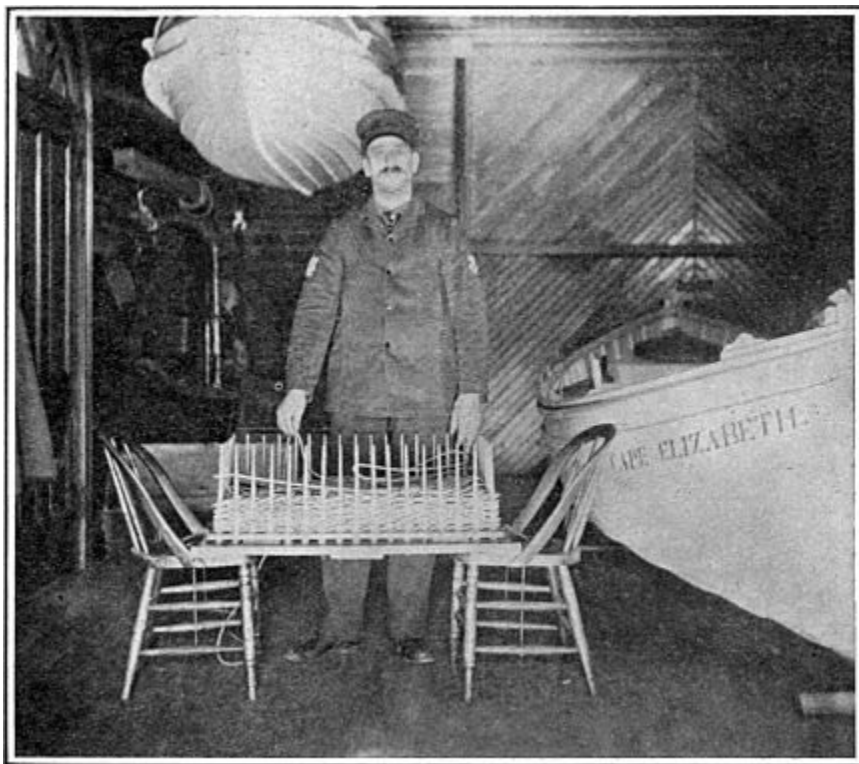
The supposititious shipwrecked sailor drew in on the thin line as if working for life, and soon brought over the top a stouter rope, sufficient to sustain the weight of a human being.

When this had been made fast both on the spar and near the cart, the man was drawn down exactly as one would be pulled ashore from a wreck.

The work had been performed exactly as if human lives were really in danger, and Benny received his first lesson in life-saving, but not his last, for he soon had ample opportunity of seeing the crew work when it appeared as if both they and those whom they sought to save, would be swept into eternity by the angry waters.

After the apparatus had been repacked in the wagon, the casting-line carefully rewound on the pegs that it might be in perfect order when it should again be needed, and orders were given to make ready with the boat, Benny returned to the kitchen, where the cook was already at work preparing dinner.

"You'll soon get used to that sort of thing, for it's pretty much all drill out here, except when the weather is bad."



"I should think they'd soon know it so well that there wouldn't be any need of doing so much work," Benny replied, as he set about paring the potatoes.

"They do," the cook said with a laugh; "but just read these 'ere rules and regulations on 'Drill and Exercise,' an' you'll see that men at life-saving stations ain't allowed to spend very much idle time. All that's set down there is to be gone through with every day, in addition to patrolling the shore, which, as you have seen already, ain't child's play. Not that I'm grumblin' about the work, for it's well the boys are kept out of idleness; but this will show how hard they've got to work."

The cook handed Benny a thin, black-covered book bearing the title *Revised Regulations*, and on the page exposed to view the lad read the lines given below:

"168. The following weekly routine of drill, etc., will be observed during the first month of the active season at all regularly manned stations in the Service:

"*Monday*.--Practice with beach-apparatus and overhaul and examine all apparatus and gear.

"*Tuesday*.--Practice with surf and life-boat.

"*Wednesday*.--Practice with signals.

"*Thursday*.--Practice with beach-apparatus.

"*Friday*.--Practice resuscitation.

"*Saturday*.--Clean house.

"After the first month the practice with beach-apparatus on Monday may be omitted.

"169. Whenever the regular practice is prevented by wreck duty, stormy weather, or high surf, it must take place the first opportunity thereafter. Whenever practice is so prevented, the fact must be entered upon the journal, with full particulars of the cause.

"170. No wilful neglect on the part of the keepers to practice their crews, as directed in the foregoing routine, will be tolerated, and the officers of the district are required to permit none.

"171. By practice with the beach-apparatus is meant the mustering of the crew, the recital by each member of his particular duty, and the rigging of the gear over a distance of seventy-five yards from sand-anchor to wreck-pole, according to the method set forth in the beach-apparatus drill. Powder must be used in every case, and the practice, so far as practicable, be precisely the same as at a wreck, using the apparatus upon the carriage, excepting the long whip. If necessary, to preserve the hawser, a coil of rope may be taken to the practice ground, and placed at the rear of the carriage, and used in its stead. If a practising shot-line is used, it must be removed from pins, and fired from the box precisely as in actual service. The use of powder will be dispensed with when the supply on hand is reduced to three pounds, at which time the district superintendent or resident assistant inspector will be notified.

"172. Boat practice will consist in launching and landing through the surf, and at least one half-hour's exercise of the men in handling their oars, as directed in the prescribed boat-drill. Going off and landing through the surf will not be sufficient to enter upon the journal as practice.

"173. Practice of resuscitation will consist in each member of the crew repeating the rules, as hereinafter provided, using the words of the book, and afterwards illustrating them by manipulations upon the succeeding member of the crew. Thus, the keeper will work upon Surfman No. 1, No. 1 upon No. 2, etc., and No. 7 upon the keeper. At the close of this exercise the keeper will open the medicine-chest, and question each man upon the uses of the remedies contained therein.

"174. Practice with the International Code Signals will consist in questions by the keeper to each member of the crew upon the colors of the different flags, the definitions of the two-, three-, and four-flag hoists and the distinguishing flag or pennant of each, the part of the code-book necessary to turn to when reading and when making a signal, etc., and in actual conversation or communication by means of the miniature signals provided for each station.

"175. In fine weather signals and books may be borrowed for one day from the adjacent station, and by erecting a temporary pole, the crew practised in the use of flags, which will fix the method of their use in the mind more effectively than any other practice.

"176. No departure from the prescribed drill for the use of the beach-apparatus in any of its details will be made by district superintendents or other officers without the sanction of the General Superintendent, previously obtained."

Benny read all this carefully, as if trying to fix the whole upon his memory, and then asked:

"What is the 'active season'?"

"That's when we begin work in the fall. You must know that all the crew don't stay here during the summer. The active season is from September 1st to May 1st; but the keeper holds on the year round."

"Are you a surfman?" Benny asked after a pause.

"No, my son, I'm only the cook, and hired by the men, instead of the Government, so you see I don't come in for all these long hours. My work is no harder in stormy weather, while then it is that every other man is on duty all the time. I have seen this same crew worked forty hours on a stretch, wet to the skin and half frozen, with never a single word of complaint. They are just putting off in the surf-boat, and I reckon it would be worth your while to watch them, Benny. We've got the dinner so far along that there's nothing to be done for a spell, so you and Fluff C. Foster had best stay out in the open air while you can."

The lad had a strong desire to see the crew afloat, otherwise he might not have taken advantage of the permission while there was any work to be performed.



Fluff had remained in the chair like an obedient dog that he could be when so disposed; but he came down after the fashion of an exceedingly small and very white whirlwind at the first word from his master.

"Be careful that old Maje ain't layin' anywhere outside on the watch," the cook cried; but Benny believed there was no necessity for him to be over-cautious regarding the safety of his pet. Fluff's experience with the big dog had been such that he did not intend giving Maje another opportunity of playing ball with him; he marched sedately and very close at Benny's heels from the station, down to that point on the shore overlooking the reef on which the *Amazonia* had gone to pieces.

It was the first time the lad had seen the wreck of the ship which served him as a home during so many months, because every member of the crew had taken especial care to prevent his wandering in that direction.

On this morning the men most likely believed Benny would be employed in the kitchen, and, perhaps, expected the cook would prevent him from going out on the shore; but if the latter had thought of the matter at all, it was probably with the idea that the boy must at some time see the small portion of the ship which remained on the rocks, and as well then as at any other.

At all events, he allowed his assistant to go out as has been seen, and instantly Benny came in view of these vestiges of disaster all the sorrow of the past came over him like a flood, drowning for the time being every other thought save of that night, when he alone out of all the ship's company came safely to land.

Seated upon the rocks he buried his face in Fluff's silken hair, and gave way once more to his grief. Then, the outburst of tears having in a measure soothed him, he looked out upon the frowning reef whereon the *Amazonia* ended her cruise.

The forward portion of the dismembered hull, with the foremast still standing, and a few timbers of the after portion, was all that remained to tell of the stately vessel which had plowed her way through so many oceans only to meet with disaster when virtually within sight of the home port.

"It won't do for us to be crying all the time, Fluff, else the crew will get tired, and think perhaps we'd better find some other job; but we shall keep on feeling sorry just so long as we live because the captain and Mrs. Clark didn't come ashore with us."

It was his own words which reminded Benny of the fact that the bodies of those who had been drowned would, in the ordinary course of events, be washed ashore, and at the very moment this came into his mind he saw the life-saving

crew taking from the wreckage what was unquestionably a human body.

"Oh, Fluff, Fluff, it may be our captain that they have found! We can't stay here and see them bring him ashore!"

Hugging the dog so tightly that the little fellow uttered a low cry of protest, Benny ran back to the station, and there it was necessary to explain to the cook why his eyes were red and swollen from weeping.

"No, my son, it's not the captain's body they have found, for that was carried into the city last night, together with the remains of his wife and some of the sailors. You were sent out on patrol with Sam Hardy and Joe Cushing so you shouldn't see what was being done; but it had to be known, and now it is as good a time as any other for you to be told."

Benny tried unsuccessfully to check his tears, and the cook, observing the struggle, said in a kindly tone:

"Look here, lad; you've had in your short life a good bit of sadness, an' it ain't to be wondered at that this last blow comes mighty tough. Now take my advice, and have a solid cry. Go back into the thicket, for there's no need of your seein' what the crew will bring ashore, if it so be you were not mistaken about what was taken from the wreck. Go back into the thicket with the dog, and stay there till I call you for dinner. It'll help you out, and prevent some ugly sights."

Benny hesitated. This running away from work in order to spare himself additional sorrow was not to his mind manly, and he feared lest those who had constituted themselves his guardians might censure him for so doing.

"I can't help feeling bad; but that ain't any reason why I shouldn't stay where I belong, for no matter how much work I do, it won't be possible to pay Fluff's board and mine. I think perhaps I ought to hold on right here."

"Do as I tell you, my boy. I'll explain to the men when they come in, and you may be certain that the keeper himself would give the same advice in the form of an order, if he was ashore. There's no reason to take more bitter things in this life than is necessary; so be off with you, and I'll answer for it that Fluff C. Foster won't object to a tramp through the woods."

Benny could do no less than act upon this suggestion, which was at the same time a command, and with Fluff under his arm he set off, not daring to turn his head seaward lest he should see the crew engaged in their gruesome work.

Once within the shelter of the pine trees, where patches of brown moss could be seen here and there, much to the delight of Fluff, Benny gave way to his gloomy thoughts until the antics of the dog, overjoyed at having this opportunity for a scamper after so many months of life on shipboard, aroused him from his mournful revery.

Then, and he blamed himself most severely for finding it possible to do other than mourn at such a time, he yielded to the dog's mute entreaties, and the two ran here and there under the trees, the low moaning of the murderous surf alone breaking the silence, until the cook's cries told that the noon-day meal was ready.

When Benny answered the summons the boat-room door was closed, and he believed this had been done to shut out from view those forms which had come ashore from the *Amazonia*.



## CHAPTER VI.

### ROUTINE DUTY.

During the three days which elapsed after the crew began work on the wreck Benny found sufficient with which to occupy his time.

From early morning until after dinner he was engaged in the kitchen, or in setting to rights the different apartments of the station, and the result of his work was soon apparent. Never before during the active season had the interior of the building been so cleanly, and the men were delighted with the agreeable change.

"You're what might be called an A 1 housekeeper, Benjamin," Tom Downey said one day as he returned to the station unexpectedly and found the lad washing the floor of the sleeping room. "All hands of us turn to and clean up once a week, according to the rules and regulations, but somehow we don't get it as neat as you do, and it's littered up in great shape forty-eight hours later. Now, everything is bright and clean as a new pin, and I reckon we're gettin' the best of this guardianship business."

"I'm glad if you think I'm paying our board, sir," Benny replied, pleased because of the praise bestowed upon him.

"You're doing more than that, my lad, an' we must hit upon some plan of squaring matters. A lad who takes it upon himself to see that our outside clothing is properly dried after we come in from a day's work is worth considerably more than what he and an imitation dog can eat, to say nothing of the other duties you have assumed."

"If you'll be as pleased to have me here as I am to stay, it'll be a big thing for Fluff an' me, sir."

"I allow matters are about in that shape already, and we'll see if something in the way of an allowance can't be made for the extra work you're doing."

"Do you mean that you'll pay me money, sir?"

"That's what the boys are talking about. You see we count on your going to school next season, and you must have a nest-egg before then, in order to pay your way."

"I'd rather it shouldn't be done, sir," Benny replied gravely. "It's mighty good of you to say I'm helpin' along; but I'm sure this kind of work isn't worth more than our board. If the men would be willing to teach me the rules of the service, and let me join in the drill sometimes, I'd be glad."

"What's your idea in doing that, Benjamin?"

"If I knew how to handle a boat in the surf, and could go through the drill, perhaps I might get a job as a surfman."

Tom Downey laughed loudly, until noting the red flush which crept over the lad's face, when he checked his mirth suddenly, as he said seriously:

"You're not much bigger than a peanut, Benny, and I'm afraid you wouldn't cut any figger in a boat."

"But I'm bound to grow, sir. Of course I couldn't do anything of the kind now, but after a spell perhaps I'll be big enough."

"Why do you want to get into the service, lad? Every member of a crew takes his life in his hand when there's work to be done, and you've already had a chance to see that the duties are not only dangerous, but severe."

"Yes, sir; but whenever you save a man from drowning it must make you feel mighty good, and that squares up for all the hard work. I'd rather be a regular member of the crew than anything else."

"That comes of your having been thrown among us; but once you go out into the world you'll have different ideas."

"I've seen quite a bit of it already, sir, and never thought so much of what I might be able to do," Benny replied meekly.

"I'll admit, lad, that you've knocked around considerable for one of your age--seen more of the world than any of us; but--I'll tell you what it is, Benny, you shall learn the drill, and when spring comes we'll show you how to handle a boat, although I'm not certain any of the crew would agree to your entering this branch of the service."

The conversation came to an end at this point for the time being, so far as Benny was concerned; but when Tom Downey had an opportunity of speaking privately with the crew, he repeated all that had been said, treating the matter

as if it gave him no slight degree of pleasure because the lad was inclined to enter the service.

"I'll answer for it he shall know how to handle a surf-boat 'twixt now and next summer," Sam Hardy said decidedly. "That boy has got sand, an' a good deal of it, else he'd never worked in as he has here."

"If his mind is set on such a life, I'm another as will help the little whifflet along," Joe Cushing added with a laugh, and although no lengthy discussion was indulged in at the time, all the crew appeared to consider it as settled that Benny should be instructed in the duties of life-saving.

It is not to be supposed that the boy worked every moment of daylight. After the dishes used at dinner had been washed, the cook insisted that he go out of doors with Fluff, and the pine grove was his favorite playground. Here, despite the cold weather, he roamed to and fro while the dog chased imaginary squirrels and his own shadow, until the frosty air drove both inside the station again.

It was while he was enjoying his "outing" that the bodies lately recovered from the *Amazonia* were removed by the coroner, and Benny asked no questions concerning them. There was in his mind the fear that by speaking of the wreck, when it would be impossible to control his sorrow, he might displease those who were so kind, and all this he kept a secret from every one save Fluff.

When he was alone with the dog, however, and the moaning and roaring of the surf told of what had been done on that forbidding coast, he poured out all his heart to Fluff, and those who had gone into the Unknown from the decks of the *Amazonia* had at least one sincere mourner.

Each evening Benny accompanied one or the other of the men on patrol duty, and appeared to take the liveliest interest at all times in watching for signs of some craft in distress. At every convenient opportunity during the day he visited the lookout on the bluff, and when not otherwise engaged pored over the regulations of the service until, as Joe Cushing said, he believed the lad "could come near to repeating every word in the book."

During three days of pleasant weather the crew brought on shore the little which could be saved from what remained of the *Amazonia*, and the men had settled down to a round of routine duty.

It was Sam Hardy's turn to begin the patrol work of the night, and, much to Benny's satisfaction, he called upon the lad to accompany him.

"I'm thinkin' it will be your last chance for some time, according to the indications, and I'll set myself down as a Dutchman if we don't have a blow 'twixt now and mornin' that will go ahead of anything you ever saw on this coast."

Now that Fluff C. Foster was well acquainted with the members of the crew, Benny did not consider it necessary to carry his pet whenever he went out, therefore the dog was left behind, and, well wrapped in thick clothing, Benny set off, having received the assurance from Sam that he would be allowed to share in the entire four hours of duty.

The wind had increased in force until it was difficult to make one's way over the bold headlands through the snow, and more than once did Sam Hardy find it necessary to seek a shelter while he rested from the severe labor.

An unusually vigilant watch was kept over the broad expanse of waters, for this was a time when the life savers along the coast knew their services would most likely be needed. There would probably be some vessels, through carelessness, ignorance, or mishap, in distress, and whatever of peril might await them, the men of the service must be prepared to put off in their boats for a battle with the raging waters.

"This wind is gettin' into shape for a regular tearer," Sam said when the two, partially sheltered by the rocks, stood peering out over the heaving waters. "Them as are outside to-morrow morning will do well to see that they have plenty of sea-room."

Already had the first particles of snow begun to fall, and the air was rapidly growing colder.

"It ain't often we have two big storms so near together; but it's coming this time, an' I'm mistaken if we don't have plenty of work before the sun sets to-morrow."

"It doesn't seem possible you could see very far after it begins to snow."

"We can't, lad, an' that's a fact; but I allow our eyes do better service than those that haven't been trained to the work. There's Dick Sawyer, for instance, he's by far the best man among us in this kind of work. I've been with him when it seemed as if he smelled a vessel, for he's struck his signal when I couldn't see six inches before my nose, an' I never knew him to go wrong. But we can't loaf here much longer if we count on covering our beat in the regulation time."

It was as if the storm had begun without warning. The first particles had no more than fallen when the air seemed thick with swirling wreaths that struck the skin like needle-points, and were forced by the increasing wind through every aperture in one's clothing.

Benny found it necessary to shield his eyes, because of the pain caused by the icy particles, and could give little



heed to his footsteps, but followed directly behind his companion.

Sam, on the contrary, appeared to suffer no especial inconvenience; he kept constant watch over the sea, although at times it was necessary to cover his eyes, and breasted his way against the wind as if finding real pleasure in the struggle.

"I'm sorry you came to-night, lad," he said when they paused for an instant. "My idea was that this flurry would hold off till past midnight, or you wouldn't have had a chance to show your nose outside the station."

"I'd been sorry if you hadn't let me come, 'cause I'll never make any fist at being a surfman by staying under cover all the time."

"It ain't my plan to coddle you up, Benjamin; but at the same time there's no good reason why you should get it quite so tough at the start. You won't learn much----"

Sam paused as, sheltering his eyes, he gazed steadily seaward, and Benny tried in vain to discover what had thus attracted his companion's attention.

During fully a minute the surfman stood immovable as a statue, regardless of the howling wind and stinging snow, and then muttered half to himself, as he drew from his pocket one of the Coston signals:

"The work has begun sooner than I counted on."

"What do you mean?" Benny asked anxiously.

"There's a three-masted schooner less than a mile away, I should say, and doing her best to crawl off from the land."

Benny strained his eyes to pierce the fleecy cloud which enveloped him; but nothing save the swirling wreaths could be distinguished.

"I can't make out anything," he exclaimed in a tone of regret.

"And it ain't to be wondered at, lad. Wait until you've been on patrol duty a dozen nights like this, and you'll find it a different matter. I can see the schooner now an' then, an' allow she's got a fore-staysail, reefed foresail, and spanker set; but don't seem to be crawling off very fast. We'll let her know that the crew at this station ain't asleep."

While speaking he had inserted the signal in its wooden handle, and as he concluded, struck it sharply against a rock.

There was a crackling and spitting of fire for an instant, after which the light burned out with apparently almost as much brilliancy as that displayed from the lighthouse a short distance away, and the glare literally blinded Benny.

When it died away the night seemed yet darker than before, and the lad peered straight ahead in the direction pointed out by Sam until he fancied he saw a tiny flare appear and disappear at brief intervals.

"They have seen us," Sam said in a tone of satisfaction. "That wisp of flame was their answer, and I allow by its having been given so quickly that all hands understand they'd better have headed for deep water sooner. Word must be taken to the station, and I'm doubtful about leavin' here. I wonder could you find your way back, Benny?"

"Of course I could, and I'll be mighty glad of the chance to try. What shall I tell the keeper?"

"I am not so certain that I've got any right to let you take the chances, for in this storm a lad who is green at the business can easily get bewildered."

"I shan't," Benny replied quickly. "Please let me go, Mr. Hardy, for it'll show that I can be of some little help in the work, and perhaps the men will think I may be a surfman in time, even if I am small."

"You shall make the venture, my boy. Do you hear that whistle now and then?"

"I have been hearing it for some time, sir. There must be a steamer near by."

"Why, bless your soul, Benny, haven't you found out by this time that there's a steam fog-horn near the lighthouse. I counted on their setting it going when this smother first gave signs of coming."

Benny remembered now that the cook had pointed out to him a small brick building painted white, which had at one side a curiously shaped funnel, and told him this last was the fog-horn; but other matters were occupying his mind at the time, and he gave little heed to the information.

"Keep straight on after that sound," Sam said as he saw to it that Benny's coat was closely buttoned. "Don't try to travel too fast, for there's plenty of time. Even if that craft comes to grief, she won't strike inside of an hour. When you get to the station there's nothing to be done save tell the keeper what we've seen, and that the schooner lays off Skinner's Point."

"Shall I come back, sir?"

"Come back through this storm, Benny? Why, you're crazy! There's such a thing as learning a surfman's duties; but attempting to find me out here in this swirl ain't one of 'em. Even if I was fool enough to say you might try it, the rest of the crew would take good care you didn't get outside the station again. Now be off, lad, and keep your wits well about you. Remember that you'll bring up nearabout the building if you follow the sound of the whistle."



Benny was proud indeed as he began what unquestionably was, for a person unfamiliar with the locality, a perilous journey.

There was in his mind the knowledge that he was taking some slight part in the work of life-saving, and that by his making this venture Sam Hardy could remain on duty where he might possibly be of great assistance to those who were in danger.

To push on alone over the rocks, through drifts of snow, beaten and buffeted by the wind, and half blinded by the icy particles, was entirely different from following behind Sam. Previously he had been partially sheltered by the surfman's body; but now it was necessary to breast the storm alone, and there were many times when he found it literally impossible to proceed, for the wind came in spiteful gusts that nearly threw him from his feet.

Many times did he unconsciously turn aside from the direct course, and when the whistle sounded again he was forced to make a detour in this direction or that, at the cost of many additional steps. Then again it was as if the heavy booming came from all sides, and save for the fact that he remained motionless until the force of the wind lessened, he might have lost his way completely.

Although the air was bitterly cold Benny was hardly aware of the fact; the severe labor of making his way through the drifts and against the blasts warmed his body until he perspired even at the same time that his hands and face were chilled by the frost.

When he came upon the light of the station, suddenly, as it were, it appeared to him as if a full hour must have been spent in the journey, and now that the task was accomplished it seemed impossible he could have continued on five minutes longer.

There was no need for him to explain why he had returned alone. The waiting crew, fearing news of disaster, understood at once that Sam Hardy would not have sent the boy back unless he had grave reasons for doing so, and before Benny could speak Dick Sawyer cried:

"What have you seen, lad?"

Benny understood that his report should be made to the keeper, and, therefore, instead of answering Sawyer's question, he turned to Mr. Downey, describing what Hardy had seen.

"Off Skinner's Point, eh?" Downey said as he took from the pegs where it was hanging, his suit of oiled clothing. "How far away?"

"Mr. Hardy said about a mile; but I didn't see any sign of a vessel, except when the little light showed itself."

"You'll need to go on patrol more than once, lad," Joe Cushing said with a laugh, "before you'll make much of a fist at seeing a craft a mile away on such a night as this."

"I'll get so I can in time, if you allow me to go out on patrol," Benny replied confidently, and then, turning to the keeper, he added, "Mr. Hardy said I wasn't to come back; but if there's any message you'd like sent him, sir, I'm certain I can carry it."

"Would you be willing to go through this storm from here to Skinner's Point when there was no real need of it?"

"If there was a chance I might be of service, I'd be glad to, sir, and, besides, such work as that would be helping me along in learning a surfman's duties."

"It seems a cruel thing to do," Downey said half to himself; "but I've a mind to let you go with us."

"If you only would, sir!"

"What about leavin' Fluff C. Foster alone? All hands of us, except the cook, must go."

"Fluff will behave himself, I'm certain, for he doesn't make any trouble when I tell him he must stay alone."

"Thaw yourself a bit by the fire while we're getting the beach-wagon out, and then you shall do your share of the work, unless it so chances we're forced to launch the boat."

During this time every member of the crew had been preparing for the arduous labor before him, and the men were in readiness when Keeper Downey led the way toward the door.

Benny had no idea of spending valuable time in front of the fire. He delayed only an instant to pet Fluff, and whisper in the dog's ear that it was necessary he remain inside the building quietly.

"You see I'm going to take my first lesson as a surfman, Fluffy, and it's as much to your interest as mine that I do it, because we've got to pay our way somehow, and it can't always be done by washing dishes and clearing up the house. Now be a good dog, and don't go outside, for you'd surely get lost in the snow."

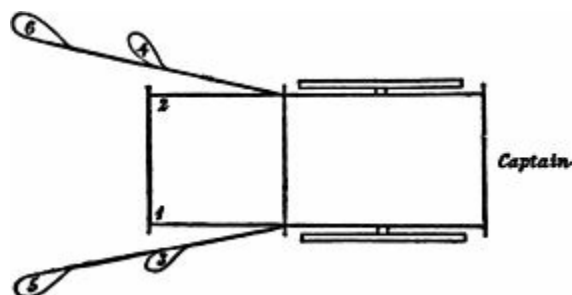
Then Benny replenished the fire, throwing on sufficient coal to keep it glowing several hours at least, and, closing the door behind him lest Fluff should be tempted to disobey his command, joined the men at the door of the boat-room.

Four of the crew were putting the drag-ropes over their shoulders; Joe Cushing and Keeper Downey were at the handles, although had the full crew been present Sam would have occupied the position which was now filled by the keeper, and the latter's station would have been at the rear of the cart.

"You shall take my place, Benny, which is behind. Don't exert yourself to push too strongly; but you may pull back the best you know how when we are going downhill."

"There'll be little holding back needed through this snow," Joe said with a cheery laugh, such as he might have indulged in had they been setting out on some pleasure excursion.

Benny had studied a diagram in the *Revised Regulations*, showing how the beach-wagon should be manned, as given below, therefore knew exactly what were his duties.



He heeded not the excessive labor which was before them in dragging the cart more than half a mile over the rocks and through the snow-drifts, because of the proud satisfaction which was his in thus being allowed to share the duties of the men.

The crew set off at a slow pace. It was reasonable to suppose, however imminent the danger which threatened the schooner, that some considerable time must elapse before they could begin the work of life-saving, and it was necessary to husband their strength because of the difficult and protracted task before them.

Benny asked himself, even as they started, how it would be possible to drag the heavy wagon over the course traversed by the patrol, for he knew that in many places they would be forced to clamber up cliff-like masses of rocks, and again drag the wagon through the drifts of snow that under other circumstances would seem impassable.

The crew, however, appeared to give no heed to the difficulties in the way; but set out on this journey which, fatiguing as it must be, was but the beginning of their night of work.



## CHAPTER VII.

### SAVING LIFE.

The men pressed forward, dragging the heavy load steadily, but at moderate speed.

Keeper Downey was too good a captain to urge his crew to their utmost efforts at the beginning of the journey, lest he exhaust them before the task was accomplished. He also knew that their services were not needed immediately, otherwise Sam Hardy would have burned another signal, and again, a conclusion much to be desired, the vessel might succeed in working off from the dangerous situation.

"Slow and sure is better than rapid and uncertain," the keeper shouted cheerily, and Benny was surprised that the crew should appear almost eager for the work, which, under the most favoring circumstances in case the schooner struck, would be severe and attended with great suffering. He shivered as he realized that perhaps soon the clothing of these brave fellows, wet with spray, would be converted into an armor of ice, which they must wear as best they might on this bitter winter's night until the task of life-saving was accomplished, or proven to be fruitless.

The cheeriness of the men was by no means allied to mirth. They were setting out, perchance, to battle face to face with death, and realized to the utmost all the dangers and the suffering which awaited them. It could also be told, from a certain manner apparent in all, that their thoughts were with those poor fellows whose craft was drifting on to the cruel rocks, rather than upon the possible labor which might be demanded of them.

Now and then as they paused for an instant, while making ready to haul the wagon over some miniature cliff, one of the crew referred to the anxiety which must be in the hearts of those aboard the schooner, and another expressed satisfaction that the imperilled mariners knew there were on the shore waiting to succor them, men who were provided with every known method for saving life under such circumstances.

All the while as these men spoke one with another evincing anxiety for strangers, they were fighting against the furious wind and driving particles of frost, and even at times, when their way lay near the water's edge, against the volumes of surf which were flung landward by the angry blasts.

There was no moment when the progress was other than extremely difficult, and Benny was absolutely obliged at times to allow them to drag him at the tail of the cart, else he would have been left far behind; but yet those brave fellows had not a word, perhaps not a thought, concerning their own labor or peril.

"Half-way to Skinner's Point!" Joe Cushing shouted as they mounted a hill of brown rock from which the snow had been driven, and stood for a single instant to regain their breath. "Half-way to Skinner's Point, and no signal from Sam! Who can see the schooner?"

Every eye had been directed seaward when they first gained the elevation, but it was as if the wind drove the snow yet more compactly, and the oldest surfman among them failed to see objects at a distance of fifty feet.

"God help the men who are drifting on to the coast this night!" Keeper Downey muttered, and then added in a cheery tone, "Get on, boys! Get on! You'll freeze if you stand loitering here, and exercise is what all of us are most needing just now."

Benny shut his teeth tightly together when, from the movement of the wagon he knew the men were settling forward in the rope harness again, and determined to so husband his strength during the remainder of the journey that when they came to the more difficult portions of the road he might be able to lend some assistance, even though feeble, rather than act the part of a drag on the load.

During fifteen minutes more the men pulled and tugged, straining every muscle to drag the heavily laden wagon over the difficult way, and then as if by common consent another halt was made.

"We should be seeing the schooner by this time, unless she has succeeded in crawling off from the land," Keeper Downey said, letting go his hold on the cart as he advanced to the edge of the rocky cliffs and looked out over the waters.

No more than five hundred yards in distance lay between them and the dreaded Skinner's Point, where so many vessels had met their doom, yet the driving snow shut out all save immediate objects from their view.

Nothing had been seen or heard from Sam Hardy, and even the keeper began to believe that possibly the danger had been averted from this particular vessel.

Again Downey gave the word to push on; again the men strained at the ropes and the handle-bar, and again they were advancing on their mission of mercy.

Now no one spoke; each man was too far spent with toil to dare waste breath in cheering his comrades.

Then, and it seemed to Benny as if they had but just started on this last stage of the journey, a glow was seen dead ahead through the bewildering maze of dancing, whirling snow, and an exclamation of sorrow burst from the lips of every one.

"She has struck, boys, and now we're to work for their lives!" Keeper Downey shouted, his words causing each member of the crew to leap forward with renewed vigor, as if the knowledge of peril to others had taken from him all sensation of weariness.

Benny understood from these words that the light which had been seen was Sam's signal telling that the schooner had struck the rocks, and what was much like a fever came over him as he exerted all his puny strength to forcing the wagon-load of life-saving appliances on yet faster.

It was a race between the life savers and death, and by no possibility could they have won had Keeper Downey been so unwise as to push them to their utmost speed when first setting out from the station. Now that the supreme struggle was at hand they had a reserve of strength which bore them on to partial victory.

Just how they finally succeeded in gaining the point where Sam Hardy stood peering intently out over the waste of boiling waters, Benny never knew. The last five minutes of that mad scramble was to him as a dream, in which he was conscious only of making every effort to press forward, lest by faltering he should be deemed unworthy a place among those whom he considered true heroes. He knew, however, that they were come to the spot where the work could be performed, because of hearing Tom Downey cry sharply as each man dropped the harness of rope to run back to the wagon and take up his proper station:

"Stand aside, lad, and make it your business to keep out of the way."

Benny understood that there was nothing for him to do in the way of lending aid, and realized he could only show that he might be of some service in the future by following the instructions to the letter.

Now had come the moment when the lad could appreciate the value of the drilling which the men were forced to undergo day after day.

Every member of the crew knew exactly what he should do, and did it as methodically and quickly as if on the drill-ground back of the station.

While the captain slung the haversack containing the ammunition over his shoulders, Sam threw the buoy off the cart. Henderson, Jones, and Brown unloaded the shovel, pick, and sand-anchor, and proceeded at once to fasten the latter at a point already decided upon by Mr. Downey. Cushing and Robbins took out the shot-line box. The captain and Hardy placed the cannon a short distance to the windward of the wagon, and the box was set down on a line with the muzzle of the gun.

The keeper loaded with cartridges, Hardy brought the shot, which he held for the captain to wipe, and then inserted it into the bore of the gun, forcing it down firmly on the charge. Joe Cushing wet a fathom of the shot-line and bent it into the shank of the shot with three half-hitches, without disturbing the fakes, and without leaving any slack line between the gun and the shot-line box.

Hardy and Cushing, kneeling either side of the cannon, trained the muzzle to the right or the left as Downey commanded. While this was being done Sawyer unloaded and carried the crotch (two pieces of wood formed after the fashion of the letter X) to a point near the shore, in a line between the sand anchor and the wreck.

Even Benny, who knew nothing of such labor, understood that many seconds of valuable time must have been saved by the crew being so familiar with all the details of the work, and accustomed to performing each portion of it in like manner every time.

A description of the men at work is given at this moment in order that one may know exactly how a life-saving crew goes to work, and it must not be supposed that Keeper Downey's men, or even Benny Foster, directed their gaze all the time toward these operations, without glancing seaward where was the noble vessel grinding her life out upon the cruel rocks, as her crew looked down into the face of what would have been certain death but for the presence of those brave fellows on the bluff.

When the men halted with the wagon, and even while they were removing the implements, every one could see the schooner as she lay not more than a hundred and fifty yards from the shore, heading directly toward them.

So large was she, and with her sails holding back, as it were, much of the snow, even Benny could distinguish her quite distinctly, and while his comrades labored as do men who work in defence of their lives, he saw portions of rail

and deck torn off piece-meal by the waves which were striking sledge-hammer blows against the side of the doomed craft, each one sounding, even above the howling of the blasts, like the booming of a cannon.

Seven men could be made out now and then when the snow wreaths were less dense, in various places of refuge about the wreck; three were aloft in the port mizzen-rigging, one in the port fore-rigging, and three about the fore-castle, or in the bowsprit. In these positions they remained apparently immovable. It was to Benny as if they were frozen beyond the power of movement, as indeed might have been the case, for the night was bitterly cold.

So near the shore did the wreck lay that it seemed impossible Downey could miss his aim.

Benny heard Joe Cushing say:

"With five ounces of powder and a No. 9 shot-line bent on, there should be no trouble in opening communication with those poor fellows."

Then the keeper had adjusted the piece and pulled the lanyard.

Benny saw a tongue of flame leap out from the mouth of the gun, and as the shot sped through the air, the line, so carefully laid in the faking-box, uncoiled length by length, until suddenly and without apparent cause it parted.

The shot sped on; but fully two thirds of the line remained in the box.

In the shortest possible space of time, and without unnecessary words, the cannon was reloaded with the same amount of powder and the same-sized line as before.

Once more appeared the tongue of flame. In the midst of it the lad, who hardly breathed because of his excitement, saw the missile as it sped onward true to its aim, dragging after it length upon length of thin line which unloosed from the box in the most perfect fashion, and then a loud cry of triumph went up from the brave fellows who had expended so much labor to aid the unfortunate mariners.

Even in the gloom and amid the falling snow one could see that narrow, black thread as it lay fairly across the wreck just forward of the mizzen-rigging, and within easy reach of the sailors in the vicinity; but yet no one of that imperiled crew left his place of refuge to seize upon it.

Just for an instant the life savers on the shore stood in amazement. They had laid to hand a means of escape, and yet those who were so near death had not moved a finger toward availing themselves of the opportunity.

"They are most likely frozen into helplessness," Keeper Downey cried. "Let's give them one more line, boys, and this time we'll send it farther forward. There must be some one on that schooner who can help himself, at least so far as to haul in the rope."

Rapidly as the life savers worked before, they moved yet more quickly now that it was understood those whom they would rescue were so nearly unable to aid themselves.

It seemed to Benny as if he had no more than time to count ten before the third faking-box had been brought from the wagon, and the gun was reloaded, re-aimed, and discharged.

Again he saw the narrow black line amid the white, drifting snow. Again a cry of triumph went up from those whom he called his comrades, and this time the line lay directly across the deck of the schooner just abaft the fore-rigging, where the sailor on the port side might reach it without so much as leaving his station.

After five seconds, perhaps, this man, whose garments had almost been brushed by the line-carrying shot, made no motion, and then slowly, as if it required all his strength to move so much as a finger, the unfortunate sailor stretched forth his hand until he grasped that narrow cord which alone remained between him and death.

"He can't haul it in!" Sam Hardy cried in dismay. "It's more than he can do to raise his arm."

If the crew of the schooner could not second the efforts of the life savers, then indeed were they not rescued, for no man might get through that surf from the shore to the schooner, and the life-boat could not be used because of shallow water and rocks.

Every man on the bluff shouted words of encouragement which could not be heard by those for whom they were intended; but it seemed impossible to remain quiet while the half-dead sailors stood within reach of help, and yet were unable to grasp it.

It was to Benny as if a full hour passed, although in fact perhaps not more than three or four minutes elapsed before the man in the fore-rigging succeeded in thrashing his arms together, most likely to break the ice which, forming over his garments, encased him as if in bonds of iron, and then, slowly at first, but more rapidly as the seconds passed, he succeeded in recovering the use of his limbs until he reached down and caught up the line.

Now it was a shout of triumph which went up from those on the bluff, and the anxious lad who was bending

forward over the very edge of the rocks believed the sailor heard the cry, for it was as if something suddenly animated him. He began hauling in on this means of escape from the angry waters as he turned his head toward those in the mizzen-rigging, evidently urging them to come to his assistance.

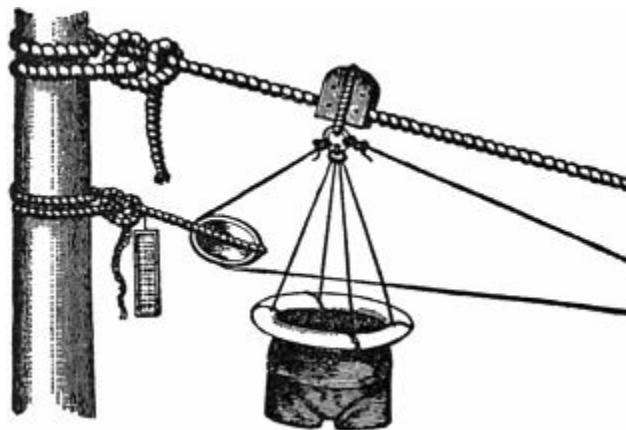
Each instant was fraught with danger for those upon the wreck. Plank by plank the schooner was being torn to pieces by the irresistible force of the towering waves, and it needed not that one should be versed in such matters to understand that before many moments passed one or all of the spars must go by the board.

Now that the sailor on the wreck was hauling in the shot-line, the crew set about making the necessary arrangements for sending aboard the hawser, and before this had been completed Benny shouted, although speaking to no one in particular:

"The men in the mizzen-rigging are coming down! They are going to help themselves!"

It was as the lad had said, for soon all save two on the forecastle were hauling on the tackle which was made fast to the shot-line, and in perhaps ten minutes from the time the last missile was fired across the deck of the wreck, the sailors had succeeded in attaching the tail-block to the mainmast.

Now even Benny could be of assistance in manning the whip to haul the breeches-buoy out to the ship.



As the lad saw the buoy appearing and disappearing amid the waves, but continuing rapidly on toward the wreck, a great joy came into his heart, and he realized then, if never before, the wondrous pleasure which must come to those who succeed in saving lives after a desperate battle.

When the buoy reached the wreck those ashore saw a man step into it, and then came the command:

"Man the lee whip! Haul ashore!"

Now the life savers were working to economize time. Every second must be utilized if that crew of seven was to be brought ashore before the schooner should have been torn to pieces.

Anxious though Benny was, and fearful lest they should not succeed in getting even one ashore, the breeches-buoy appeared to be moving swiftly, as indeed was the case, for every man of the crew, tailing on the whip, was working as only men can under similar circumstances.

The first of the rescued was well-nigh helpless after gaining the shore, and now had come the time when Benny might be of some assistance.

"Let me take care of him, sir, and it will save a man's labor when you need all hands at the whip," the lad said as Keeper Downey approached, and the latter replied with a ring of cheeriness in his tones which had not been heard since the work began:

"Here's where you'll come in handy, lad. Roust that fellow about; don't let him remain quiet, for he must keep the blood circulating."

Then the weather whip was manned, and the buoy forced out toward the wreck to receive another passenger. In again was it hauled, and two lives had been saved.

"Man the weather whip! Haul out!"

The third had taken his place in the breeches-buoy.



"Man the lee whip! Haul ashore!"

The third had been saved.

And so went on the work while the tempest howled and raged; the snow wreathed and whirled as if to blind the life savers, and the sea roared and bellowed at losing its prey; but in time--in a comparatively short time--six were ashore, and only one remained upon the quivering vessel which was now hardly more than a hulk, so sadly had the sea battered and torn it.

For the last time the buoy was being run out, and more than half the distance had been traversed when suddenly, and without warning, the mizzen-mast went by the board, carrying with it the mainmast.

As the second spar fell, communication between the life savers and this poor fellow for whom they were battling, was broken; but almost while the disaster was taking place Tom Downey had sprung to the gun for the purpose of sending out another shot-line, when a cry of horror went up--a crash was heard even above the howling of the tempest, and the foremast had fallen.

Now it was that Benny witnessed a scene of heroism such as is seldom heard about, although often performed--heroism that is displayed during the winter's tempests on our rock-bound coasts, in the presence of those who themselves are heroes.

When the last spar fell he who remained upon the wreck was seen to leap from the port-rail beyond the raffle of spars and cordage which dashed to and fro alongside, and Sam Hardy cried with a tone of admiration in his sturdy voice:

"That fellow has got grit, and will fight well for his life! See him strike out!"

The man was swimming bravely in the icy waters, and every member of the crew, who an instant before despaired of being able to save him, now began to hope that through his own exertions the task might be accomplished.

The surf was dashing a hundred feet up the side of the cliff, and the water 'twixt the schooner and the shore so filled with wreckage that it seemed as if the swimmer must be torn to pieces ere he could take a dozen strokes, but yet now and then, as the billows raised him on high, it could be seen that he was holding his own--that he was making headway toward the shore.

It needed no word of command from Tom Downey to send every member of his crew into the foaming waters, and there, with a line stretched from one to the other, the entire seven formed a chain; with Sam Hardy at the outermost end, all buried under each succeeding wave, but yet pressing outward in the hope of being able to clutch the gallant swimmer before he should become exhausted.

Finally it seemed as if the man had gained a foothold on the rocks, for he apparently stood in the water knee-deep one single instant, and then a receding sea, lifting him from his footing, hurled him backward toward the hulk from which he had escaped.

"Give me more rope!" Sam Hardy shouted, and Benny stifled the cry of fear which came to his lips as he saw the gallant surfman swimming out to meet the half-drowned sailor.

Then an incoming sea caught up the man who had made such a desperate struggle for life, bore him shoreward again until he was within twenty feet of Hardy, when one of the schooner's spars, rearing up in the water as if raised by some giant hand, descended upon the struggling wretch, crushing out his life as it forced him down to the bottom of the sea.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### FLUFF A HERO.

During the work of rescue Benny was fully employed, according to instructions received from Keeper Downey, in ministering to those who had been brought on shore.

The clothing of the men was water-soaked, as a matter of course, and very shortly after gaining the shore these saturated garments were frozen stiff. Therefore it was necessary that the rescued be kept moving to and fro as rapidly as possible, and when one or another, exhausted by previous exposure, would have succumbed to the drowsiness which precedes death by freezing, Benny urged him to walk about, employing threats when entreaties were of no avail.

Immediately after the brave sailor had met his death Keeper Downey called sharply for Benny, and when the lad stood before him, asked:

"Are you willing to make another try at finding the station, lad?"

"Yes, indeed, sir?"

"The rescued men should be able to get there under your guidance more quickly than by remaining with us. If you can keep your wits in this smother of snow, set out, and see to it that every man moves at his best pace. The fog-horn will give you the direction. Once you have arrived oblige the men to strip off their frozen garments, and supply them with dry clothing. I am trusting you to take all six of them in, Benny, and it isn't impossible one or more, half-dazed as they are, may refuse to move as rapidly as is necessary, therefore you must keep a sharp lookout."

"Shall I go now, sir?"

"Be off as quickly as you can," Tom Downey replied, and Benny noted with pride that the keeper turned immediately away to attend to the reloading of the beach-wagon, a fact which, to the lad's mind, proved that he was trusted implicitly.

"You are to come with me," Benny said, going to where the rescued men were tramping round-about in a circle, threshing their arms together to keep up the circulation of blood. "Mr. Downey says you must be kept moving at full speed, and since I'm not big enough to carry out the orders if there's any kick made, your captain ought to see that there is no loitering."

"Our captain was the last to leave the schooner, and you know he did not gain the shore," one of the men replied, his voice choking with emotion. "I'm the mate, however, and you'll find we can obey orders. A man would be a poor stick who didn't carry out any instructions given by those who have met death more than half-way to save him."

"I'm not very certain of the road, but if we follow the sound of the fog-horn we'll come out near the station, and we'd best get off now, else Mr. Downey will think we're loafing."

"Strike out, an' we'll keep at your heels," the mate replied, and, trusting to this promise, Benny set off, bending low to protect his face from the pitiless lashing of the snow.

Very proud was the boy at having been given this share in the labor of rescue, and when the way was difficult, or the elements beat him back, he repeated to himself again and again that if this duty should be performed worthily he would most likely be entrusted with others as occasion might arise.

The journey to the station was simply a repetition of the one made after the schooner was first sighted, except that on this occasion he had companionship, and his mind was taken from the difficulties of the way in a great measure by the responsibility which had been put upon him.

The mate urged the crew to keep pace with Benny, but every man among them found it more difficult to press on than did the lad; yet the hinder-most was no more than a dozen yards in the rear when the guide gained the door of the station and was welcomed by the shrill barking of Fluff, who had distinguished his master's footsteps even above the howling of the gale.

Since the *Amazonia* sailed from Calcutta this was the first time the tiny dog had been left alone, and the welcome he gave Benny was so vigorous that it seemed as if the noise would shake his tiny body into fragments.

"Be a good dog, Fluff, and wait just a little bit till I get dry clothes for the men. I'm just as glad to see you as you are to see me, but while there's work to be done we mustn't spend time telling each other about it."

The dog danced and capered and barked at Benny's heels as he went back and forth from the store-room to where the sailors were gathered around the glowing fire, and it was much as if he fancied himself assisting in the labor--as if Fluff also counted on being a surferman.

The cook, who had retired before the crew set out, now came down to perform his regular share of the work in such cases, which was to make a fresh supply of coffee and prepare a meal for the exhausted men.

Benny had faithfully carried out the instructions given him by the keeper, and there was nothing more he could do until the crew should return, when he knew full well his services would be welcomed gladly by the weary, half-frozen life savers.

The mate was disposed to indulge in conversation, and after having drank a bowl of hot coffee, he told the lad that the schooner which was being torn to pieces on Skinner's Point was the *Three Brothers*, coal-laden, from Philadelphia to Portland. At noon on that day, so low did the temperature fall that ice had formed about the craft until she was unmanageable, and during five hours had been driven at the mercy of wind and waves.

"Knowing the schooner was bound to go ashore, we hoped it might be in the vicinity of where she did strike."

"But why did you want her wrecked there? It seems to me a worse place couldn't be found."

"We knew there was a life-saving station near, and when the red glare of the Coston signal flashed out through the snow, all hands understood that a crew of good men and true stood ready to do whatsoever lay in their power to give us aid. I answered that signal, and then ran over in my mind the instructions which the service sends out to every ship-master and mate."

"What kind of instructions?" Benny asked, showing by the expression on his face that this information was something entirely new to him.

"If you care to find out, you will find a small, black, water-proofed book, something like a note-case, in the pocket of the coat I took off, and there everything is set down so plainly any sailor can understand what should be done when the life-saving crew appears. But you here in the station should know all about it."

"I haven't been here but a day or two," Benny replied gravely. "I was on the ship *Amazonia* when she went ashore only a short distance from this building."

"Then you know what it is to see these men come to your assistance. How many were saved from the ship, lad?"

"No one but me," Benny replied, turning away quickly lest the mate should see the tears in his eyes, and in order to avoid further questioning he went in search of the book mentioned.

"It's the only thing in my pocket, lad," the mate cried, understanding, perhaps, why Benny professed such eagerness to see the instructions. "I took it from my berth when it seemed certain the *Three Brothers* was doomed. Give me the book, and I'll read that part of the printed matter which most interests us sailors."

After searching over the sodden clothing, which he had carefully hung on pegs behind the stove, Benny found a tiny book and brought it to the mate, who read as one does who wishes to refresh his memory:

"The patrolman, after discovering your vessel ashore and burning a Coston signal, hastens to his station for assistance. If the use of a boat is practicable, either the large life-boat is launched from its ways in the station and proceeds to the wreck by water, or the lighter surf-boat is hauled overland to a point opposite the wreck and launched, as circumstances may require.

"Upon the boat reaching your vessel, the directions and orders of the keeper (who always commands and steers the boat) should be implicitly obeyed. Any headlong rushing and crowding should be prevented, and the captain of the vessel should remain on board, to preserve order, until every other person has left.

"Women, children, helpless persons, and passengers should be passed into the boat first.

"Goods or baggage will positively not be taken into the boat until all are landed. If any be passed in against the keeper's remonstrance he is fully authorized to throw the same overboard.

"Should it be inexpedient to use either the life-boat or surf-boat, recourse will be had to the wreck-gun and beach-apparatus for the rescue by the breeches-buoy or the life-car.

"A shot with a small line attached will be fired across your vessel.

"Get hold of the line as soon as possible and haul on board until you get a tail-block with a whip or endless line rove through it. This tail-block should be hauled on board as quickly as possible to prevent the whip drifting off with the set, or fouling with wreckage, etc. Therefore, if you have been driven into the rigging, where but one or two men can work to advantage, cut the shot-line and run it through some available block, such as the throat or peak-halliards

block, or any block which will afford a clear lead, or even between the ratlines, that as many as possible may assist in the hauling.

"Attached to the tail-block will be a tally-board with the following directions in English on one side and French on the other:

"Make the tail of the block fast to the lower mast, well up. If the masts are gone, then to the best place you can find. Cast off the shot-line, see that the rope in the block runs free, and show a signal to the shore.

"As soon as your signal is seen a three-inch hawser will be bent on to the whip and hauled off to your ship by the life-saving crew.

"If the circumstances will admit, you can assist the life-saving crew by manning that part of the whip to which the hawser is bent, and hauling with them.

"When the end of the hawser is got on board a tally-board will be found attached, bearing the following directions in English on one side and French on the other:

"Make this hawser fast about two feet above the tail-block, see all clear and that the rope in the block runs free, and show a signal to the shore.

"Take particular care that there are no turns of the whip-line around the hawser. To prevent this take the end of the hawser up between the parts of the whip before making it fast.

"When the hawser is made fast, the whip cast off from the hawser, and your signal seen by the life-saving crew, they will haul the hawser taut and by means of the whip will haul off to your ship a breeches-buoy suspended from a traveller-block, or a life-car from rings, running on the hawser.

"If the breeches-buoy be sent, let one man immediately get into it, thrusting his legs through the breeches. If the life-car, remove the hatch, place as many persons into it as it will hold, and secure the hatch on the outside by the hatch-bar and hook, signal as before, and the buoy or car will be hauled ashore.

"In many instances two men can be landed in the breeches-buoy at the same time by each putting a leg through a leg of the breeches and holding on to the lifts of the buoy.

"Children, when brought ashore by the buoy, should be in the arms of older persons, or securely lashed to the buoy. Women and children should be landed first.

"Circumstances may arise, owing to the strength of the current or set, or the danger of the wreck breaking up immediately, when it would be impossible to send off the hawser. In such case a breeches-buoy or life-car will be hauled off instead by the whip, or sent off to you by the shot-line, and you will be hauled ashore through the surf.

"If your vessel is stranded during the night and discovered by the patrolman, which you will know by his burning a brilliant red light, keep a bright lookout for signs of the arrival of the life-saving crew abreast your vessel.

"From one to four hours may intervene between the burning of the light and their arrival, as the patrolman will have to return to his station, perhaps three or four miles distant, and the life-saving crew draw the apparatus or surf-boat through the sand or over bad roads to where your vessel is stranded.

"Lights on the beach will indicate their arrival, and the sound of cannon-firing from the shore may be taken as evidence that a line has been fired across your vessel. Therefore, upon hearing the cannon, make strict search aloft, fore, and aft, for the shot-line, for it is almost certain to be there. Though the movements of the life-saving crew may not be perceptible to you, owing to the darkness, your ship will be a good mark for the men experienced in the use of the wreck-gun, and the first shot seldom fails."

The mate had read thus far, Benny listening intently to every word, when the sound of voices outside, and the opening of the boat-room door, told that the crew had returned.

Fluff greeted the men with his shrill barking, and Benny laid out dry clothing for each one, an attention which was fully appreciated, as could be told by the exclamations of satisfaction and of pleasure uttered by the weary crew as they entered the mess-room.

The shipwrecked men greeted their rescuers with the liveliest protestations of gratitude, and Tom Downey replied, even while Benny was pounding his coat with a broomstick in order to so break the ice that the keeper could take it off:

"We've only done what the Government hires us for, mates, an' our extra pay comes in when we're able to save lives, as in this case. I'd feel that the night was more of a success if we hadn't lost a life; but we ashore couldn't say how weak the spars had grown under the pounding of the waves."

"When the first line came aboard I thought we were doomed because it would be impossible to help ourselves,"

the mate replied. "For a time it seemed as if my arms were frozen stiff, and but for the knowledge that death would come in a very few moments unless something could be done to second your efforts, I believe of a verity I should have died where I stood."

Then the sailors began relating their personal experiences, and soon the rescuers were before the glowing fire while the cook and Benny passed around coffee or food, with Fluff sitting bolt upright apparently listening intently to every word.

The two whose duty it was to go on patrol could not be excused, however excessive the labor just performed. The storm was still raging furiously, and the *Three Brothers* might not be the only craft in peril on the coast that night.

Robbins and Sawyer remained in the cheery mess-room no longer than was absolutely necessary, and then they went out into the howling storm to walk the long beats on which might be found more work for the crew which had already done such brave duty.

Keeper Downey ordered Benny to bed, accompanying the command with words that gave the lad most sincere pleasure:

"You've done as good work, accordin' to your experience, as any man among us, Benjamin, an' we're proud of you."

Sam Hardy nodded his approval of this praise, and Benny, with Fluff C. Foster in his arms, went up-stairs to bed feeling that he would be willing to brave almost any danger in order to earn another compliment equal to that.

When the amateur surferman awakened next morning the sun was shining brightly, and, save for the roaring of the surf, nothing told of the furious tempest which had so lately raged.

The cook had already gone down-stairs, and Benny dressed himself hurriedly, for he was not pleased at the prospect of being late at his post of duty.

"I counted on your waking Fluff and me," he said reproachfully as he entered the kitchen. "We were up so late----"

"That's exactly the reason why I sneaked down-stairs on the quiet. After last night's work you should have had a long nap, instead of being down here before the fire is fairly going."

"We didn't do enough to hurt us," Benny replied with a laugh, "and surely we must be needed this morning, when there are so many mouths to feed."

"I've had a bigger family than this many a time, an' got through with the work alone, but since you've been so foolish as to turn out, I'll be glad of your help, for a handy lad like you makes the job a light one."

"It seems as if I was getting praised all around," Benny said with a laugh as he made his toilet. "Pretty soon you'll be finding out that I don't deserve it."

"I hope not, lad, for all hands of us are getting a good bit of satisfaction out of you and the dog."

Benny was kept busy in the kitchen a greater portion of the succeeding forty-eight hours, and then the shipwrecked sailors were sent to the neighboring city, after which the crew at the station settled down to the old routine of drill and patrol, every man looking forward eagerly to the reply from headquarters regarding their request in the boy's behalf.

Sam Hardy and Joe Cushing had taken it upon themselves to teach Maje that Fluff was entitled to the liberty of the station grounds, and, at the expense of considerable time, and much loss of temper on the part of Maje, the lesson was so nearly learned that the big dog allowed the little one to go here and there without interference, but Benny did not trust wholly to appearances.

"It won't do any harm if I keep my eye on Fluff when he goes out," the lad said gravely after Sam Hardy had suggested that there was no longer any good reason for being suspicious of Maje. "Of course your dog is bound to be jealous for a spell, and till he gets over it I wouldn't want to trust Fluff alone with him very long at a time."

Both Sam and Joe were positive Maje could be depended upon to behave himself, and appeared eager Benny should allow matters to take their natural course, so far as the two animals were concerned, therefore the boy permitted Fluff to go out of doors whenever he was so disposed; but he was careful to first make certain that Maje was not in the immediate vicinity.

It was nearly sunset on the day the shipwrecked mariners had been conveyed to the city. There was not a cloud in the sky, and the sea was so calm that it was almost difficult to believe it could ever be aroused to a roaring fury.

The lookout on day-duty had come down to the station for supper, and the two whose time for patrol began at sunset were already eating the evening meal that they might be ready to set out at the exact moment.

Benny had been assisting the cook as usual, but was now waiting upon the men who were about to go on patrol.

Fluff, ten minutes previous, had whined for permission to go out of doors for a stroll, and, after learning that Maje was in the oil-room, where he usually found a shelter during exceedingly cold or stormy weather, Benny opened the door for his pet.

So white was Fluff, thanks to his master's custom of giving him a bath every other day, that it was almost impossible to distinguish him in the gloom of early twilight while he remained on the snow, and Benny lost sight of him before he had gone a hundred feet from the building.

Then he was called by one of the men, and while attending to whatever trifling duty had been set him, it was observed that the boy appeared anxious.

"What's the matter, Benjamin?" Sam Hardy asked. "Anything wrong with Mr. Fluff C. Foster?"

"I hope not, sir; but he disappeared so soon after leaving the house that I'm wondering if he didn't get into the oil-room."

"I reckon not, else we'd heard something from Maje before this. I'm goin' out, though, an' will look after him."

Sam opened the door as he spoke, and at that instant Fluff could be heard in the distance, barking shrilly.

Benny leaped to his feet and ran toward the door, calling the dog by name.

From the noise it could be told that Fluff came nearer the building in obedience to the summons, and then stopped, yelping and barking as if in dire distress.

"Come here, sir! Come this minute!" Benny cried peremptorily, and to the surprise of all, for the dog usually obeyed readily, the yelping increased as Fluff retreated from the house.

Benny ran after him, and Sam Hardy followed quickly, as if he believed something serious was the cause of the animal's disobedience.

The remainder of the crew stood near the open door curiously, and after a brief interval they heard Benny calling yet more peremptorily to the dog, when for reply the yelping was changed to most dismal howls.

"Maje shall have a sound flogging if he has dared to touch that little fellow!" Keeper Downey said threateningly as he took up his cap to leave the building, and just at that instant the crew were startled by hearing Sam Hardy shout:

"Man overboard! Out with the surf-boat!"

Members of a life-saving crew never stop to question a statement of such a nature as that made by their comrade.

Every man sprang to the boat-room door, and the surf-boat was outside the building ready for launching by the time Sam came up, breathless with rapid running, but not excited.

"Beyond the Horseshoe!" he cried, taking his proper station with the others, and in what to a stranger would have seemed an incredibly short space of time the light craft was in the water, leaping from wave to wave under the impetus given by three pairs of oars.

The "Horseshoe" was a circular reef which made out from the main shore five or six hundred yards from the station, and the cook ran with all speed across the bluff, with the idea that he might arrive there in advance of the boat.

His legs were no match for the life savers' arms, however, and when he gained the cliff which overlooked the reef the crew were dragging the body of a man over the surf-boat's rail, while a light gunning-skiff, overturned, a short distance away, was sufficient evidence as to the cause of the disaster.

"Some greenhorn out here alone, sneaking along the shore hoping to bag a few ducks just at sunset, has come near paying dearly for the sport," the cook muttered in an angry tone. "After two or three more accidents of the same kind, sportsmen from the city will begin to understand, I hope, that such fun is dangerous."

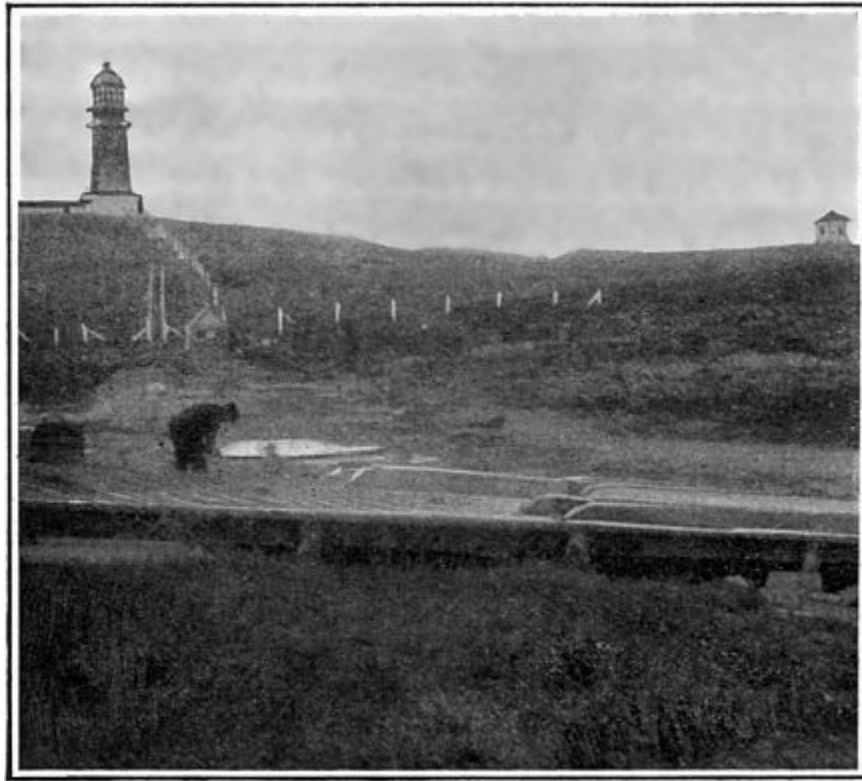
It was the third mishap of a similar nature that season, and in one case the venturesome hunter had lost his life, therefore the cook might well be excused for losing his temper over such carelessness.

When he returned to the station the half-drowned man had been carried into the building, but he still retained sufficient consciousness to understand how his rescue had been brought about, and the cook heard him say to Tom Downey:

"If it hadn't been for your toy dog I should have drowned, for I'd swallowed so much salt water that it was impossible to make a very loud noise."

"Yes, I reckon you can set it down as a fact that Fluff C. Foster saved your life, mister, and from this out he, as well as his master, is a member of this 'ere crew if I can bring it about!" Joe Cushing said emphatically, as he emptied fully half the contents of the sugar-bowl into a saucer and gave it to Fluff, who was dancing to and fro, wagging his white

tail furiously, as if calling attention to the fact that even a "toy" dog might be of some service in the world.



## CHAPTER IX.

### OFFICIAL PERMISSION.

The story told by the stranger did not differ materially from that which the cook had imagined after seeing the overturned gunning-skiff.

The young gentleman, Francis P. Bradford by name, had been paddling around the shore, keeping well within the shadow of the rocks in the hope of getting a good bag of wild ducks when they settled upon the water at sunset. He had begun the voyage from a point two miles or more distant, and approached in such manner that the men who were on watch could not have seen him.

The shallow skiff, which Sam Hardy declared very emphatically "was little better than an egg-shell," had run upon a submerged rock, and, the swell arising at that instant, overset her, throwing the sportsman into the water.

Encumbered as he was by heavy clothing, and being by no means a skilful swimmer, the sportsman could do no more than keep himself afloat, while the boat was driven by the wind farther and farther from the shore.

Knowing that a life-saving station was near at hand, he shouted for help; but, as has been said, it was impossible to make any very loud outcry, and, rapidly becoming exhausted, he believed death was inevitable until there suddenly appeared on the bluff, to use his own words, "what looked to be a ball of white cotton blown along by the wind."

"I had no idea it was a dog," he said continuing the story, "until the fluffy object straightened itself out and began barking shrilly. I am certain the little fellow understood my plight, for when some person called him he ran back a few paces, and then returned yelping and howling until one would have said there was danger the volume of sound would cause him to explode like an overcharged boiler."

Benny's eyes sparkled with delight as young Bradford continued to praise Fluff; but an expression of dissatisfaction came over his face when the sportsman declared his intention of leaving with Keeper Downey a sum of money to be expended in purchasing food and dainties for the animal that had been the means of saving his life.

"What's the matter, Benny?" Sam asked, noting the look on the boy's face.

"It won't do at all, sir," and Benny spoke very decidedly. "Fluff wouldn't like to be paid for such a thing as that, I'm certain, and besides, if, as Mr. Cushing says, he is a member of the crew, then it's his business to save life if he can, without thinking of taking money for it."

"I'll guarantee that the idea of money never came into Fluff C. Foster's head!" Sam Hardy cried, laughing heartily. "You see, lad, what Mr. Bradford proposes is to give the dog a reward, and that any life-saver is entitled to if it be offered voluntarily."

"It would please me if the gentleman wouldn't leave money for Fluff," Benny insisted. "It don't seem right to take it for doing anything of the kind."

From that moment Mr. Bradford ceased to press the matter; but later in the evening he had a long conversation with Tom Downey, and those who accidentally overheard scraps of the conversation understood that the keeper was telling Benny's pitiful story.

Fluff was not interested in anything which was taking place around him. The feast of sugar which Joe Cushing had set out was so tempting and so delicious that he gave heed to nothing else.

When the sweet repast had come to an end, however, the dog was petted by first one and then another of the crew as he had never been before, and Benny said laughingly, as he took the little fellow in his arms fully half an hour before the usual time for retiring.

"Fluff will grow so proud that he'll be spoiled if all hands praise him in this fashion. He'd better go to bed, and I'll make him understand that it was no more than his duty to bark when he saw Mr. Bradford in the water."

Then the boy and the dog disappeared for the night, and after he had left the room the life savers and their guest held a long consultation of a business nature, which was to be kept a profound secret from Benny and Fluff until all the details had been carried into effect.

On the following morning immediately after breakfast, Mr. Bradford left the station for the purpose of hiring some one of the farmers nearby to carry him into the city.

Very gravely he thanked Benny for the great service which had been rendered him by Fluff, urging the boy to



promise that he would apply to him if at any time in the future he should need assistance.

To this the lad agreed, and when the gentleman had taken his departure said confidentially to Sam Hardy:

"If Fluff and I are to be surfmen we shan't be obliged to beg from anyone, and I'd a good deal rather earn what we need than have it given us."

"Well, lad, it shall go your way, and I like the idea you've got in mind. Whether you and Fluff will be able to cut much of a figure as surfmen is a matter which needn't trouble us just now, for I'll guarantee you don't come to want while this crew holds together."

Benny went about his regular duties as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred, and Fluff, believing himself safe from any attack by Maje, ran to and fro over the snow-covered rocks until his pink feet were chilled by the frost, when he returned and, standing before his master, held up first one and then the other with a low whine which told of his discomfort.

The cook placed a chair near the stove, and, despite Benny's protestations, insisted that Fluff should occupy it whenever he had been so foolish as to stay out of doors until thoroughly chilled.

"You have no business to play on the rocks while it is so cold," Benny said reprovingly, addressing himself to the dog.

"It's the nature of dogs and boys to be foolish at times, Benny, and since they can't be expected to have better sense we must do whatever we can to repair the mischief. Therefore Fluff C. Foster sits right there until he's comfortable once more. There's nothing to be done around the kitchen for the next two or three hours, and seein' how you and the dog are bent on being surfmen, now is the chance to learn the duties of a crew when there's a wreck off shore, as in the case of the *Three Brothers*. Every man needs have in his head the manoeuvres to be performed at such a time, and it's all set down here in the regulations under the head of 'Station Bill.'"

"What do you mean by that, sir?" Benny asked as he took the book from the cook's outstretched hand.

"It shows the station of each man after the beach-wagon is on the shore ready for business. You know that every member of the crew has a number. Sam Hardy is 1; Joe Cushing, 2; Robbins, 3; Sawyer, 4, and so on. Here, under the same numbers that the men answer to, is set down exactly what must be done, with a few remarks to follow. Now, since all that must be repeated at drill, it would be a good idea if you stowed it away in your head."

Benny began to read eagerly, understanding that if he had been familiar with all this information when the *Three Brothers* went ashore he possibly might have been of more assistance, and until the cook called him to assist in the work of preparing dinner he read and re-read the following lines:

"No. 1. Place gun in position; provide and load with shot; train the gun; bend the shot-line around the whip inside block; tend the left part of the whip; hold the hawser for No. 2 to bend on the whip; overhaul back of the whip, and, if to leeward, unbend ends and bend outer end into traveller-block; if to windward, snap traveller-block onto hawser, and bend outer end of whip into traveller-block; man fall and left leg of crotch.

"No. 2. Place shot-line box in position; bend shot-line into shot; train the gun; take a half-hitch with shot-line over tail of whip-block; tend right part of whip; bend the lee part of whip onto hawser; overhaul back whip, and, if to leeward, unbend ends and bend inner end into traveller-block; if to windward, snap traveller-block onto hawser and bend inner end of whip into travelling-block; man fall and right leg of crotch.

"No. 3. Place shot-line box in position; stretch tackle (outer block); haul left part of whip from reel; if to windward, reeve end of whip through sand-anchor block; otherwise, bend ends of whip together; man weather part of whip when sending off the hawser; haul in slack of hawser; put on strap for outer block of tackle; man fall, left leg of crotch, and am shifting man on the whip.

"No. 4. Unload buoy from cart; place crotch, hawser, and buoy in position; stretch tackle (inner block); haul right part of whip from reel; if to windward, reeve end of whip through sand-anchor block; otherwise, bend ends of whip together; man weather part of whip when sending off the hawser; haul in slack of hawser; hook on outer block of tackle; man fall, right leg of crotch, and am shifting man on the whip.

"No. 5. Unload and bury sand-anchor; man the weather part of whip when overhauling off the reel and sending off the hawser; haul in the slack of the hawser and make a cat's-paw in the end; man fall; belay fall, and am shifting man on the whip.

"No. 6. Unload and bury sand-anchor; man the weather part of the whip when overhauling off the reel; lighten the hawser to captain; snatch bight of hawser into sand-anchor block; haul in slack of hawser; hook inner block of tackle into cat's-paw; man fall, centre of crotch, and am shifting man on the whip.

"No. 7. Unload shovel and pick; assist to bury sand-anchor; man the weather part of whip when overhauling off

the reel and sending off the hawser; haul in slack of hawser; man fall, centre of crotch, and am shifting man on the whip.

"The exercise must be considered as a whole, and when a man has performed one duty he will proceed to execute the next assigned him. All must work together. While the captain, 1, and 2 are opening communication with the gun and shot-line, 3, 4, 5, and 6 will have the hawser and its connections ready for sending off and hauling taut.

"When practising, as soon as the gun is discharged, 6 will go to the pole representing the wreck and haul off and make fast the whip and hawser; unless some other person willing to perform that duty is present, 4 throws the buoy off the cart that it may not interfere with removing the gun from the cart.

"If through carelessness the shot-line has been faked too tightly upon the pins, instead of forcing it off the pins by the bottom board, which is liable to split, raise the frame and remove a few of the bottom fakes with the hand, when the remainder will fall off into its place in the box.

"The sand-anchor must be opened, its sides at right angles to each other, and buried upon its flat in a narrow trench of sufficient depth, say two feet, and the trench filled in solidly about the anchor.

"In many instances, after communication is made with the wreck, as many as two or three hundred yards of shot-line will be left in the box. The captain must be governed by circumstances as to the best method of handling the surplus line. If there is no danger of the wreck going to pieces, spare line may be hauled on board the wreck, the shore end being bent around the whip; but where great haste is necessary it must be cut.

"Bending the bight of the shot-line around the whip is not recommended, as the portion inshore is liable to foul the whip.

"Cases may occur when, instead of unreeling the whole whip from the reel, both parts of the whip must be cut as soon as the whip-block is fast on board the wreck. Keepers must act with promptness in such cases, remembering that everything must be sacrificed to save life.

"The point where the hawser is bent into the ship must be as far as possible outside of where the ends of the whip are bent together, in order that when the hawser reaches the wreck the whip bend will be well inshore, out of the reach of the shipwrecked people, for should they, through excitement or ignorance, cast that off instead of the hawser, communication would be broken and much delay result.

"The whip should be worked moderately slack, unless extreme cold or drifting ice makes it necessary that it should be kept out of the water.

"Instances may occur when the wreck is breaking up rapidly, and there is not sufficient time to send off the whip and hawser, or the crew are too much exhausted to haul the gear off. In such cases, after communication is made by means of the shot-line, cut the shot-line, and bend the shore end onto a single part of the whip; when the end of the whip has reached the wreck, bend the bight of the whip into the slings of the buoy (block removed), and let the buoy be pulled off through the surf to the wreck."

Benny was an apt pupil, and before nightfall could repeat word for word more than one-half of the Station Bill. It was his purpose to commit it all to memory, but he was interrupted in the task late in the afternoon by the return of Joe Cushing from the post-office, and it was such a noisy home-coming that every member of the crew knew what he brought.

All save the lookout were in the building engaged upon various trifling duties, when a series of yells from the outside brought the men to their feet, and Sam Hardy cried:

"That's Joe Cushing! He's brought the mail, and you can count for a certainty that in it is the answer from headquarters in regard to Benny."

Even Keeper Downey found it difficult to remain calm, for that Sam had guessed correctly could be told by the Indian yells to which Joe was giving vent, and it is little wonder that the crew, instead of waiting for his entrance, went to the door to meet him, realizing as they did that in a few moments would be known the views of the Superintendent regarding the taking on of this new member.

Joe was coming at full speed, holding high above his head the official-looking envelope, and, as if believing his comrades had not been warned regarding the importance of what he brought, he shouted:

"Here's the answer from the Department! It has been about as much as I could do to keep myself from opening it."

Tom Downey stretched out his hand, and there was just a shadow of anxiety to be seen on his face as he took the missive.

The crew gathered around him; but Benny, trembling with apprehension, stood a short distance away holding Fluff

in his arms.

"If it should be that we've got to go away now when things are fixed so nice, we'd be awful sorry, Fluffy; but we'll try not to let the crew know we're feeling bad," he whispered to the dog while keeping his eyes fixed upon Sam Hardy.

Tom Downey was too impatient to permit of his reading carefully the communication from the Chief of the Service. He first glanced quickly over the letter, catching a word here and there, until understanding the proposition, when he cried joyously:

"It's all right, boys! Benny's entitled to stay here so long as we pay his bills!"

"I knew the Superintendent wasn't the kind of a man that would turn a cold shoulder on a lad like him," Sam Hardy said approvingly; and patting Benny on the head, he added, "Now, lad, you're regularly one of us, seein' how you're here by authority, an' I'll venture to say that before spring comes you'll have the drill at your tongue and fingers' ends with the best of us."

Benny, burying his face in Fluff's silken hair, whispered to the dog:

"We're awful lucky, Fluff, and we'll make sure the crew won't feel sorry because of helping us."

"Ain't crying when good news has come, are you, lad?" Sam asked, raising the boy's chin until he could look into his face.

"Indeed, I'm not, Mr. Hardy. I just wanted to remind Fluff so he'd never forget it, that we was bound to work mighty hard to pay all hands of you for being so good."

"I reckon that part of it will be all right, my son. We're gettin' full value for all we give."

That which added to Benny's pleasure was the fact that from the keeper to the cook, every member of the crew exhibited the liveliest joy because he was allowed to remain at the station, and an evening never to be forgotten by the lad was this which followed the receipt of the letter from headquarters.

Half a dozen times over was Tom Downey called upon to read the communication from their Chief, and if it be true that a person's right ear tingles when good is spoken of them, the Superintendent of the Life-Saving Service must have been surprised because of the warmth of that organ.

Even amid the general rejoicing Benny found opportunity to study the *Regulations* and observing him at this work Sam Hardy proposed that Keeper Downey write an additional paragraph to the Station Bill.

"Benny must have a regular duty, and we'll call him No. 8. Set down exactly what part he is to play, an' let him learn it with the rest."

That night when Benny, with Fluff in his arms, stood on the threshold to bid his kindly guardians a "good-night," all hands replied in concert:

"Good-night, No. 8."

"That means Fluff as well as me," Benny cried with a laugh, and as he laid down to sleep that night "No. 8" was an exceedingly happy boy.

On the following morning Benny had a serious proposition to make Sam Hardy, and after his portion of the morning's work had been done he called the surfman aside.

"I want to ask a favor of you, Mr. Hardy."

"Well, lad, what is it?"

"All hands call me No. 8, so that proves I'm regularly one of the crew, don't it?"

"Of course it does, Benny."

"Then I should have some regular work."

"So you have, my lad. You're doin' as much now as the cook, an' some of the boys are beginnin' to think you can take his place next season."

"My work in the kitchen don't count. It's only enough to take up the spare time. What I mean is, I ought to have a share in all that the crew does."

"What are you drivin' at, Benny? Suppose you talk it right out plain, an' then I'll understand the quicker."

"It's this, Mr. Hardy: I want to go on patrol duty with you every night, no matter what time you start out."

"Now look here, Benny, there are some nights when that's precious hard work, and almost any time in the winter it's no joke to turn out, say about midnight, an' walk this blooming shore four hours."

"I know that, sir; but yet it will toughen me to do it, and after a spell I won't mind it any more'n you do."

"But what's your idea in doin' such work?"

"I want to grow into so much of a surfman that I can see at night the same as you do. When the *Three Brothers* was sighted I couldn't make her out at all."

"It's trainin' your eyes you're after, eh?"

"Yes, sir, perhaps that's what you could call it."

"Well, I'll talk with Downey, and see what he thinks of the scheme, although I'm willing to say right up an' down now that I don't just like it. The job is too rough for a little chap like you."

"I must get hardened to bad weather, and the cold, and all that sort of thing if I'm goin' to stay in the life-saving service."

Sam turned away with a laugh, and not until evening did he make any reply to the request.

Then, when the hour was near at hand for him to go on patrol, he said, speaking to all hands, including Fluff's master:

"Benny claims the right to do patrol duty, if he's No. 8 in this 'ere crew, an' the keeper has given permission for him to act as my apprentice, exceptin' when the weather is too rough. Therefore, Mr. Benjamin H. Foster, you'll make ready for a four hours' turn, and the thermometer is standin' well down to zero. If this night's work don't give you a different idea of what it's fitting a lad should do; then I'll say there'll be no use in our tryin' to keep you out of the Service."

If Benny suffered from the cold during this four hours' tramp, Sam Hardy was none the wiser regarding it, for he held the pace regardless of rough ways or banks of snow, plodding sturdily by the surfman's side throughout the entire time. But it was observed by Sam Hardy that on their return to the station he went immediately to bed, and next morning, in relating the experiences of the previous night to the keeper privately, Sam added:

"He's all grit, that lad is, an' when he's older grown I allow he'll be an ornament to this 'ere station."

The cook declared, after dinner had been eaten and the apartments set to rights, that it was necessary for Keeper Downey to issue a positive order preventing No. 8 from doing more than his share of the work, and Benny, his face crimsoning with pleasure, would have turned the conversation into some other channel.

"I mean what I say," the cook added emphatically. "There's to be a regular Kitchen Station Bill made out for you, else before many days I'll find myself idle. So let it be understood, No. 8, that you're only to do so much of the work as belongs to your part, and in the future you and Fluff C. Foster will have longer loafin' spells. If you study the *Regulations* after dark, I reckon it will be enough."

Tom Downey had begun questioning the cook as to what share of the work Benny really did, when the noise of bells was heard outside, and a moment later came a knock at the door followed almost immediately by the entrance of Mr. Bradford—he whom, as the crew claimed, Fluff had rescued from drowning.

He greeted the men cheerily; had a kindly word for Benny; but took Fluff in his arms petting him affectionately.

"I wasn't satisfied with leaving matters as they were day before yesterday, so far as this little fellow was concerned," he said, addressing himself to Keeper Downey. "But for the dog I should have been drowned, and as Benny refused me the satisfaction of repaying Fluff, I claim the right to bestow upon him what the government would award either of you for a timely rescue of life."

While speaking he had drawn from his pocket a daintily fashioned silver collar to which was attached a small gold token.

"It is a medal of honor made from a coin, and inscribed: 'To Fluff C. Foster for having saved the life of Francis P. Bradford, January 2, 1894.' That much I am entitled to give, regardless of what the dog's master may think, and I only hope it may be in my power at some future time to bestow upon Benny a more substantial token of regard."

Mr. Bradford handed the collar and medal to the boy as he ceased speaking, and the latter gazed alternately at the gift and the dog, who was sitting bolt upright on his hind legs as if begging to be told the cause of this sudden commotion.

"Well?" Sam Hardy said interrogatively as Benny remained silent. "Well, No. 8, ain't there anything more to it? The dog is coaxin' you to thank the gentleman."

"I know he is, Mr. Hardy; but how can I do it?" Benny replied with a long-drawn sigh of delight. "It's splendid, though it ain't none too good for a dog like Fluff, an' I'd rather he'd have this than all the money in the world. Just to think!" and the lad turned to address the entire crew. "Fluff has got a regular life-saving medal."

"It's a big thing," Keeper Downey replied with a nod of satisfaction, "an', what's more, Fluff is the only one of this crew that has won such a distinction."

"If anything was needed, after the letter from the Superintendent, to show that he an' I were members of the crew, this would be enough, wouldn't it?"

"It's as good as a commission from the Treasury Department," Joe Cushing replied gravely.

"If you would like to make the change, I can buy you something, instead of spending so much money for the dog," Mr. Bradford said, with a meaning glance at the men. "It will be an easy matter to exchange the collar and medal for cheaper metal, and give you the difference."

"Take this away from Fluff?" Benny cried in alarm. "Why, I wouldn't have it done for the world! Now I'm a regular member of this crew I don't need anything, an' even if I did, he should have the best, because he's the one who saved your life, an' I'll get a heap of pleasure out of looking at it."

"I have also sent out here ten pounds of sugar in lumps, so that you may remind him of me at least once every day," Mr. Bradford said, apparently getting as much pleasure out of the presentation as did Benny, "and because of thus rewarding Fluff, I want you to do me a favor."

"What is it, sir?" Benny asked in surprise.

"I want the privilege of giving you a full suit of clothes. Here is an order on a tailor, who will make whatever you may decide upon."

While speaking the gentleman had pressed into Benny's hand a slip of paper, and before the lad could reply Sam Hardy cried in delight:

"Of course No. 8 will do you the favor of takin' it, an', what's more, it's a mighty lucky thing for him. Here he has just been made a member of the crew, but hasn't got a uniform to wear when he goes into the city. That order, Mr. Bradford, is just the ticket, and with Fluff C. Foster rigged out in a solid silver collar with a gold medal of honor, and Benjamin H. Foster in a regulation suit, brass buttons an' all, this 'ere station will blossom out in regular shape."

Benny was won by the idea of wearing a uniform like his comrades; but he looked toward Mr. Downey as if asking his permission to accept the gift.

"Take it, my lad, and thank the gentleman by so doing," the keeper said with a smile. "What's more, you shall go into the city with Sam Hardy to-morrow morning and be measured for the uniform."

There was a wondrously bright gleam in Benny's eyes as, taking the dog suddenly in his arms, he said to the generous visitor:

"We thank you awfully much, Mr. Bradford, an' you may be sure Fluff will never do anything to make you ashamed of having given him such a beautiful collar and medal."



## CHAPTER X.

### THE UNIFORM.

Mr. Bradford was in no haste to return home on this evening when he had decorated Fluff and provided Benny with the means of getting a uniform.

He had come to assure the crew that he fully appreciated the discipline and prompt attention to duty which made possible his rescue, for had thirty seconds been wasted after Sam Hardy's summons, the boat would have arrived too late.

"I never before fully realized the value of life-saving stations or the heroism of life-saving crews," he said, addressing Keeper Downey. "Perhaps it was because I never knew what perfection of discipline and drill was to be found among the men. I have often wondered why this service should be under the supervision of the Treasury Department, when one would naturally expect it to be a branch of the navy."

"The reason is, Mr. Bradford, that a deep-water sailor, as a rule, knows very little about surf work," Tom Downey replied quickly, and with considerable warmth. "You will find that among all the mariners we aid, no more than one out of every hundred has had any experience in making a landing on a shore like this when the water is rough, and it's not to be expected of them. The life-saving service is recruited from shore fishermen--men who are accustomed to going back and forth through the surf in all kinds of weather. Put the best sailor that ever jockeyed a spar into our surf-boat, and he'd be out of his element, as you can well understand. Therefore the life-saving service is really the duty of landmen, and has nothing to do with such as the navy would be forced to employ."

Before the visitor could reply Sam Hardy began making preparations to go on patrol, and Benny felt it his duty to accompany him, particularly after having begged permission to share the labor, although he was eager to hear the remainder of the conversation.

"There's no need for you to go out this night, Benjamin, and I think you are called on to stay here till Mr. Bradford leaves," Sam said, observing the expression on the boy's face.

No. 8 had no idea of allowing inclination to interfere with the duties he had assumed, especially now that he had considered himself a regularly enrolled member of the crew.

"Mr. Bradford knows that somebody must go on patrol, and I'll never be trusted alone if I don't hurry up with the learning," Benny replied promptly, putting on the pea-jacket and sou'wester Joe Cushing had given him.

"You will come and see me to-morrow?" the visitor asked, and Sam replied for the lad:

"You can count on his givin' you a call, Mr. Bradford, although we won't have overly much time to spend in neighboring."

Then the two shook hands with the gentleman, and went out into the night on their errand of mercy.

Benny was unusually quiet as they walked along the bluffs, glancing from time to time over the placid waters illumined by the moon, and after ten minutes or more had passed in silence Sam asked:

"What has gone wrong with you, No. 8? Ain't a solid silver collar rich enough for Fluff C. Foster, or did you think the medal might have been bigger?"

"I'd be terribly ashamed of myself to think anything like that, Mr. Hardy. Of course the collar and medal ain't any better than Fluff deserves; but they're a good deal nicer than I ever thought he'd get, and it makes me feel fine to think of his having them."

"Then what is keepin' you so glum? You haven't opened your mouth since we left the station."

"That is 'cause I've been thinking."

"About what, No. 8?"

"I'm afraid I shan't do enough, and that the crew will find out I ain't coming up to the praise I'm getting. Everybody has been so good to me since the ship was wrecked, that I can't even begin to pay it back."

"There isn't any danger so long as you have such thoughts in your head, Benjamin. I don't believe in praisin' boys, as a general thing, because it's apt to spoil 'em; but you don't seem to be one of that kind. Keep on as you've started, No. 8, and I guarantee all hands of us will be satisfied."

Then Sam Hardy told Benny of a boy who had been saved from a wreck two years previous, and who was anything rather than an agreeable companion, following this story with another, until the four hours passed so quickly that it seemed to No. 8 as if they had not been on duty one quarter of the required time.

Mr. Bradford had started for home nearly two hours before Benny and Sam came in, their night's work finished, and no one except Fluff was awake.

He greeted them with his shrill barking, which Benny checked quickly lest the others should be awakened, and when the two whose time for duty had come were aroused, Sam whispered:

"Now we'll turn in, No. 8, and see to it that you're up bright and early to-morrow. You're not to do any work in the kitchen, but will eat breakfast with the crew, so that we shan't be delayed in setting out."

Benny did not obey this command strictly. Next morning when the cook slipped out of bed softly to avoid disturbing the others, the lad heard and followed him without delay.

"You could have had a good half-hour's sleep before breakfast will be ready, No. 8."

"Yes, sir; but I wouldn't have done my share of the work here," Benny replied hesitatingly, for the cook had spoken sharply.

"Members of the crew who have a day's liberty are not expected to do anything around the station, and you're down for leave of absence from midnight."

"That's no reason why I shouldn't do what I can before we leave," Benny replied stoutly as he set about the usual morning duties, and until breakfast was on the table he insisted upon aiding the cook.

Then Sam sternly ordered him to "knock-off" and make ready for the journey.

"We've got a five-mile pull before us, an' I'm not of the mind to spend our entire day at the oars."

Until this moment Benny had supposed they would walk from the station to the city, and on learning that Sam intended to make the journey in the dory which the crew used for fishing, a certain wistful expression came into his eyes.

"Now what have you got on your mind, No. 8?" Sam asked, quick to note the change on the boy's face.

"I was wondering--I thought--I don't suppose you'd want to take Fluff, Mr. Hardy. He's been in a boat very often, and knows how to behave himself."

"Afraid Maje will make trouble if you leave him behind?"

"No, sir, it wasn't that; but you see he won't have many chances to go away from the station, and I want him to show his collar and medal whenever it's possible. He had a bath yesterday, and is as clean as a whistle."

"There's no reason why he shouldn't go, an' I'm not certain but Mr. Bradford would like to see him rigged out in his finery."

Benny no longer gave any heed to his breakfast, but spent all the remaining time in combing Fluff's silken hair, and when Sam Hardy announced that he was ready to start, the dog was looking his best, with the medal hanging in the most conspicuous position.

"He's looking a good deal finer than you are, No. 8," Joe Cushing said with a laugh. "That gorgeous collar don't correspond with your old pea-jacket and sou'-wester."

"It don't make any difference about me, so long as he's the way Mrs. Clark always wanted to see him," Benny replied, choking back a sob as his mind thus involuntarily went into the past. "Folks wouldn't notice a boy like me, but they always stare when Fluff walks along looking like everything belonged to him."

"Wait till you're togged out in a uniform, No. 8, and then I'll answer for it you get as much attention from the people as does Fluff. I'm going into town with you then, and what a dash we'll cut!"

Joe Cushing laughed in anticipation of that moment, and while he was thus amused Sam beckoned Benny to follow him.

The dory was lying near the water's edge, and it only required that she should be launched in order to begin the journey.

Fluff took his place in the stern-sheets as if accustomed to this method of travelling; Sam took up the oars, refusing most decidedly Benny's proposal that he be allowed to do his share of the rowing, and as the boat glided out of the little cove the crew at the station cheered right heartily.

"It sounds as if they were glad to be rid of us," Benny suggested, and Sam replied:

"That's their way of showin' that they'll be pleased to see you back. I might leave a dozen times, an' nobody would so much as poke his nose out of the door to see if I got away all right."

"But they count on your coming home just the same," Benny replied earnestly, as if thinking his comrade might be jealous because more attention was bestowed upon a newcomer than on himself.

"I reckon they do, No. 8; but an old fellow like me don't cut any such figger as does a boy, an' a dog what's wearin' a medal of honor," and Sam Hardy laughed heartily, whereat Benny began to understand that no jealousy lurked in his heart.

A most enjoyable voyage did this prove to be for No. 8 and Fluff, even though the temperature was many degrees below freezing and the wind piercing cold. Sam Hardy did not appear to be in any very great hurry to reach the city, once he had put off from the station, but told stories of heroism displayed by his comrades, at the same time that he fed the dog liberally with lumps of sugar.

"We're out for a holiday," he said when Benny suggested that it was not well for Fluff to have such a feast, "an' I'm countin' on his enjoyin' it as well as us."

"But it may make him sick."

"Then it will teach him not to be so greedy another time."

"I'm afraid he won't remember it."

"Most likely not, No. 8, most likely not. Boys an' dogs are much alike in that particular--they won't learn by experience. Did you ever think what a wise lad he would be who was eager to learn by the experience of others?"

Benny was considerably puzzled by this remark, and the surfman continued gravely:

"Look at it in this light, lad: you've been thrown with them as were older than yourself a good portion of the time you've lived in this world. You've heard of this one's havin' what people call 'bad luck,' or of that one's doin' some foolish thing. Now suppose you'd stored all that up in your memory. Wouldn't you be able to steer clear of the first man's bad luck, an' keep yourself from committin' the same folly you condemned in the other?"

Benny nodded gravely. This proposition was something entirely new to him, and he believed it to be a most valuable suggestion.

"A boy who was willing to learn from the experience of others would soon be wiser than the average run of lads, and, what's more, he'd save himself many a sore time; but it ain't done by young people any more than Fluff will remember, in case he's sick to-morrow, that the next time sugar's offered him he should be less greedy."

Benny was so interested in this method of acquiring knowledge that he continued to discuss the matter until the dory was made fast alongside one of the city piers, and Sam said laughingly:

"I reckon we'd best not spend any more of our time discussin' the matter; it'll serve us out on patrol bright nights, when there's little call to keep a very sharp lookout. Now we're bound for Mr. Bradford's office, and then to the tailor's. You'll be a terrible swell before many days, No. 8."

"I'm not going to wear the uniform except when I go into the city, so there's no danger of my doing very much swelling," Benny replied with a laugh, and then Sam Hardy was ready to lead the way to the sportsman's office.

No. 8 did not dare allow Fluff to walk through the streets lest some evil-disposed dog should pick a quarrel with him; but he took good care both the collar and medal could be seen while the little fellow was in his arms.

Their reception by Mr. Bradford was exceedingly friendly--almost too much so, Benny thought, when the gentleman insisted on introducing them to his acquaintances, and telling the story of the rescue.

The dog was petted as perhaps he never had been before, which was pleasing to his master; but, as Benny afterward told Sam Hardy confidentially, there was no reason why he should be praised for what Fluff C. Foster had done.

Then the little party went to the tailor, who was ordered to make a uniform exactly like the one worn by Sam Hardy, and, in addition, a second suit of clothes was decided upon, so that the boy might have a proper outfit when the time came for him to go to school.

The surfman, No. 8, and Fluff dined with Mr. Bradford on this day, after which they were treated to a carriage ride, and so eager was the gentleman to give them pleasure that but for Sam Hardy's persistency in setting out on the return voyage at an early hour, they might not have succeeded in regaining the station until late in the night.

"It has been what you might call a great day, No. 8," the surfman said when they had bidden their entertainer adieu on the pier and the dory was out of the harbor. "I'm not certain but that two such outings as this would spoil you an'



Fluff C. Foster for work at the station."

"We've had a good time, and Mr. Bradford has been very kind," Benny said thoughtfully; "but I'm not so sure as I'd like to try it over again very soon."

"Why not?"

"Because, in the first place, I don't deserve it, even if Fluff does; and then again, it ain't very nice to have folks praising you up when there's no reason for it."

"Then you don't think Mr. Bradford had any right to lay it on quite so thick about what you'd done?"

"No, because it wasn't altogether true. Any fellow who was all alone in this world with a dog like Fluff, would work mighty hard if folks gave him a home, same's the crew have given me, so what I do don't count. Now if Mr. Bradford had told the people we met how good you all were to take us, I'd had a much better time."

"You're too modest, Benjamin, an' that's a fault every boy don't have, I'm sorry to say. Now about that uniform of yours. You didn't so much as ask me when it was to be sent out to the station."

"It wouldn't have looked very well to be in a hurry when some one makes me such a splendid present."

"Oh, it wouldn't, eh? Well, the toggery wasn't for me, therefore I had no call to be so bashful. The uniform is to be ready in four days, and about that time Tom Downey will be goin' into town. The other clothes are to be finished in a week. When they come we'll--Hello, what's that steamer layin' off there for?"

The dory was almost within sight of the station when Sam Hardy ceased rowing very suddenly to gaze at a steamer which appeared to be at anchor a mile or more off the shore, and Benny was wholly at a loss to understand why his companion had become so thoroughly excited.

"She don't seem to be in any trouble," he ventured to say, and Sam settling down to the oars as if believing he had a severe task before him, replied:

"Her captain is huntin' for it, if he comes to anchor in that place without precious good reasons. A shoal makes out just there, an' I've seen two good vessels go to pieces on it. That steamer is aground, Benny!"

There was nothing startling to the lad in this announcement. The craft lay as if afloat; the wind was not strong enough to raise a very heavy sea, and nothing indicated any sudden change in the weather.

"I'll admit that it don't mean very much now, lad," the surfman continued as if reading his companion's thoughts; "but on this coast at this time of the year, no one can say when everything may be changed. There! The captain is beginning to understand that matters ain't altogether lovely."

The steamer's whistle had begun to sound a whistle that help of some kind was required, and Benny believed the captain was calling upon the life-saving crew for assistance, until Sam said:

"She's whistlin' for a tug; but with the wind in this quarter it ain't likely to do much good, unless she is sighted by one."

"Our crew will see her."

"Not before sunset, when the patrol goes out; but they'll hear the whistle, an' find her by that means."

Sam was rowing at his best speed, and Benny watched eagerly for the appearance of the life-saving crew, but no one had appeared in sight when the dory was brought within hailing distance of the stranded steamer.

The rail was lined with heads, showing that she had passengers aboard, and on the bridge was a group of officers.

"Boat ahoy!" some one shouted, and Sam replied, standing up as he did, so that his uniform might be seen.

"Are you a member of a life-saving crew?"

"Ay, sir; the station is a mile and a half away around the point. Are you in need of assistance?"

"We want tugs. Can you telephone from your quarters?"

"Ay, sir."

"Ask that two steamers be sent at once. We're not heavily aground; but to such an extent that our engines are of no avail."

"Shall we take off your passengers?"

"There's no need of it. We can lie here easily enough, if it isn't possible to haul us off before morning."

"I'm not so certain of that, sir. The tide will fall twelve inches or more before the ebb, and the water hereabouts is

rough."

"Send a message for me to the city, and that will be enough," the master replied curtly, and Sam took up the oars again, pulling vigorously toward the station.

"There's what you call a pig-headed captain," he said when the dory was some distance away. "It stands to reason he doesn't know anything about this coast, else he'd never gone on that shoal, an' he had too good an opinion of his own abilities to so much as look at the chart. There are no tugs around here that can pull him off before high tide, and in the meanwhile he's likely to find that the steamer won't lay as easy as he's countin' on."

"There comes our surf-boat!" Benny cried, pointing toward a projecting cliff which hid the station from view, and around which the life-saving crew were just appearing. "I knew they'd answer the steamer's signal as soon as it could be done."

"Of course they would, lad, there are no sleepy heads among us, if I do say it. Tom Downey will read that captain a lecture, I reckon."

The dory and the surf-boat were soon side by side, and the keeper asked for information concerning the steamer.

Sam repeated the conversation he had had with the captain, and Mr. Downey replied:

"Send the message as soon as you get back, and then go on duty at once, taking up a station directly opposite where the steamer lies. Flash the Coston twice if she's likely to need us between now and midnight. Joe Cushing shall cover the remainder of your beat."

Then word was given for the crew to "pull away," and Sam bent to his oars as if time was very precious.

"Does Mr. Downey think it is possible the steamer can come to any harm in such pleasant weather?" Benny asked in surprise.

"There's no telling what may happen, lad, and Downey don't intend to get himself into trouble if it can be prevented."

"What trouble can come to him if the captain of the steamer won't allow the crew to do anything?"

"In case there should be loss of life, even after what's been said and done, all hands of us would be called for an explanation as to why we didn't do our duty. Let any trouble come to that steamer, an' we're bound to stand an investigation, for the Superintendent of the Service is mighty sharp in such affairs."

Benny could not understand how it might be possible to blame a crew who had not been allowed to give their services, and Sam was too deeply intent on the business in hand to go into any lengthy explanation.

"I'll figger it all out for you some time when we're on patrol," he said, and No. 8 understood from the tone of his voice that the surfman was not inclined to indulge further in conversation.

When, ten minutes later, the dory was pulled into the little cove near the station, Sam Hardy landed hurriedly, calling out to Benny as he did so:

"Make her fast, lad, and follow me. I'll set the cook to work on our supper, for we're not likely to have another chance for anything to eat till midnight."

No. 8 did as he was bidden, and when he entered the station Sam was just coming from the telephone.

"There's little show of getting two tugs out to the steamer much before high water, and I'm thinkin' the captain may be obliged to call on us after all, unless he's shipped a different set of passengers than usually travel. Turn to an' fill yourself up with coffee and hearty food, Benjamin, for we've got a long stretch of patrol duty ahead, if nothing worse comes of this night's business."



## CHAPTER XI.

### THE STRANDED STEAMER.

Benny delayed in carrying out the instructions given by Sam Hardy only sufficiently long to remove Fluff's collar and medal, and after that but little time was spent in "filling himself up," because the excitement had driven away what small remnant of appetite was left after the feast which Mr. Bradford had set before them.

Fluff, wearied perhaps by the attentions bestowed upon him in the city, was perfectly willing to occupy the bed which the cook made up for him near the kitchen stove, and failed to exhibit any sign of displeasure when his young master left him.

"I guess he's had all the excursion he wants in one day," Benny said as he followed Sam out into the fast gathering gloom, and the latter replied sagely:

"Dogs are much like boys, No. 8, as I've said before. They think of nothin' but pleasure while the fun is goin' on, an' when it's over are disposed to pay more attention to their own weariness than duty."

"But Fluff couldn't help staying in the city just as long as we were there," Benny said, as if thinking some apology was needed for the dog. "He would have been willing enough to come home if we'd shown him the way."

"I dare say he would, Benny, I dare say he would; and now we'll turn our attention to the work before us instead of givin' any heed to boys or dogs. I'm thinkin' the captain of that steamer will change his mind about landing the passengers when he learns that the tugs can't get to him for quite a spell, an' after he takes note of that fog-bank to seaward."

Benny gazed in the direction indicated by the surfman's outstretched hand, but failed to distinguish anything which betokened fog, until Sam called his attention to a dark line along the horizon, and also to the fact that there was a decided change in the temperature.

"There'll be a smother upon us in less than half an hour, an' it's fortunate I brought an extra supply of Coston signals. That's another case, No. 8, where people would talk of luck, an' yet it was only reasonable foresight, such as any man ought to exercise."

Sam was making his way along the coast at his best pace, which was so rapid that at times Benny was forced to run, and when ten minutes had passed the boy asked, panting for breath:

"Why are you hurrying? All the crew are out to the steamer, and a watch ashore won't be needed until quite a while after they have come back."

"True, lad; but it's necessary to get the location of the ship well fixed in mind before the fog shuts down. Once that has been done we can go out to her without any great trouble, providin' we're needed."

The two arrived none too soon at the post they were to occupy.

On gaining the bluff opposite the steamer, the mist, which had been rapidly creeping over the ocean, had already begun to envelop her, and no more than the spars could be distinguished.

"Ten minutes' delay, and we'd have been too late, not only to make her out, but to hear what orders Tom Downey may have to give," the surfman said, and Benny could faintly distinguish amid the vapor a dark spot which he understood, because of Sam Hardy's words, to be the surf-boat coming shoreward.

Five minutes later the crew rested on their oars within an hundred feet of the bluff, as the keeper shouted:

"Did you send a message to the city?"

"Ay, sir, and there will be no tugs here much before high water."

"Keep your ears open for the steamer's whistle, which will be sounded three times if the captain decides that he needs assistance."

"And what then, sir? It will be hard making out such a signal as that now the fog-horn has begun to blow."

It was as if the keeper had only realized this fact by thus being reminded of it, and after a brief consultation with the crew he shouted again:

"We'll come ashore on that bit of shingle just below, and you may join us there."

Having said this he gave some order to the men, and the surf-boat was pulled out to sea again, disappearing almost immediately in the fog which had by this time reached the land.

"Why are they coming ashore?" Benny asked as Sam Hardy set out northward.

"He counts on havin' the surf-boat in case she may be needed, for, if this smother clears away before the moon rises, there'll be a sea on that will trouble yonder steamer considerably."

Sam followed the trend on the shore a hundred yards or more, coming to a halt where a narrow strip of pebbly beach lay between two frowning walls of rock, and Benny said to himself that it would not be possible, however familiar the life-saving crew were with the coast, for them to find their way through this dangerous passage while the fog was so dense that objects a dozen feet away could hardly be distinguished.

In this he was mistaken, however. The men had been forced many times, either to save their own lives or in the aid of others, to pursue quite as blind a course, and two or three minutes later the surf-boat came between the frowning walls against which the waves were already beginning to dash with an ominous moan.

Now Benny had an opportunity of observing how much labor might be required of the life-saving crew when it became necessary to take precautions.

The captain of the stranded steamer had refused to allow his passengers to be taken off when it might have been done without difficulty, and now, aground as she was, much danger was to be apprehended. This could be guarded against only by leaving the surf-boat where she might readily be launched. At the same time the remainder of the coast must be patrolled lest other ships needed assistance, and the crew were forced to perform all their regular duties while remaining on the alert to answer a call from this point.

"Suppose the steamer should whistle for assistance, and at the same time a vessel went ashore the other side of the station?" Benny asked. "How could one crew attend to both?"

"It would be the keeper's duty to decide which craft was in the greatest danger, or, if both were in much the same position, where the largest number of lives might be saved, and then one or the other would be left to her fate. There's where the responsibility of the keeper comes in, my son, and a heavy one it is like to be under certain circumstances."

The surf-boat had been hauled up beyond reach of the tide when it should rise, and all the men ordered out on patrol.

There was no time to be spent in eating supper, for the most dreaded of all dangers upon the Eastern coast had suddenly presented itself, and the life-saving crew must labor to the utmost extent of their powers without thought or heed of self until, perchance, exhaustion should overcome them.

Sam and Benny were left alone, and a long, dreary vigil did they keep, although the surfman tried to enliven it for the lad by telling stories, or explaining again and again the duties of each member of the crew under supposititious circumstances.

The fog hung low and dense until nearly midnight, when the wind had so increased in force that it was "blown away," to use Sam Hardy's expression, and the steamer revealed to view.

That the surf had been rising all this time the watchers on shore knew full well by the roaring and pounding of the waves upon the rocks, but yet even Sam Hardy, experienced in such matters as he was, betrayed surprise when the lifting of the fog revealed the situation of the stranded steamer.

At the time she was first discovered the vessel lay motionless as if at anchor in a quiet haven; now the heavy swell, dashing over the shoal, was so high that at times it seemed as if the steamer's decks must be flooded, and Sam Hardy cried anxiously and impatiently:

"Why don't that pig-headed captain signal for assistance? I've seen a craft more staunch than she knocked to pieces by the surf when there wasn't half a gale of wind, an' now we're likely to have before mornin' all the breeze that a water-borne craft can stagger under, to say nothin' of one that's aground."

"Perhaps he's waitin' until daylight," Benny suggested, and his companion replied with a note of anger in his voice:

"If he does it'll be too late, for in that shallow water we couldn't get a life-boat to her, an' the time has already passed when we might be able to use the surf-boat."

Five minutes later the two watchers on shore saw, coming around the point, the heavy boat from the station, and understood that Keeper Downey believed the moment had arrived when assistance should be rendered, even though as yet it had not been asked for.

"I reckon the cook is No. 1 in that crew," Sam muttered half to himself as he watched the buoyant craft toss like an

egg-shell on the heavy waters. "Downey might at least have sent him out here, an' let me take my proper place, for now the life-boat has been launched there's little need of keepin' a man on duty at this place."

It was a brave sight to see that staunch boat breasting the waves which at times appeared to raise her literally on end, but yet steadily continuing the course, and the timid ones aboard the stranded steamer must have hailed her as a thing of beauty and of mercy.

Benny had never seen the life-boat in service, and so engrossed was he with the spectacle that he could give no attention to anything else.

By this time not a vestige of fog could be seen. The stars were twinkling brightly in the sky, and, save for the tremendous wind which seemed gathering force every instant, one would have said that there was no fear of disaster alongshore.

The life-boat ran down the coast, heading directly for the steamer until she was within perhaps an eighth of a mile, when, turning, she put straight out to sea in the teeth of the wind as if running away from the stranded vessel, and Benny cried:

"Mr. Downey's afraid to go any nearer; but why doesn't he come back to the station?"

"Bless your heart, lad, he's countin' on boardin' that craft as soon as may be; but with such a sea runnin', an' over that shallow water which is like to let the life-boat down on the shoal when she gets into the trough of the sea, he's bound to take every precaution. Now! He's cast the grapnel, an' you'll see them drop back as close aboard the steamer as can be done with safety."

This manoeuvre was performed rapidly, and with the least possible delay.

Almost before Sam had ceased speaking the life-boat was lost to view on the starboard side of the steamer, and there she remained so long that the surfman cried impatiently:

"What can they be doin'? Surely there has been time enough to take off a full load, an' Tom Downey knows as well as any other man, that in an hour from now no craft ever put together by human hands can lay over that shoal without being dashed to pieces on the bottom."

It was soon seen, however, that Tom Downey was not delaying, for presently the life-boat was pulled up to her grapnel, and then headed for the station, with none save the regular crew on board.

Now it was that Sam Hardy lost his temper entirely; he stormed and scolded, shaking his fist toward the stranded craft until, almost in alarm, Benny asked the reason of his excitement:

"Can't you see that again the commander of the steamer has refused assistance? Tom Downey went off believin' the pig-headed master would realize the danger by this time, an' counted on bringin' the passengers ashore; but he's been sent away empty-handed, and when that captain comes to his senses it'll be too late for us to give him any assistance."

"Surely, Mr. Downey has done all a man can, and if anything happens now it's the master of the steamer who is responsible," Benny said soothingly.

"That doesn't relieve us from some shadow of blame in case anything happens. We shall be raked over the coals if that craft goes to pieces, an' Downey will be forced to explain why he didn't insist on saving the passengers, if not the crew!"

"But he couldn't if the captain refused."

"True for you, lad; but it'll hurt us all the same, for the crew of a life-saving station feels a certain degree of responsibility for every life lost in their district, and thus far our record has been exceptionally good."

It was useless for Sam to scold and fret.

The circumstances could not be altered, and all he might do was to stand on the shore watching the increasing violence of the waters, knowing full well that each moment lessened the chances of rendering assistance to the stranded steamer.

Then came Joe Cushing, who was doing patrol duty on that portion of the shore, and Sam asked for the particulars of the life-boat's voyage.

"When we came alongside Downey explained to the skipper what was like to be the condition of affairs an hour later; but couldn't beat any sense into his head. He refused to allow a single passenger to leave, although many of them were anxious to do so; but asked again that we send another message into the city for tugs," Joe Cushing replied. "It seems that the craft hasn't taken ground so badly but that she could be pulled off with her own engines, by the aid of a

couple of tugs, an' the master declares she'll stand more poundin' than she's likely to receive this night, all of which may be true. Just as we were leavin' he asked the keeper to have the crew on hand in case he decided later to land with his own boats."

"With his own boats in this surf!" Sam Hardy exclaimed.

"Ay, that's what he allowed. Of course Tom Downey told him it couldn't be done, an' said all a man might to dissuade him from makin' such an attempt. Then we came away, an' Sam, you know as well as I, that now there's no crew in this or any other country that can put out across the shoal an' get back with their boat."

"Know it, of course I do!" Sam Hardy cried, and then for ten minutes or more the two surfmen discussed the situation angrily, but without making matters any better, save perhaps it might be that their own minds were relieved by much talking, after which Joe Cushing went on patrol again.

When he was gone Benny asked:

"Are we to stay here, sir?"

"Ay, lad, until we starve, unless Tom Downey orders us in."

The wind was piercing cold, and the two on the shore were exposed to its full force while they remained where it was possible to keep the steamer in view.

Sam urged Benny to find a sheltered spot where he might be partially screened from the wind; but the lad refused, saying decidedly:

"I have been ordered here, sir, the same as you were, and I'll do what any other member of the crew would in my place."

"All right, No. 8; but I hold to it that there's such a thing as havin' too much grit. You want to toughen up; but you're goin' too strong at the start. If you're bound to hold on, keep pace with me while I trot around here a spell."

Then the two paced back and forth along the rocky coast nearly an hour when, although constantly expecting it, they were startled by the steamer's shrill whistle.

Three blasts blown, and Sam Hardy exclaimed:

"He's come to his senses at last; but when it's too late! Now, whatever happens, he'll say he was 'unlucky,' although we know it was nothin' but sheer willfulness."

"What are we to do?" Benny asked, as if thinking they must immediately set to work in an attempt to answer this call for assistance.

"That's for the keeper to say. If I was in his place I'd get the beach-wagon over here, for the boats are of no use."

"Sha'n't I run back toward the station so's to help them in case they're comin' with the cart?"

"No, Benny. Our orders were to stay here, an' here we'll wait."

To show that the call for assistance was heard and understood, Sam Hardy flashed his Coston signal, and less than half an hour later the crew from the station came up at full speed, but without the beach-wagon.

"We'll make one fight with the surf-boat," Tom Downey said hurriedly to Sam, "and if that proves useless, as I reckon it will, we'll try to send a line aboard, although there's little show it can be done while she lays so far from shore."

Hardy joined the crew as they ran toward the surf-boat, which was hauled up on shore a short distance away, and Benny wondered that he should be so willing to make the attempt when but a short time previous he had declared it an absolute impossibility they could gain the steamer's side in either boat.

Now the lad saw for the second time what an heroic struggle *his* crew could make against almost insurmountable difficulties.

Across the shoal the sea was running wildly, while inshore the spray dashed so high as to completely hide the steamer from view at times.

It seemed little short of madness to put out even in the staunch life-boat, yet Tom Downey and his brave fellows made the venture without hesitation.

With three on either side and the keeper at the stern, they waited with the surf-boat close at the water-line until the heavy swell had broken upon the shore and was receding, when, following it, they ran into the waves breast-deep, leaping aboard their craft instantly she was water-borne.

Benny literally held his breath in suspense as, under the impulse of six oars, the surf-boat was forced out into that tumult of waters, and ere she had sailed a hundred yards the heavy waves, striking her bow, lifted her up, up, up, until she was literally pitch-poled backwards, throwing every member of the crew into the sea.

A cry of horror burst from the lad's lips as he ran down to the pebbly beach, fancying his puny strength might avail in that terrific struggle which must ensue, for he had good reason to fear that not one of his comrades would reach the shore alive.

The men had prepared themselves for this battle by throwing off all superfluous clothing, despite the chilling wind, and now was shown the advantage which they had over deep-water sailors, for, knowing every trend of the current along the coast, and accustomed to avail themselves of it under all conditions of weather, it was possible for them to do what one who had not been bred to such dangers would have lost his life in doing.

The lad who stood trembling with apprehension on the shore was literally amazed at seeing one after another of the sturdy fellows emerge from the foaming waters, and make his way ashore either by creeping on his hands and knees, or, throwing himself backward upon the crest of a wave, and allow the volume of water to sweep him upon the beach even at the risk of dashing him against the rocks.

No more than ten minutes had elapsed from the time the surf-boat put out before the last member of the crew was on the cliff, all bruised and beaten more or less, but alive and ready for further duty, even at a time when such a duty seemed impossible.



## CHAPTER XII.

### IN THE SURF.

A new day was breaking when the life-saving crew were beat back upon the shore by the waves after their heroic but vain struggle in the surf-boat.

The wind gave evidence of gaining strength as the sun rose, and steadily the waves increased in violence. Now they were dashing against the steamer with the same force as upon the rocky cliffs, and to those ashore it appeared as if every billow of foaming water passed directly over the stranded vessel.

In the minds of the life-saving crew, at least, it was no longer simply a question of the passengers' discomfort, but whether the steamer could withstand the terrific beating and pounding to which she was subjected.

"She must either go to pieces, or be driven nearer inshore," Joe Cushing said, when the crew halted for a moment upon the cliff after their terrible struggle with the surf, and his mates fully agreed with that conclusion.

It was more than probable the captain of the steamer had by this time taken quite as gloomy a view of the situation, for he continued to sound his signals of distress, although, as Sam Hardy said impatiently, "he should have had sufficient sense to know that everything in human power would be done to aid him."

"He may be ignorant of the waters round about here, and have an idea that a tug can get near enough to pass him a hawser," Dick Sawyer suggested, and Keeper Downey replied:

"It will only be necessary for him to look at his chart, which he had better have done yesterday afternoon, in order to learn that no help can be expected from seaward. I am at a loss to know just what is wisest to do, and ask each of you to give his opinion. The tide is now so low that we cannot hope to get the life-boat over the shoals. Perhaps there's one chance in twenty, by putting out into deep water, we might drop down so near as to take off a few; but certain it is all could not be brought ashore in that manner. The question to be decided is, whether we shall make such an attempt, or put forth all our efforts toward getting a line aboard."

The men gave an opinion according to their station numbers, Sam Hardy speaking first, as a matter of course, and his view of the situation appeared to be that of all the others.

"While I'm ready to try what can be done with the life-boat, and will go aboard of her cheerfully, to my mind there are too many chances of failure--which would probably mean death to all concerned--and too few of success to warrant making the attempt. I believe, as Joe Cushing does, that if the steamer isn't stove by the waves she must be driven nearer ashore, in which case we can get a line out to her. Therefore I vote that we put all our dependence upon what may be done from here."

Learning that the others were of the same opinion, and understanding that they might not have very much time at their disposal, Keeper Downey at once gave the necessary orders for setting about this last plan of rescue, which necessitated the bringing up of the beach-apparatus.

"No. 1 and No. 8 are to remain here on duty in order to prevent, if possible, by signal, any effort of the captain toward landing with his own boats, as he suggested," Tom Downey said, speaking hurriedly. "The remainder of the crew will go back to the station with me for the beach-wagon."

Exercise was what the men most needed, wet to the skin as they were after the battle in the surf, and as soon as the order was given they set off at full speed, while Sam Hardy was left with Benny upon the cliff to bear the discomforts as best they might.

"You ought to have gone with the others," No. 8 said solicitously. "Your wet clothes will be frozen long before they can get back, and it don't seem to me as if there was much need of keeping anybody out here in the wind."

"It is necessary, lad, if for no other reason than that the order has been given. In Tom Downey's place I should have made much the same arrangement. Some one of the crew must grin an' bear it in wet clothing, an' because of havin' first been stationed here, I'm the one to bear the brunt."

"But you will freeze to death," Benny cried sharply.

"Not quite so bad as that, lad, for I'll keep movin' about," and Sam suited the action to the words, Benny following close by his side as the surfer ran swiftly to and fro, beating his arms upon his breast for additional exercise.

"Of course we don't always get it quite as tough as this," Sam said when he halted to regain his breath after ten



minutes of this most violent exertion, "an' then again, there are times when it comes harder; so you see, lad, that belonging to a life-saving crew ain't quite as pleasant as you may have thought."

"I didn't count it was an easy life."

"But you can see now that it's best you don't hold to the idea of bein' one of 'em."

"If I was going to be discouraged because of hard work on such a job as this, then I'd best not think of ever bein' a surfman," Benny replied stoutly. "It wasn't on my own account that I said anything; my clothes are dry, and I can keep warm; but I was afraid you'd freeze after having been overboard so long."

"You're a gritty little chap," Sam said admiringly, "almost too much so for one of your years an' build; but don't worry about me. I've been in worse places than this, an' never come to any great harm. If it wasn't that all the work might have been done readily an' without risk, I shouldn't feel like grumblin'; but when a man realizes that the situation has all come about through a pig-headed captain who wouldn't allow we knew anything of the coast, then it seems tough. Howsomever, we're in a box, an' have not only got to get out of it ourselves, but pull others with us,—an' we'll do it, No. 8, we'll do it."

Then Sam resumed the exercise, Benny copying his every movement, and thus alternately running and halting to regain breath, the two passed the time until they could see in the distance the crew, dragging the beach-wagon over the rocks.

"Now that the apparatus is here it can't be used while the steamer lays so far off," Hardy said half to himself, and at that instant a cry of dismay caused him to gaze seaward.

When the waves began to run high the master of the vessel had gotten out anchors fore and aft to prevent her from being driven shoreward.

The parting of the stern cables had caused the cry of dismay from Benny, and as Sam looked in that direction the ship's stern was swung violently around until she lay broadside to the waves, in such position as proved that she would soon be driven inshore virtually a wreck.

"I reckon we'll be able to put a line aboard of her mighty soon," Sam said grimly, waving his arms to attract the attention of the crew that they might hasten their movements, and Benny, seeing an opportunity to be of some slight assistance, ran at full speed to meet the wagon.

"What has happened?" Keeper Downey asked, as the lad joined him at the rear of the cart, the cook holding Sam Hardy's station at the handle-bar.

"The stern cable has parted, sir."

"Shove her along, boys! Shove her along! We'll be able to get a line out now," and as the men strained yet more energetically at the ropes and the handle-bar, Benny put all his little strength into the effort, performing, as Joe Cushing afterward said, "considerably more than half a man's work."

Sam Hardy also joined the crew, and the wagon had no more than been hauled down to the strip of pebbly beach, the only point from which the work could be carried on, when the life savers had yet further evidence of the captain's "pig-headedness."

When he laid alongside the steamer, while urging that the passengers at least be taken ashore, Tom Downey had said all a man might to prevent the master from holding to the plan of launching his own boats; and yet despite such advice, which should have been considered well worthy of being followed, that very manoeuvre was now about to be attempted.

The life-saving crew could see that one of the port boats was being hoisted out, and every man ashore knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that such a craft could not live five minutes in that boiling, yeasty swirl of waters.

With a hope of yet persuading the wilful captain, Tom Downey ignited a Coston signal, and, waving it violently above his head, showed as plainly as man might by such means, that there was danger in the contemplated move.

"It seems to me as if deep-water sailors lose their heads at such a time," Joe Cushing cried, observing that the work went on aboard the steamer despite the keeper's warnings. "The captain must have seen that we failed to keep the surf-boat on her bottom, but yet he expects to do with his cockleshell what we couldn't with a craft built especially for the purpose!"

Joe was not the only member of the crew who criticised harshly the methods of the steamer's commander; every man gave words to the indignation in his heart, but yet the foolhardy work went on rapidly, as if those on board the stranded craft were eager to meet their doom.

That they were anxious to leave their steamer seemed probable, even to Benny, for the waves were now rolling

completely over her, and at every surge she was driven higher and higher up on the shoal until the surfmen began to fear she would be rolled completely over.

The work of making ready to send out a line was begun as soon as the wagon had been placed in position, and the men labored none the less energetically and expeditiously because they glanced from time to time at the tiny boat swinging at the davits, in which the steamer's crew were taking their stations.

The gun was not yet loaded when the boat, with a crew of eight men, dropped into the water at a moment when the receding waves made such a manoeuvre possible, and then, to the surprise of the life savers, all the sailors were seen working at the oars, while no one appeared to be steering.



**THE BOAT FROM THE STEAMER.**

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"It isn't enough that they must attempt an impossibility!" Tom Downey cried angrily. "They're bent on doing all within their power to provoke destruction. What kind of a sailor can he be who believes it possible to put a craft of any kind through the surf without a helmsman?"

No one made reply to this outburst. The surfmen on shore understood that even though the oncoming craft had been a life-boat, it meant certain disaster to handle her in such manner.

And that disaster came even sooner than they expected.

Before the little craft had cleared more than a third of the distance from the steamer to the shore, she was overturned by a heavy breaker which raised the stern higher and higher until the bow was forced into the trough of the sea, and the boat disappeared entirely.

As the waves rose the eight men could be seen struggling amid the foaming waters, and this sight caused the life savers to forget their previous failure--their late struggle amid that same surf, wherein death so nearly overtook them.

"Come on, boys!" Downey shouted, throwing off his outer clothing as he ran swiftly to where the surf-boat, having drifted ashore, was lying beyond reach of the waves. "We can't stand here and see them drown, however the disaster has been caused!"

Benny ran with the crew, clutching at Sam Hardy's garments as if begging him not to make the venture which apparently meant positive death; but yet daring to speak no word.

Once more they ran breast-deep into the water, and, clambering over the gunwale as the surf-boat was borne swiftly outward by the receding wave, took up their oars. Again they battled against wind and tide, heading straight onward to where the seven struggling wretches could be seen--one had already disappeared. Two of the steamer's men were striking out for the shore, and appeared to be making fair headway, while five others were clustered near the capsized boat, apparently making no decided effort to save themselves, except by keeping their heads above water.

It seemed to Benny that the surf-boat must be turned end over end before she was thirty yards from the shore, in the same manner as during the first attempt to put off; but Keeper Downey handled her with consummate skill, and, owing to the fact that the tide was ebbing, he succeeded in keeping her on a comparatively even keel, avoiding the two swimmers in order to direct his first efforts toward those who appeared unable to help themselves.

The lad ashore followed with his eyes every movement made by his comrades, literally ceasing to breathe when the surf-boat was thrown high up by the swell, and then panting heavily, as if sharing in the exercise, when the crew strained every muscle to force her over the next foaming wave.

Inch by inch, combating both wind and current, their lives hanging in the balance when the little craft was poised on the crest of some gigantic roller, the brave life savers advanced until they had come to the group of five who still paddled wildly around the overturned boat.

This was a moment most fraught with peril, and Benny clenched his hands until the nails almost cut the flesh, so great was his suspense and fear, as one after another of the men was hauled over the boat's rail, saved, if the crew could gain the shore again.

The two who had been swimming were by this time within the line of shore-breakers, moving slowly as if nearly exhausted, and No. 8 saw his opportunity of doing real life-saving work.

Seizing a coil of rope from the beach-wagon, he ran with all speed to the very edge of the water, when, standing motionless for an instant to make certain of his aim, he flung one end out over the waves.

Fortunately the wind forced the rope slightly aside, otherwise it would have gone so far to windward of the struggling men as to be of no avail.

As it was, however, this seeming accident was of the greatest possible advantage, since the coils dropped almost directly upon the heads of the struggling men, as fairly as Tom Downey or Sam Hardy could have sent it.

Both the swimmers clutched it at the same instant, and then it was Benny began to fear he had attempted what it would be impossible to carry out. His strength was not sufficient to enable him to pull both the sailors in--in fact, a single man drawn back by that undertow would have been too heavy a burden for the lad--and while one might have counted five he stood irresolute, trembling with fear, for it seemed that he had begun the work only to meet with failure.

Glancing quickly around as if hoping to see some one who would lend assistance, his eyes rested upon a spare tail-block in the beach-wagon, and now did his experience on shipboard serve him in good stead.

With the least possible delay he made this fast to the wheel of the wagon in such fashion that the drag would come upon the cart sideways, and, as soon as might be, rove the casting-line through the block.

Now he had a purchase which was equivalent to the strength of three men when used on the rope without a block, and he strained every muscle in this his first attempt at life-saving, believing that unless he was successful the sailors would perish in the surf. The strain forced the wheel of the wagon deep into the pebbly beach, and, consequently, the purchase held fast, while he, bracing himself against the wheel, hauled and tugged until the skin on the inner side of his fingers was broken in several places; but he finally succeeded in the effort.

Lest it appear incredible that a lad only twelve years of age should be able to perform such a feat, let it be borne in

mind that Benny knew full well the value of such a purchase as was formed by the tail-block, having learned this while on shipboard, and that his excitement and desire to save life lent him a certain fictitious strength, for positive it is on that day Benny Foster, unaided, except by the rope and block, saved two lives.

While the rescued men were so near inshore as to be able to gain a footing, their hold upon the rope prevented them from being carried back by the undertow, giving them a means of standing steadily when otherwise the surf would have swept them out to sea again, and during the momentary lull both succeeded in running beyond reach of the waters.

Then it was they fell on the shore as if dead; but the lad who rescued them knew full well they were only exhausted. Not until he was assured of their safety, did Benny allow himself to look seaward, and then his heart was filled with thankfulness, for the surf-boat laden gunwale deep with her crew and those that had been snatched from the raging waters, was coming like an arrow toward the shore on the crest of a wave that had in it such force as must land her beyond the reach of danger.

Out of eight men who had tempted death in a venture which was the height of foolhardiness, seven were brought safely to land by the life-saving crew, among whom should be numbered Benny Foster.

The lad only waited to assure himself that his comrades were safe, when he turned his attention to the men whom he had dragged ashore; but they stood in little need of his services, for by this time both were fully conscious, and before Benny could so much as speak, Sam Hardy, having leaped out of the boat, had caught the boy in his arms.

"You've done that, No. 8, of which any one of us might well be proud, and he who says you're not a member of this crew, is makin' the mistake of his life! You were born to the work, my boy, and have got the heart to carry it through!"

So great had been the lad's excitement that he was hardly aware of the service he had rendered, until each of the men in turn had some word of praise or congratulation to bestow, and not the least was that which came from Tom Downey, who said as he hurried on toward the gun:

"If you don't get a medal for this morning's work, No. 8, it's because we can't tell the story in the proper way, for you've earned one if ever man did!"

No more than two or three minutes in all had been spent by the life savers upon the lad, for each had greeted him while pressing on to take his proper station, and by the time Benny fully understood what the keeper's words signified, every member of the crew was performing the necessary work toward sending out the breeches-buoy.

While the rescue was being effected the steamer had been driven yet higher up on the shoal, and was now so near the shore as to render it a comparatively simple matter to send the line-carrying shot over her deck.

Once communication was established Benny took his station at the whip in the rear of the shifting-man, hauling with a will, and heeding not the laborious exertion until one after another, first the passengers, then the crew, and lastly the captain were brought ashore.

The master of the steamer made no verbal comment upon the work when he clambered out from the breeches-buoy.

He clasped Keeper Downey's hand for an instant, looking into the latter's eyes as if acknowledging his fault, and then turning to Benny, said:

"I saw what you did, lad, and the best man of your crew couldn't have accomplished the rescue more expeditiously."

The two men whom the lad had saved now came forward as if to give words to their thankfulness, but Keeper Downey prevented any further conversation by saying sharply:

"Captain, you will get your people together and start them at once for the station. No. 8 will show the way, and see to it that you are provided with dry clothing."

The captain looked around as if asking who No. 8 might be, when Joe Cushing cried:

"He's that whifflet in front of you, captain. It may seem strange that a lad of his size is a member of a life-saving crew, an' it's true he don't figure on the list; but all the same he has his place with us, an' always will till he himself shall want to leave the service."

Benny's face was crimsoned when he turned to conduct the rescued party along the coast, and he walked some distance in advance fearing lest further praise might be bestowed upon him.

Before having gone a dozen yards he heard Tom Downey say to the cook:

"Follow on, my man, for the chances are those people will need something warm; but you'll remember that No. 8 is in charge until I get back."

This was the height of honor, so Benny believed, and he no longer thought of the medal which might possibly be his, because of the fact that the keeper had shown most conclusively that he was a member of the crew of equal standing with the others.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### "NUMBER EIGHT."

Although he had remained on duty since the previous afternoon, and, counting the time spent in the city with Sam Hardy, had been without rest full forty-four hours, Benny insisted on doing his equal share of work in the kitchen when the crew and passengers of the stranded steamer arrived at the station.

It was so late in the day, and the crew yet had so much labor to perform, that there would not be time in which to make the necessary arrangements for sending into town until the following day those who had been rescued from the steamer, therefore the station was a scene of bustling activity.

The officers and crew of the steamer were to be given a hearty meal before they joined the life-saving crew in patrolling the shore on the lookout for such wreckage as might be driven in from their craft, and after that had been done the passengers must be cared for.

"With the addition to our family of thirty-eight, work here in the station will be right lively," the cook said to Benny when the latter, after providing with dry clothing such of the rescued as were in need, presented himself in the kitchen; "but for all that I can run the concern without calling on a boy who hasn't been in bed since night before last."

"I'm no more tired than any other member of the crew, and want to do my share," Benny insisted. "I'd be a pretty poor No. 8 if I couldn't hold my own with those who have done twice as much work."

"You've kept even pace with all hands, accordin' to what I've heard, an' it'll please me better to see you in the other room taking care of Fluff C. Foster."

"He don't need me while all those ladies are petting him. Of course he was glad to see me after being alone in the station so long; but while I was getting out the dry clothing he made friends with some of the passengers, and now hasn't time to more than look at me."

"Has he got his medal on?"

"Do you think I'd let him wear that all the time?" and Benny set about paring potatoes as if he had but just come on duty. "I took it off the very minute we got back from the city."

"You ought to let him have it, for surely the people will be interested in knowing he has won such an honor. There ain't many dogs who can show as much, an' it isn't fair to keep it from him just now. You must go back and tell the whole story."

Benny hesitated. He was eager that Fluff should have all the credit due him, but feared lest by displaying the medal his motives might be misunderstood.

"Do you suppose they'd think I was trying to make out he was something wonderful?"

"Now don't be too modest, Benjamin. Fluff really was the means of saving Mr. Bradford's life, and it's only fair to let people know about it."

Thus urged, Benny did as the cook desired, and nearly half an hour elapsed before he returned to the kitchen.

"It seemed as if I'd never get away," he said apologetically, taking up the first work which presented itself, and quickening his movements to atone for lost time. "They made me tell the story over and over again, and now Fluff's having a terrible good time."

"That's as it should be, and I only wish they'd kept you longer, for I don't like to see a tired lad hustling around here."

"I sha'n't hurt myself," Benny replied with a laugh, determined not to be prevented from attending to his regular duties, except by a positive command from Keeper Downey.

The members of the crew were too busy to give much heed to No. 8. The tugs, which had finally come in response to the messages sent, were lying-to outside, communicating with the keeper by signals; all the gear used was to be put away in proper order that it might be got at without loss of time should occasion arise, and three of the men had been sent back on the bluff to watch for wreckage from the steamer. In fact, all was bustle and seeming confusion until after the keeper issued imperative orders that Benny make up a bed for himself in the kitchen, and go to sleep.

The number of the rescued was so large that all the apartments in the station, save the kitchen itself, were given up

to them, the crew lying down when their turns to rest came, wherever sufficient space could be found.

Regardless of the noise consequent upon so many people being crowded into such small quarters, Benny slept as only a tired boy can, until the cook aroused him by building the fire next morning in order to cook breakfast.

"Of course I'm all right," he said in reply to the question as to his condition; "but I must have been terrible sleepy last night, for I've let Fluff wear his collar and medal all night."

"That won't do any harm, and, besides, he's bound to keep his ornaments on till our visitors leave. I reckon we'll soon have the station to ourselves, an' I for one won't be sorry. This sleepin' on the kitchen floor with not so much as a blanket to ease up on the boards, ain't particularly pleasant, accordin' to the way I look at it."

"I could have slept on a rock last night, I was so tired," Benny replied, with a cheerful laugh as he began his toilet, promising Fluff that he should have his hair combed before the ladies appeared. "How are they going away?"

"It was settled last night, over the telephone, that if the wind died down, a tug would be out here about eight o'clock, and it's so calm now that there won't be any trouble in putting them aboard."

"I wonder if the steamer was stove to pieces?"

"Joe Cushing was the last man in, and he reported that she was then in fair condition for hauling off. The wrecking crews will soon be at work, and if the weather holds good it may be possible to save her."

"Will our crew be called upon?"

"Not a bit of it. All that is done by contract, and those who take the job have no right to ask for the services of the life-saving men. Why don't you take a spin out there, an' see how she looks?"

"I guess it'll be more to my credit if I stay here pretty close while there's so much work to be done," Benny replied with a laugh, and then, his own toilet having been made, he set about combing Fluff, an operation which was never greatly enjoyed by the dog.

While No. 8 was busily engaged in helping the cook, several of the lady passengers from the steamer held a private interview with Keeper Downey, and it seemed as if they had no slight amount of business to settle, for not until breakfast had been served did the conference come to an end.

Before the meal was finished a tug hove to off the cove, and Sam Hardy announced that the passengers from the stranded steamer could be put on board whenever they were ready to leave.

Before taking their departure every woman and man shook hands most cordially with Benny, and one of the ladies whispered in his ear:

"You must not refuse to accept what has been left for you and Fluff. Each of us considered it a favor to be allowed to add something, and when your school days begin it will be needed."

Benny was wholly at a loss to understand the meaning of these words, and when he asked Sam Hardy if he knew to what the lady referred, that jolly surferman said with a laugh:

"You'll find out in time, No. 8, and it may be worth your while to look at Article 151 of the *Revised Regulations*."

Benny waited until all those who were to be taken to the city had been put on board the tug, for none but the passengers were to leave the vicinity, the crew and officers of the steamer remaining to assist in the labor of floating the steamer, and then he set about finding the article to which Sam Hardy referred.

Twice over he read the following lines, and even then he was puzzled to understand what bearing they could have upon the remark made by the lady.

"The regular crews of stations are not entitled to salvage, it being part of their duty, as Government employees, to assist, without charge, in saving property from wrecked vessels, so far as it can be done without interfering with the duty of saving life, which must always be the paramount consideration, or injuring the effectiveness of the appliances for prompt service at any moment. They are not, however, prohibited from claiming reasonable compensation for the use of boats, wagons, or other appliances, personally belonging to them, which may be employed upon such occasions, nor from receiving such rewards for labor performed, or risk incurred at wrecks, as owners or masters of vessels or other persons may see fit to *voluntarily* bestow upon them, but they are strictly forbidden to solicit such rewards."

The crew of the station had not been served with breakfast before the departure of the tug, owing to lack of space for so many in the mess-room, therefore they were alone once more when the cook summoned them to the long-delayed meal.

As he took his seat at the table, Benny fancied his comrades looked unusually sharp at him; but no one made any

comment, until the hunger of all had been satisfied, when Keeper Downey asked:

"Didn't I see one of the ladies whispering to you just before the passengers went on board the tug?"

"Yes, sir," Benny replied, and then he repeated what she had said, together with the conversation between himself and Sam Hardy.

"Well, did you look up Article 151?"

"Yes, sir; but I couldn't find out anything by that."

"I'll explain it, No. 8, and while I'm doing so remember that I'm the captain of this crew, and my orders are to be obeyed without question."

"Yes, sir," Benny said hesitatingly, almost alarmed by this stern reminder of authority.

"After the passengers heard what Fluff had done, they were naturally curious to know why a lad like you was living in such a place, and it became necessary to tell the story. You can hardly wonder that every one of them was eager to show due appreciation of our services, and it was decided among them that it could best be done by making some little provision for the future of you and Fluff C. Foster, although all knew you belong to us, if it so chances that no relatives come forward to claim you."

"I haven't got any relatives, except it might be second-hand ones who never so much as heard of me," Benny interrupted.

"We can almost hope you haven't, No. 8, for we couldn't afford to spare you from this 'ere crew," Joe Cushing said emphatically, and Tom Downey motioned that all remain silent.

"The passengers made up a purse for the lad who, unaided, saved the lives of two men, and in Article 151 you'll find that you're allowed to receive whatever may be given you voluntarily."

"Do you mean that they've paid me money?" Benny asked sharply.

"Yes, and it was with the full approval of every member of this crew, except yourself. By making up a purse for you and Fluff, a great compliment was paid to us, and as such you must receive it without any back talk. I've got here one hundred and thirty dollars, which is to be put into the bank for your benefit, and as the lady said, it will come in handy when you begin to go to school."

Mr. Downey displayed the money, but Benny made no attempt to touch it, and Sam Hardy took it upon himself to banish the lad's scruples in regard to receiving it.

"There ain't a man among us who would refuse a gift made in the same spirit that was, No. 8, an' we take it as a compliment to ourselves. It would have pleased us better if the passengers themselves could have put the money in your hands; but we felt afraid you'd be so backward about acceptin' it as to give them the idea such a token wasn't to your likin', so the keeper took the matter in charge. We want you to be glad, for the rest of us are feelin' mighty fine because it has been done."

Benny could make no reply just then, and his comrades understood the reason; but later he came to look at the matter in a different light, and asked Tom Downey to write a letter thanking the passengers for their kindness.

The crew had but little time to spend on private affairs just at this moment. The wrecking crew went to work on the stranded steamer that same day, and all hands were interested in watching the operations, which were not brought to an end for many days, when the vessel was hauled off the shoal with no more damage than might have been expected.

Some time before the work came to an end the life-saving crew settled down once more to the regular routine of duty, and Sam Hardy suggested that No. 8 spend all his spare time studying the printed rules for the management of open row-boats in a surf.

"It's what every lad should know, Benjamin, whether he counts on becoming a surfman or not, and you must have it all well in mind before spring, when I'm goin' to give you plenty of practice in such work."

Under this inducement it is not to be wondered at that Benny at once became unusually studious, and on the day before his uniform arrived, it was possible for him to repeat all which is here set down for the benefit of those lads who may not have such an able teacher as Sam Hardy.

"As a general rule, speed must be given to a boat rowing against a heavy surf. Indeed, under some circumstances, her safety will depend on the utmost possible speed being attained on meeting a sea. For if the sea be really heavy, and the wind blowing a hard on-shore gale, it can only be by the utmost exertions of the crew that any headway can be made. The great danger then is, that an approaching heavy sea may carry the boat away on its front, and turn it broadside on, or up-end it, either effect being immediately fatal. A boat's only chance in such a case is to obtain such



way as shall enable her to pass, end on, through the crest of the sea, and leave it as soon as possible behind her. Of course, if there be a rather heavy surf, but no wind, or the wind off shore, and opposed to the surf, as is often the case, a boat might be propelled so rapidly through it that her bow would fall more suddenly and heavily after topping the sea than if her way had been checked; and it may, therefore, only be when the sea is of such magnitude, and the boat of such a character, that there may be a chance of the former carrying her back before it, that full speed should be given her.

"It may also happen that, by careful management under such circumstances, a boat may be made to avoid the sea, so that each wave may break ahead of her, which may be the only chance of safety in a small boat; but if the shore be flat, and the broken water extends to a great distance from it, this will often be impossible.

"If sufficient command can be kept over a boat by the skill of those on board her, avoid or 'dodge' the sea, if possible, so as not to meet it at the moment of its breaking or curling over.

"Against a head gale and heavy surf, get all possible speed on a boat on the approach of every sea which cannot be avoided.

"If more speed can be given to a boat than is sufficient to prevent her being carried back by the surf, her way may be checked on its approach, which will give her an easier passage over it.

"The one great danger, when running before a broken sea, is that of broaching-to. To that peculiar effect of the sea, so frequently destructive of human life, the utmost attention must be directed.

"The cause of a boat's broaching-to when running before a broken sea or surf is, that her own motion being in the same direction as that of the sea, whether it be given by the force of oars or sails, or by the force of the sea itself, she opposes no resistance to it, but is carried before it. Thus, if a boat be running with her bow to the shore and her stern to the sea, the first effect of the surf or roller, on its overtaking her, is to throw up the stern, and as a consequence to depress the bow; if she then has sufficient inertia (which will be proportional to weight) to allow the sea to pass her, she will in succession pass through the descending, the horizontal, and the ascending positions, as the crest of the wave passes successively her stern, her midships, and her bow, in the reverse order in which the same positions occur to a boat propelled to seaward against a surf. This may be defined as the safe mode of running before a broken sea.

"But if a boat, on being overtaken by a heavy surf, has not sufficient inertia to allow it to pass her, the first of the three positions above enumerated alone occurs; her stern is raised high in the air, and the wave carries the boat before it, on its front or unsafe side, sometimes with frightful velocity, the bow all the time deeply immersed in the hollow of the sea, where the water, stationary or comparatively so, offers a resistance, whilst the crest of the sea, having the actual motion which causes it to break, forces onward the stern or rear end of the boat. A boat will, in this position sometimes, aided by careful oar-steering, run a considerable distance until the wave has broken and expended itself. But it will often happen that if the bow be low it will be driven under water, when, the buoyancy being lost forward, whilst the sea presses on the stern, the boat will be thrown (as it is termed) end over end; or, if the bow be high, or it be protected, as in most lifeboats, by a bow air-chamber, so that it does not become submerged, that the resistance forward, acting on one bow, will slightly turn the boat's head, and the force of the surf being transferred to the opposite quarter, she will in a moment be turned round broadside by the sea, and be thrown by it on her beam ends or altogether capsized.

"Hence, it follows, that the management of a boat, when landing through a heavy surf, must, as far as possible, be assimilated to that when proceeding to seaward against one, at least so far as to stop her progress shoreward at the moment of being overtaken by a heavy sea, and thus enabling it to pass her. There are different ways of effecting this object:

"1. By turning a boat's head to the sea before entering the broken water, and then backing in stern foremost, pulling a few strokes ahead to meet each heavy sea, and then again backing astern. If the sea be really heavy and a boat small, this plan will generally be the safest, as a boat cannot be kept more under command when the full force of the oars can be used against a heavy surf than by backing them only.

"2. If rowing to shore with the stern to seaward, by backing all the oars on the approach of a heavy sea, and rowing ahead again as soon as it has passed to the bow of the boat, thus rowing it on the back of the wave; or, as is practiced in some life-boats, placing the after-oarsmen with their faces forward and making them row back at each sea on its approach.

"3. If rowed in bow foremost, by towing astern a pig of ballast or large stone, or a large basket, or canvas bag, termed a 'drogue' or drag, made for the purpose, the object of each being to hold the boat's stern back, and prevent her being turned broadside to the sea or broaching-to.

"Heavy weights should be kept out of the extreme ends of a boat; but when rowing before a heavy sea the best trim is deepest by the stern, which prevents the stern being readily thrown on one side by the sea.

"The following general rules may therefore be depended on when running before, or attempting to land, through a heavy surf or broken water.

"1. As far as possible, avoid each sea by placing the boat where the sea will break ahead or astern of her.

"2. If the sea be very heavy, or if the boat be very small, and especially if she have a square stern, bring her bow round to seaward and back her in, rowing ahead against each heavy surf that cannot be avoided sufficiently to allow it to pass the boat.

"3. If it be considered safe to proceed to the shore bow foremost, back the oars against each sea on its approach, so as to stop the boat's way through the water as far as possible, and if there is a drogue, or any other instrument in the boat which may be used as one, tow it astern to aid in keeping the boat end on to the sea, which is the chief object in view.

"4. Bring the principal weights in the boat towards the end that is to seaward, but not to the extreme end."

All of these rules Benny was called upon to repeat aloud before the entire crew, and in the discussion which followed he learned very much which would be valuable when the time came that he could put the teaching into practice; but all his comrades assured him that if he would keep this one lesson well in mind, he might be depended upon to manage a boat in broken water without first having had any experience.

"I'll be glad when I can handle the surf-boat," he said as he took Fluff in his arms preparatory to going to bed.

"That will come in good time, lad, never fear," Keeper Downey said cheerily; "but you'll be called upon to wait patiently until warmer weather is here. In the meantime we've something important on hand to-morrow."

Benny looked at him questioningly, and the keeper asked:

"Have you forgotten that the uniform should be done by this time, and to-morrow's my day for going into the city?"

"I didn't forget it, sir."

"Then why hadn't you spoken about it?" Joe Cushing asked impatiently.

"I was afraid perhaps Mr. Downey had changed his mind about going to the city, and besides I didn't want you to think I couldn't wait."

"There's little fear of your being too forward, my lad," Sam Hardy said with a hearty laugh. "We must see to it that you're called regularly to meals, or you'll get the idea that perhaps we'd like it better if you missed one or two. The uniform is to be here to-morrow, an' if anything had prevented the keeper from going to town, I'd pulled in and back myself, for I'm mighty anxious to see you togged out in proper fashion, even if you do feel so moderate about it."

"Of course I want the uniform," Benny added quickly; "but I'd rather wait a week than have any of the crew put themselves out to get it."

Then the lad, holding the dog affectionately in his arms, ascended the stairs to the sleeping quarters, and when he had disappeared from view, Sam Hardy said emphatically:

"Accordin' to my way of thinkin', it's seldom you run across so good a lad as No. 8."

"You're right there," Mr. Downey added. "All that troubles me in the matter is the fear that we may not be doing quite our duty by the boy in keeping him here with us, when he should be at school."

"Don't let that fret you; he'll learn enough wherever he is, an' it's a heap of satisfaction to the little shaver when he believes he's paying his own way," Joe Cushing said quickly, and Dick Sawyer cried emphatically:

"If he don't do all of that, then I'd like to see the boy, or man either for that matter, who does!"



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE WRECKERS.

The crew at the station were, even under ordinary circumstances, out of bed early in the morning; but since the wreckers had been at work on the stranded steamer there was little possibility any one, except a very deaf person, could sleep after the first signs of day appeared in the sky.

The wrecking tugs, when they did not return to the city at nightfall, anchored off the cove near the station, and their whistles were sounded vigorously fully half an hour before daybreak, in order that the men might be ready for work as soon as there was sufficient light.

As Sam Hardy said, "it came pretty rough on a fellow who'd been patrolling the coast till midnight, to be wakened at four o'clock," but grumbling on the part of the life savers effected no change in the situation, and as a rule breakfast had been eaten before the man whose tour of duty ended only at daylight, had returned to the station.

On this morning when Tom Downey was to visit the city, all hands had been awakened even earlier than usual, and the keeper set off a full hour before Joe Cushing, who had the last trick at patrolling, came into the building.

"It's like to be a long day for us, lad," Sam Hardy said as he entered the kitchen where Benny was washing the breakfast dishes. "I'm thinkin' you can't be so very busy 'twixt now an' eleven o'clock."

"There's nothing to be done around the house, so I counted on studying the *Regulations* for a while."

"It won't do you any harm to drop that kind of work for a spell; you already know more of that precious book than any of us, except it may be Tom Downey, an' there's danger you'll grow too wise in the work of life-saving. What do you say to havin' a look at the wreckers? They are gettin' well along with their job, an' I allow the tugs will make a try at pullin' the steamer off when this tide rises."

"I'd like to go if it would be all right to leave," Benny said thoughtfully, as he looked inquiringly at the cook, and the latter replied to the unspoken question:

"There's no reason why you shouldn't have an outin', lad. It'll do you solid good, for you've been shut up here too long. What about Fluff C. Foster?"

"I wouldn't like to take him with me, for it's too cold on the rocks, and where there are so many men at work he might get hurt."

"Very well, leave him behind, an' I'll answer for it that he comes to no harm. Maje has given over all ideas of botherin' him, and, besides, if you say the word, he sha'n't be allowed to poke his pink nose out of doors."

Benny put on the pea-jacket which was large enough to serve him as an overcoat, pulled the flaps of the sou'-wester over his ears, and, just as the sun was coming up from behind the restless expanse of water, the two set out, walking at full speed, for the cold was too intense to admit of any pleasant lingering by the way.

When they arrived at the scene of the wrecking operations it appeared very much to No. 8 as if Joe Cushing had made a mistake when he declared that the steamer might be saved. To the lad she looked like a hopeless wreck.

The sea had thrown her on her beam ends, and then forced her so high up on the shoal that nearly half the bottom was exposed to view. The bridge, a greater portion of both rails, and nearly everything on deck was missing, while the wreckage along shore explained where the top-hammer had gone.

"Been used rather rough, eh?" Hardy said as he and Benny stood on the cliff where a full view of the wreck could be had.

"It doesn't seem possible that they can get her off, or, even if that might be done, that she would be fit for sea again."

"In a mishap like this the worst of the mischief is all on the outside, lad. Most likely her hull is as sound as ever, and it only remains to get her afloat, when a little carpenter-work will finish the job. It's a pity the steamers couldn't go alongside, for then she might be raised in short order."

The wrecking tugs were lying some distance off shore, and lighters had been drifted down over the shoal to the steamer's side. A large number of men were at work making ready to break the cargo; others were running out anchors to prevent her being driven any further ashore, and yet another crew was gathering up the odds and ends which had

been driven ashore.

Half a dozen small boats were moving back and forth from the steamer to the shore, and after surveying the scene from the cliff until the chilling wind suggested a retreat, Sam Hardy said:

"It wouldn't be a bad idea to go on board, lad. What do you say to looking the old hooker over?"

"Do you think they'll allow us on her, sir?"

"I reckon there won't be any great row about it, lad. After what our crew, an' especially you, have done, it would be odd if we should be warned to keep off."

Benny was eager for a nearer view of the steamer, and Sam led the way down to the narrow beach where so much of heroism had been displayed.

"Hello, mates, will you take us off to the wreck?" Sam cried to four men who were launching a surf-boat bearing the name of a well-known wrecking tug.

"That we will, although I should think you might have seen enough already of yonder steamer," one of the party replied cheerily.

"We had too big a job on our hands to spend very much time in looking her over; but it's possible to take things easier this morning, an' I'd like to see how badly she's been punished," Sam replied as he and Benny stood by to take their places in the boat.

"She isn't in bad shape, an' if the weather holds good we'll soon have her afloat," he who was in charge of the boat said in a matter-of-fact tone, and after they had put off he asked, nodding toward Benny:

"Is that lad a member of the crew?"

"Ay, that he is, an' one who don't spend much idle time when we're pushed, as was the case when this steamer came ashore."

"Where's the boy who hauled the two sailors out of the water? The steamer's captain was tellin' about it."

"This is the same identical lad," Sam replied with a laugh.

"That little shaver couldn't haul his own weight through such a surf as was runnin' when yonder craft struck the shoal," the man replied decidedly, giving no more than a passing glance at Benny, who looked even smaller than ever beneath the huge pea-jacket.

"But he did, matey, an' what's more, set about it in sailor-like fashion, finishin' the job as quickly as you or I could have done it."

Then Sam went into the details of the rescue effected by Benny, while the lad kept his face turned seaward lest the men should see and laugh at his blushes.

"Well, that beats me!" the sailor at the helm cried when Sam's story was come to an end. "A lad who can do such a trick as that while everything is in confusion, as it must have been then, has good stuff in him."

"That's what he has," Sam replied proudly, "an' we put on a good many airs because he belongs to our crew."

From this moment Benny received far more attention than was altogether agreeable to him. The crew of the surf-boat told those on board the steamer that he was the lad who had displayed so much bravery and sound common-sense when human lives were in danger, and every man seemed eager to give him some word of praise, until the boy was so uncomfortable in mind that he wished heartily he had never been tempted to visit the wreck.

The workmen had more important matters to occupy their attention, however, and after devoting a few moments to No. 8 they left him alone with Sam Hardy, who said with a hearty laugh:

"You've made a big reputation for yourself, lad, and this summer, when visitors come out to the station, as they do nearly every pleasant day, we'll be obliged to trot you and Fluff C. Foster out on parade as our swell life savers."

"Then I sha'n't want to stay there. I wouldn't have come over here if I'd known the men would say so much."

"Why, surely, you're not ashamed of yesterday's work, lad?"

"Not because I helped the men ashore; but it makes me feel mean to hear people praising me for doing what any other fellow would have done. It must be a pretty poor kind of a boy who couldn't throw a rope out to a drowning man, and I'd missed both of them if the wind hadn't sent the coils in a different direction from which I was aiming."

"Well, Benjamin, allow it all to be as you've said, you'll have to put up with some praise for a spell, an' then folks will forget it, for in this world a fellow can't live very long on what he's done in the past. They're takin' off the hatches

now, an' I'm minded to have a look at the hold of this 'ere craft. Come on."

Benny followed, but there was to him nothing particularly interesting in the cargo, and as it could not be seen from the deck, he left Sam and went aft, where he might watch the movements of the tugs as they pulled the lighters here and there in such position that the wind and current would send them down over the shoal to the wreck.

This last portion of the work soon engrossed the attention of all the wrecking crew, including those who had been making an examination of the steamer's hold, for considerable difficulty was experienced in moving the heavy lighters to and fro, and after a time Benny realized that he and Sam were the only ones left aboard the steamer.

"We'll be obliged to stay here till one of the boats is alongside," he said to himself, and then came the thought that he was spending too much time in pleasuring when he should be attending to his regular duties in the station kitchen.

"Perhaps Mr. Hardy will be ready to go now," he said, running forward toward the hatch where the surfman had last been seen.

The decks were deserted, and he saw no signs of life on the ship. It was as if he had been abandoned, and but for the many craft near at hand he might have had a very disagreeable sensation of utter loneliness. As a matter of fact, something much like a shudder of fear came over him with the first knowledge that he was alone; but he forced it back with a laugh as he said aloud:

"If people could know that I'm almost afraid of being here, even though there are an hundred men within hail, I wouldn't need to bother my head about being called a hero when I don't deserve the name."

As he ceased speaking an odd, indistinct murmur came from the dark hold, causing him to step back toward the rail quickly; but he advanced again an instant later, angry with himself for being such a coward.

Once more came that strange noise; but, half-expecting it, Benny held his ground, determined to learn the cause, since, until Sam Hardy should return, he had nothing better with which to occupy himself.

Leaning over the hatch he peered down into the darkness.

The space between decks was apparently empty, and he heard the water gurgling far below in the lower hold.

"That must be what I heard," he said, speaking aloud, and the words had no more than been uttered when it seemed as if amid the gurgling noise he could distinguish his own name.

"Ahoy!" he cried, smiling to think he should be so foolish as to answer the water; but an instant later his face grew pale as he heard plainly the words:

"Benny! Benny Foster!"

There was but one in the vicinity who would thus address him, and although it seemed impossible Sam Hardy could be in that apparently empty hold, he leaned far over as he shouted:

"Is that you, Mr. Hardy?"

"Ay, lad, come quick! I can't hold out much longer!"

Now Benny was alarmed, and with good cause.

Leading down to the second deck was a single stanchion; the ladder had been torn or carried away. Heeled over as the steamer was, this timber stood at an inclination of forty-five degrees, and at its foot the deck had about the same inclination in the opposite direction.

Benny waited only so long as was necessary in order to throw off his pea-jacket, and then slipped down the stanchion, holding hard on reaching the deck below lest he should slide to port.

Here all was darkness, save for the square of gray light that marked the location of the hatch, and the lad tried in vain to pierce it with his eyes in search for the surfman.

"Where are you, Mr. Hardy?" he cried falteringly. "I can't make out anything."

"Hanging by a rope below the second hatchway. It swings so far to port that I can't pull myself up, and I don't dare to drop for fear the distance may be too great. Lean over and try to get hold of me, lad; I only need a little aid, for it is possible to help myself a good bit."

Now it was only necessary Benny should feel along the upper side of the hatchway in order to find the rope by which the surfman was suspended, and the first thought was that he could readily pull his comrade up.

With the deck at such an inclination he could get no secure foothold, and the first attempt was sufficient to show him that the task was beyond his strength.

"Can you wait till I go on the upper deck?" he asked anxiously. "There are plenty of men close by; but all hands have left the steamer."

"Go ahead, lad, but move quickly. I've hung here until it seems as if my arms were pulled out of their sockets."

Benny sought the stanchion by which he had descended, and, gaining it, soon understood that he could no more work his way unaided to the top than Hardy could swarm up the rope while it swung so far away from the side of the vessel.

It seemed to him as if he had spent many minutes in the vain task, when in reality no more than a dozen seconds had been sufficient in which to prove that it was useless, and then he allowed himself to fall back again toward where the rope was made fast.

"I can't get up," he cried in a tearful voice. "Suppose I lean way over the hatch till you can get hold of my arms? The two of us should be able to work it in that fashion."

"I'd pull you down, lad; there's no use in trying anything like that. If it's certain you can't get on deck, I'll take the chances of what may be below, an' drop."

"Don't do it! Don't do it! Let me try just once!" and without waiting for a reply Benny bent far over the combing of the hatch, twining his legs around the stanchion.

By letting himself down nearly at full length he found to his great joy that he could touch the surfman's shoulders.

"Now I'll get hold, and you shall put your arms around my neck," he cried as if asking some great favor.

"Don't try it, lad, for I'll surely drag you down. It may be that I can drop without much hurt, and even a broken bone to one, is better than for us to fall together."

"Try it!" Benny screamed, seizing Sam by the neck. "Get hold of me!"

The surfman had no alternative, unless the boy should loosen his hold, and, letting go of the rope with one hand, he clasped the other around Benny's arms.

"Now get hold with the other, and then shin up! I can hold on here quite a spell!"

Even now the heavy strain was beginning to tell upon the lad, and Sam understood that if anything was to be accomplished it must be done in the shortest possible space of time.

Wearied though he was by his previous vain exertions, he put forth all his strength for the last effort, and in so doing knew full well he inflicted grievous pain upon the little fellow who was ready to take any chances in order to aid him.

With a firm hold of Benny's body the surfman was enabled to climb upward, and in a few seconds, which must have seemed to the boy like ten times that number of minutes, he succeeded in clutching the combing of the hatch.

Dragging himself over he seized No. 8's legs, and none too soon, for the boy's strength was exhausted, and at the very instant Sam grasped him he was forced to let go his hold.

A moment later the two were lying along the side of the hatch panting for breath, but in no further danger of a fall, and some time elapsed before the silence was broken.

Then Sam said, groping about in the darkness for Benny's hands, and holding them firmly as he spoke:

"It may be, lad, that I made all that trouble for nothing. It is possible the cargo was within a few inches of my feet as I hung on the rope; but that I couldn't know, and it was the fear of shattering a bone which caused me to hold on and yell for help. A surfman with a broken leg might lose a whole season's work, seein' 's the damage wouldn't have been done in line of duty."

"It's lucky I heard you. If all hands hadn't left the steamer, perhaps I shouldn't have tried to find out where you had gone."

"Do you know, lad, that you did a brave thing in takin' the chances of my pullin' you into the hold with me?"

"I do hope you won't make such talk, Mr. Hardy," Benny cried pleadingly. "I ain't brave, for I was terribly frightened when that queer noise came out of the hold."

"I noticed that you kept on trying to find out what it was."

"Yes, sir, because I'd been ashamed to have it said I was scared at a noise."

"Well, hark you, Benny, I won't say anything more about your being a little hero, although I may think so just the same, and in return you shall keep quiet about this bit of trouble."

"Don't you want any one to know of it, sir?"

"Indeed, I don't, No. 8. It wouldn't sound very well if you should tell that an old hand like Sam Hardy let himself into the hold of a wreck by a rope which he couldn't come back on. The boys never'd stop making fun of me, an' more especially if it turns out that I was hangin' all that time within two or three feet of the cargo. Now, is it a bargain that both of us are to keep this 'ere business a profound secret?"

"I'll never tell, sir, though I can't see that you have anything to be ashamed of, for nobody would want to take such chances as might have come. But how are we going to get out? While the steamer is heeled over so badly I can't climb up the stanchion."

"We'll hold on a spell, till you're rested, and then I can give you a lift up on my shoulder."

"I'm ready to try now, sir. I wasn't very tired--only for a minute or two."

"You're a lad after my own heart, Benjamin, an' so long as I have a dollar or a shelter, half of it belongs to you! Now then, get up on my shoulder, an' once we're on deck it's the same as if this foolish thing never happened, except when we two are alone."

Benny scrambled up as Sam had directed, and then the surfman, cautioning him to keep his knees stiff, lifted the lad straight above his head until he could seize the hatch-combing.

Once on deck he let down a length of rope, and Sam Hardy was soon released from his temporary prison.

"I reckon I'd better get back to the station right away, or I'll be getting into more mischief, like some youngster," the surfman said grimly as he shouted to the crew of a small boat at hand to take him ashore.

The captain of one of the wrecking tugs came alongside at this moment, and, seeing Sam, cried.

"Don't be in a hurry, Hardy. I'm going to have a look at the cargo, and you'd better go with me. It'll be interesting to find out how well it was stowed."

"Do you know what she's loaded with?"

"Pig-iron."

"It won't interest me to see it, and, besides, I've been down in the hold quite a spell already."

"How are things there?"

"To tell the truth, I didn't see very much; I had business of my own before I'd been there many minutes. You'll need a lantern."

Then Sam went over the rail into the boat which had come alongside to take him off, Benny following close behind as a matter of course, and when the two were on shore again the surfman said:

"It would have been odd if I'd dropped onto that metal without doing myself some serious injury. There's no longer any question, lad, but that you pulled me out of a bad place."

"I'm glad," Benny replied emphatically.

"Accordin' to my way of thinkin' there'd be more reason for gladness if I had never been such a bloomin' idiot as to go down there."

"Perhaps so, sir; but, so long as you did, I'm glad I was the one who pulled you out, for it's likely to be the only chance I'll ever have of doing you a favor."

"I'm not so certain of that, No. 8, if you stay around the station as long as we'll be glad to have you. In this life of ours there are many times when a fellow's mate can do very much toward savin' his life, an' you're just the kind of a comrade who can be depended upon to do pretty near the right thing at the right time."

Never since the morning when he first found himself in the life-saving station had Benny felt so proud and happy as at this moment, and he walked by Sam Hardy's side unable to speak because of the great joy in his heart.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### LIVELY WORK.

When Sam Hardy and Benny returned to the life-saving station no mention was made regarding the misadventure on board the wreck, although the former described in detail to his comrades all he had seen on or around the steamer.

Benny's greatest fear was lest the cook might question him so closely that it would become necessary to remain silent or betray the secret, and then the crew would understand that the two had had some unpleasant experience.

Fortunately, however, all hands applied to Sam for information, and he was able to lead the conversation into some other channel whenever anything was said regarding the hold of the steamer.

Then some sailors from one of the tugs came into the station, and the crew no longer showed any desire to learn what Hardy and No. 8 had seen, much to the relief of the latter.

Benny and Fluff spent several hours during the afternoon with the lookout on the hill, and when Keeper Downey hove in sight the lad walked slowly toward the station, whispering to the dog in his arms:

"It won't do, Fluffy to rush right up the minute Mr. Downey gets back and ask to see the uniform; but I do hope it won't be very long before he shows us what he has brought."

By the time Benny arrived at the boat-house door the keeper was mooring his dory, and a few moments later the lad saw him step ashore with a package in his arms so large that it hid at least half of his body from view.

"He has really brought the clothes, Fluffy, and it oughtn't to be such a dreadful while before we can look at them, because supper won't be ready for two hours, and he'll have nothing else to do except show all hands what the tailor has made."

Benny was not kept long in suspense. As Tom Downey approached the building he cried to the expectant lad:

"Come into the mess-room, No. 8; I've brought home all your finery, and the crew will be wantin' to see how you look in the uniform."

Benny answered the summons hastily, and Fluff ran at his heels barking shrilly, as if he had some personal interest in that which the keeper was carrying.

With the exception of Robbins, who was acting as lookout, every member of the crew was awaiting Tom Downey's arrival when he entered, looking particularly cheerful.

"I've got all I went for, and a little besides," he said, still holding the package in his arms. "What's more, I haven't taken advantage of you fellows by looking at the toggery. It was wrapped up when I got to the tailor's, and beyond the little he told me, I know no more about what's inside the paper than you do. Now I propose that Benny take this bundle, go up-stairs, put on the uniform, and dazzle us all by suddenly appearing as a full-fledged life-saver."

"That's the way to fix it!" Sam Hardy cried enthusiastically. "Get along, No. 8, an' don't spend too much time primpin', for we're achin' to get a sight of you in brass buttons."

Benny did as he was bidden, and a few moments after he had disappeared up the stairway those below heard an exclamation of astonishment, followed an instant later by the question:

"What's that other thing, Mr. Downey?"

"The tailor said he'd put in something on his own account for Fluff. Try it on and send him down."

The crew were wholly at a loss to understand the meaning of this brief conversation until the dog came down-stairs at full speed, yelping and barking as if in the highest state of excitement and pleasure.

A roar of laughter burst from the men when the little fellow sat up on his tail in the centre of the room, as if asking that he be admired. Over his silken white hair was strapped a tiny, blue broadcloth blanket, on the two rear corners of which was worked in white silk the letters "L. S. S." so disposed as to form a fanciful monogram.

"Three cheers for No. 9!" Joe Cushing cried, and this was responded to with such good-will that Fluff hurriedly ran back to his master, thoroughly frightened by the noisy demonstration.

"Don't he look great?" Benny cried, and Tom Downey replied with a laugh:

"Indeed he does, lad; but you needn't stay up there admiring him, for we're more anxious to see your rig."



Then, moving slowly and shyly, as if almost ashamed of his fine feathers, Benny made his appearance on the stairs, and it was an exclamation of genuine admiration with which he was greeted. The little fellow looked manly in the neatly fitting suit of blue, bedecked with brass buttons, and very proud withal, for, although he considered himself a member of the crew, the fact had never seemed so real to him as at this moment when he was attired as a life saver.

The deep crimson blood came into his cheeks as he stood before the men, in obedience to orders, turning here and there as one or the other dictated, and listening all the while to words of praise and genuine admiration.

"It's all right, No. 8," Sam Hardy said at length. "I was almost afraid that tailor might rig you out like a jumping-jack, with a lot of folderols that had no place on a life saver's uniform; but he's gone straight with the orders I gave him, an' the job couldn't be improved on."

"Don't forget that you're to go into town with me when next I have leave of absence," Joe Cushing cried, and then some one called attention to Fluff, who was sitting on the topmost step, still clad in uniform, wagging his tail vigorously as if asking whether it would be safe for him to venture down.

"Call your partner, No. 8, an' let's see how the two of you look together."

During fully five minutes Benny and Fluff were forced to walk here or there in order that the men might have good opportunity for seeing them in all possible lights, and then Mr. Downey suggested that the lad show himself in civilian's garb.

No. 8 obeyed very readily, almost glad to escape from that atmosphere of praise, and when he next appeared it was in a suit of clothes such as any well-dressed boy ten or twelve years of age would be expected to display.



A blue blouse with a rolling collar, sailor-fashion, knickerbockers, stockings, and a jacket of the same color, the clothing trimmed neatly with white braid, made of him, as Dick Sawyer said, "a perfect little gentleman."

"You look best in whichever you happen to have on when you heave in sight," Sam Hardy said admiringly. "Ain't it goin' to be quite a come-down to get into your old pea-jacket an' sou'wester?"

"I'll feel more like myself then," Benny said emphatically. "It don't seem right for me to be dressed up so fine, and most likely it ain't."

"There's nothin' too good for you, accordin' to my way of thinkin', No. 8, so don't get such queer ideas into your head. How does young Mr. Foster feel about it?"

"Do you know, I believe he's proud of his blanket? I tried to take it off before we came down, and he growled terribly."

"It'll be a good thing for him when the weather is biting cold, an' you'd better let him wear it a spell."

Then Benny went up-stairs again in order to change his clothes once more, preparatory to assisting the cook, and a stranger would have found it difficult to decide whether the boy or the crew of men were most pleased because of the new clothes.

During the four days which followed the arrival of the uniform, No. 8 was kept busily employed about the station, except during such times as he went on patrol with Sam Hardy.

Because of the wreckers in the vicinity, and the many visitors who came to see the stranded steamer, it seemed as if the buildings were thronged with strangers during the greater portion of each day, and when the lad was not at work in the kitchen, he found quite as much as he could conveniently do in "cleaning up" after the careless ones, who appeared to think it would make little difference to a "crew of men" if a greater or less amount of mud or snow was brought in on the cleanly scrubbed floors.

"If the steamer ain't hauled off mighty soon, No. 8 will wear himself down to skin an' bone, trying to make the place look tidy," Dick Sawyer said after a party of slovenly visitors had taken their departure. "It makes me tired to see him running around from mornin' till night with a swab in his hands, an' ten minutes after he's scrubbed every board clean, a fresh layer of dirt is brought in."

"He'll get a rest by to-morrow, I'm thinking," Joe Cushing replied, "an' it wouldn't surprise me such a terrible sight if all the wreckers' work was undone before twenty-four hours go by."

"We may get a little blow from the eastward, but I ain't countin' on anything that can be called a storm," Dick said carelessly as he followed No. 8 into the oil-room.

Before night had come there were many in and around the station who shared Joe Cushing's opinion as to the weather.

Everything about the wreck was made as snug as possible; extra hawsers were run out, the hatches battened down, and the lighters anchored in deep water.

Instead of lying off the cove when the day's work was done, the tugs ran over to the city, and all the small boats were hauled up beyond reach of the waves.

Sam Hardy was the first to go on patrol this night, and, as a matter of course, Benny accompanied him, for since the affair in the hold of the steamer the surfman had appeared more than usually eager for the companionship of his young comrade.

"We're gettin' the fat of the work this night," Hardy said as the two left the building.

"What do you mean by that? Ain't we going to stay out the full four hours?"

"Indeed we are, lad; but the wind won't get up much before midnight, an' when it does come I'm thinkin' it will bring rain."

"Then you believe as Mr. Cushing does?"

"I'm not lookin', as Joe is, for anything very heavy, but allow it won't be pleasant for the patrol who comes after us."

Save that the wind was blowing freshly, Benny saw no indications of a storm, and whatever might have been the appearance of the sky, it would have had no meaning for him after Sam Hardy delivered his opinion.

Their beat led them past where the stranded steamer lay, now considerably more than half unloaded, and at this point a long halt was made.

As yet the surf had not risen, although the wind had been steadily increasing in force since sunset, and the lighters rose and fell on the gentle swell with but little tugging at their cables. White foam around the wreck told that the rising tide was churning against her sides; but with no more force than while the wreckers had been at work.

To Benny, particularly after hearing Hardy's opinion, there was no reason for the life savers to feel disturbed in mind, and, when the tour of duty having come to an end, he returned to the station, it was with the belief that the repose of the crew would be undisturbed.

He was exceedingly tired, as he had been every night since the stranded steamer attracted so many visitors, and went to bed immediately after entering the building, failing to observe what at another time might have drawn his attention--that every member of the crew yet remained in the mess-room as if anticipating a sudden call to duty.

It seemed to him that he must have been asleep several hours when Fluff's shrill barking aroused him, and, sitting bolt upright in bed he observed, much to his surprise, that none of the men, with the exception of the cook, who regularly retired at an early hour, had been in the sleeping-room.

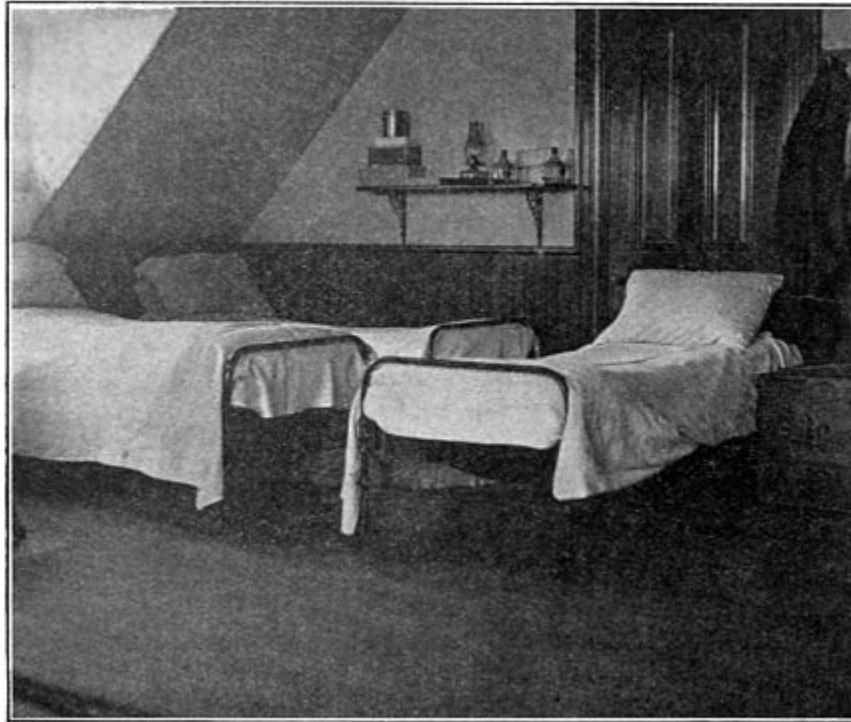


Covering Fluff's mouth to still his barking, Benny listened.

It was evident Joe Cushing had just come in from patrol, and was making a report of rather an alarming nature.

"In addition to the laboring of the steamer, one of the lighters appears to be dragging anchor, and if she sweeps down upon the stranded craft there'll be no more work for the wreckers."

Benny was out of bed in an instant, for he knew that the crew would set about repairing the mischief without delay, and it was not his intention to be left behind.



Dressing hurriedly, he descended the stairs just as the men were putting on their oiled clothing, and without comment he began following their example.

"Hello, No. 8, what are you about?" the keeper asked.

"Ain't the crew going out, sir?"

"Yes; but not on what you might call life-saving work. It's only a 'longshore job of caring for lighters, with more hard work than glory in it. We may be knocking around from one of those tubs to the other until daylight, and it'll be wiser for you to stay under cover."

Benny immediately removed the coat he had put on; but it could readily be seen that he was sorely disappointed at thus being advised to remain in the station, for advice from the keeper was to him nothing less than a positive command.

"It'll grieve him mightily to be here while we're at work," Sam Hardy whispered to Mr. Downey, and the latter replied:

"It's easier for him to feel sorry than to be knocking around with us all night, for I'm thinkin' this is a job that ain't soon to be ended."

"It won't be as hard for him as to stay here with the cook. No. 8 ain't a lad who's afraid of work, as he's shown us every day since he came."

Tom Downey hesitated a moment, and then said slowly, as does one who is not certain that he speaks wisely:

"If you had rather take the chances with us, when we're setting out to do nothing more than get a lot of scows into shape, come along, Benny. It was only in order to save you a long spell of hard work that I proposed you should stay behind."

"If it don't make any difference to you, sir, I'd much rather go," Benny replied in a low tone. "It wouldn't seem that I really was No. 8 if the crew went away without me."

"Get into your oil-skins, since you're so greedy for hard work, lad, an' we'll start. You'll see this night the dullest piece of drudgery that life savers were ever put to."

Benny's face was actually aglow with pleasure when this permission had been given, and before the foremost of the crew could leave the mess-room he was clad in his oiled clothing, eager to share whatever might be the portion of his comrades.

To the boy's delight, the life-boat was to be used for the work. He had never been on board of her, and it would

indeed have seemed hard had this opportunity been denied him.

Not until the buoyant craft had been pulled out beyond the point did No. 8 realize that in his weather predictions Sam Hardy had made a failure. The wind was blowing freshly from the northeast, the rain was falling, and the waves had risen until the heavy boat was flung about like a cork.

The crew plied their oars in silence; all evidently looked upon the work of securing the lighters in exactly the same light as did Tom Downey--as drudgery,--and there was nothing to animate them. If a vessel with a crew on board had been in distress, each man would have been on the alert and eager, straining every muscle without thought of fatigue, instead of which they were now dispirited.

Not until they were within fifty yards of the lighter which lay nearest the point, could Benny distinguish any object on the rolling waters, and then he began to understand how difficult a task had the crew taken upon themselves.

The huge fabrics, hardly more than scows, were wallowing in the waves, sending up great clouds of spray when the seas broke with a noise like thunder under the square bows or sterns, and the lad, ignorant though he was regarding such work, knew full well that it would be more difficult to board one of the hulks than to clamber over the rail of an ordinary wreck.

The order was given to "cease rowing," and as the oars were held firmly in the water to prevent the life-boat from being blown at the mercy of the wind, Keeper Downey studied how he might best accomplish the difficult task.

"They are all dragging their anchors," he said after a brief silence.

"Yes, and would in this shallow water, no matter what weight of metal they had out," Dick Sawyer grumbled. "If the wreckers are willing to leave their hulks on such a shore as this, without so much as a single man aboard, it would serve them right to lose the whole boiling."

"We've got to board that lighter!" Downey finally exclaimed, giving no heed to Dick's grumbling. "It won't be a nice job, boys, but must be done, else those hulks will be driven down upon the steamer. Stand by, 1, 2, 4, and 5," he added, designating the men by their numbers.

No protest was made, although the life savers knew they were ordered to far more dangerous work than would be theirs if human lives were to be wrested from the waters.

The men referred to hauled in their oars, and the remainder of the crew, Benny doing his best with the heavy implement Sam had been wielding, worked the life-boat around until she was to leeward of the lighter.

"Jump when I give the word, and then slack away on the cables. Look around for spare anchors! If any be found, heave them out; but remember that you must work lively! Are you ready? jump!"

The four men leaped as one, and the life-boat was hurled back by the impetus until a dozen yards of water tumbled between her and the lighter.

A long sigh of relief escaped from Benny's lips as he saw that his comrades had gained a safe footing on the rolling, pitching hulk, and then it was necessary that he give his undivided attention to working the oar, lest the waves should wrest it from his grasp.

Downey's purpose was to keep the life-boat under the lee of the lighter to lessen the labor of his men, and even this was an extremely difficult matter, for the sea increased in violence momentarily, while there were but three men and a boy at the oars.

Hardy, Cushing, Sawyer, and Henderson were the men detailed for the work of securing the heavy hulk, and there were none among the crew stronger or more able to perform the task, yet it was soon seen that they were working at a great disadvantage owing to lack of numbers.

"There are no spare anchors here!" Hardy cried out after he had been on board the unwieldy craft ten minutes or more. "There's only an apology for a windlass, an' I question if it won't go by the board before many hours."

"Give her more scope, for it's all we can do, and get on board again smartly; the lighter nearest inshore is dragging badly," Downey shouted in reply.

As was afterward learned, the men had but just loosened the carelessly laid turns from the shaky windlass when a huge sea lifted the stern of the lighter high in the air, and, passing forward, allowed the heavy after part to drop into the trough of the sea with a snap that would have tested the timbers of a strong vessel.

Those on board the life-boat heard a crashing and rending as of wood; saw the huge hulk rise again on a wave, and then came the cry from Joe Cushing:

"The windlass has gone!"

Even as he spoke it seemed as if the heavy fabric, lifting such a height of side against the wind that it acted as a sail, literally leaped forward directly upon the life-boat.

"Stern all! Lively, boys! Lively!"

Benny laid all his strength against the huge oar, and yet he could not push it back so much as an inch; but his efforts might have been of some avail in connection with the quick, muscular work of the others, and the boat was forced out of the way only so much as was absolutely necessary. The failure of an inch in distance, and she must have been crushed by the ponderous weight which overhung her until Benny felt certain they would be swamped.

This necessary manoeuvre exposed the life-boat to the full force of the wind, and before she could be brought round again, half-manned as she was, fully fifty yards of water separated her from the lighter whereon were the four life savers now turned mariners in distress.

Because no one of his companions spoke, Benny believed the danger which menaced his comrades on the hulk to be very great, and a sensation of faintness came over him as he thought that perhaps he might never again clasp the hands of those whom he had learned to love.

With a full crew on the life-boat it would have been a comparatively easy task to rescue the men from the lighter; but under the circumstances it was difficult work to even so much as hold her against the wind, and in the meanwhile the huge craft was approaching the breakers at a speed that must soon put her beyond reach of help.

"Put your very life into the oars, boys!" Downey cried appealingly. "We must lay her so near alongside that we can pass our comrades a rope, for we can't hope to help them from the shore!"

Every one, including Benny, had been working to the full extent of his power, yet it seemed now as if still greater strength was laid on the oars, as Downey shouted to their comrades:

"Stand by for a line, boys! Make it fast, and come in on it. I see no other chance!"

"Let her drift in on the shoal!" Hardy cried.

"There are too big odds against all of us using your line, an' we'll hold on a spell after she strikes. You four can manage the surf-boat, an' I allow there's time to get it."

"He's right!" the keeper exclaimed. "I must have lost my head when I thought they could come in hand-over-hand while there's such a sea on. Buckle to the oars, boys! We'll make the station if we can; but if not, beach this craft as near as possible. We've a poor crew indeed, if our comrades are allowed to drown while they've got so many timbers under them!"

While speaking he had swung the boat around head on to the shore, and every man tugged and strained at his ashen blade, while Downey lent all possible assistance with the steering oar.

"We'll never make the station!" Benny heard Robbins, who was directly in front of him mutter, and almost at the same instant the keeper cried hoarsely:

"We must take our chances in the cove, boys. No. 8, get hold of a cork jacket and come aft before we strike!"



## CHAPTER XVI.

### CAST ASHORE.

Benny understood the command given by Keeper Downey, but could not make up his mind as to how it might be obeyed. It seemed to him in the highest degree important that he keep to work with the oar, and yet he could not lay hold of a life-preserver without dropping it.

After having thus attended to the boy's safety so far as was possible, the keeper turned all his attention to the work of so steering the life-boat that she would strike the shore at the least dangerous point.

The huge lighter, on which could be seen indistinctly the forms of the four men, was being driven rapidly toward the stranded steamer, and it was not necessary one should have much experience in such matters to understand that if she struck the wreck there was little hope the four men could gain the shore alive.

If the crew had been on the cliff with the beach-apparatus, watching others being swept down the coast in such fashion, it would not have appeared to be a particularly dangerous position, because a line could be fired across the wreck, or the surf-boat pulled to wheresoever the lighter might come to grief.

Now, however, there was no one on shore to lend assistance, and, as a matter of fact, every member of the crew was in extreme peril.

Benny watched his helpless comrades as he pulled at the oar while awaiting the opportunity to lay hold of a life-preserver, and, observing that he was not yet prepared for what lay before them, Robbins asked sharply:

"Didn't you hear what the keeper said?"

"Yes, sir; but I can't reach one of the jackets without dropping my oar."

"Let it go, then! None of us are doing very much good now while the wind has such a firm grip on us, and your strength won't be missed. This is the time when you must have your wits well about you, lad, and it's no easy matter to keep a clear head while floundering in the surf."

"Is it certain we'll all be thrown out?" Benny asked as he took up one of the jackets and began adjusting it.

"There's no help for it. If we're lucky, it may be possible to get the surf-boat afloat before that lumberin' lighter strikes; but I'm doubtful as to our succeeding. In all my experience on this coast I never before saw the life savers so completely knocked out as they appear to be now."

The four men on the unwieldy craft could be seen making such provisions for their own safety as was possible under the circumstances. Just abaft of where the windlass had stood was a narrow hatchway leading to the shallow hold, and around the combing of this they ran a short length of rope to form a life-line. It was a poor makeshift, but one on which might depend the lives of four men.

In a single hurried glance Benny saw that Sam Hardy was stripping off the greater portion of his clothing preparatory to the battle with the surf, and that the others were peering ahead in the gloom as if trying to decide at which point the lighter would take the land.

Meanwhile the life-boat had been racing toward the shore with marvellous rapidity, flung forward by both wind and wave, and those on board had no more than time in which to get a general view of the surroundings before she was being tossed to and fro in the broken water which extended a hundred yards or more from the coast-line.

"Stand ready, boys!" Tom Downey shouted, still doing his utmost to guide the light craft by means of the steering-oar. "Leap clear if she turns over! Robbins, have a care of Benny; but don't try to do more than keep his head above water till some of us can give you a lift!"

"Take hold of the back of my coat," the surfman said to the lad an instant after these orders had been given. "After I have jumped, do your best to keep on my shoulders, and, above all, don't lose your courage. Surely we, whose business it is to save life in the surf, should be able to go through yonder broken water alive."

"Don't pay any attention to me, Mr. Robbins," Benny replied, trying his best, and almost successfully, to speak in a firm tone. "You can save yourself, and it ain't fair to be bothered with me."

There was no time in which to say anything more. Already was the life-boat rising on the crest of a gigantic wave which promised to drop her on the shoal twenty yards or more to seaward of low-water mark, and all knew that the

supreme moment had come.

Not until this instant did Tom Downey relinquish the steering-oar, and the others, including Benny, mentally braced themselves for the struggle which was close at hand.

Had the men been in the lighter surf-boat, the wave might have carried them beyond reach of danger; but the larger craft struck the bottom some distance from the shore, and it seemed to Benny as if the stern was flung directly over the bow.

The upheaving of the boat threw him far out over the water before he had time to leap, and ere Robbins had taken hold of him.

"Don't lose your courage!"

These words which Robbins had spoken were ringing in the lad's ears as he was plunged head foremost into the boiling waters, and he strove rather to keep his wits about him than to strike out for the shore.

He was conscious of coming in contact with the bottom, and then, as he rose to the surface, of being drawn back forcibly by the undertow, after which he threw his arms above his head lest he should be dashed against a rock.

It seemed as if he was whirled to and fro violently, then flung inshore, only to be dragged back again, and after that came a bewildering, sickening sensation, until it seemed as if some heavy object was pressing directly above him.

Involuntarily he clutched at it, and found a rope in his grasp.

An instant of confusion, and then he realized that he was floating by the side of the life-boat.

The craft had righted itself after being up-ended, for, unless serious damage had been done her hull, she would always swim in proper fashion, and it so chanced the waves had carried her directly over the lad who, by remaining passive in the surf, had done exactly that which was best calculated to insure his safety.

"I won't lose my courage!" Benny said stoutly, and his own words served to animate him.

He hauled on the rope until finding that it was made fast inside the craft, when, by exerting all his strength, it was possible to clamber inboard, although by so doing the boat was filled to the gunwales with water.

"With this jacket on, and in a life-boat, I can't sink, and the only fear is that I'll be thrown against the rocks, the same as a life saver whom Mr. Hardy knew," Benny said to himself.

Then, clutching the thwart, the lad looked around him with the idea that he might be able to render assistance to those of his companions who had not succeeded in gaining a place of safety.

On the waves near at hand he could see nothing; but ashore was a small group of men gazing toward him.

"Stand by for a line!" he heard Mr. Downey shout, and then all fear for himself fled as he thought of those on the lighter.

"I am all right!" he cried at the full strength of his lungs. "I'll hold on here while you launch the surf-boat."

He did not wait to hear the reply, but looked hurriedly around for the lighter, and his breath came quick and fast as he saw the huge craft almost upon him.

The wind was driving her down on a line with the stranded steamer, and the life-boat, in her lee and sheltered from the gale, was being swept by the undertow in the opposite direction.

Now he understood that there were other dangers than those of being dashed against the rocks, and for an instant it seemed certain the end had come.

He saw a human figure standing near the edge of the huge craft, and to him he shouted wildly:

"Can't you throw me a line?"

There was no time for a reply. Benny had hardly more than cried out before the small boat was grating against the side of the hulk, and at the same instant he who had been peering over the side leaped down.

The impetus given by the man's body flung the life-boat to one side, and in the merest fraction of time she was astern of the dangerous fabric which swept onward, leaving a wake behind like that of a steamer.

"Is it you, No. 8?" a familiar voice cried, and Benny shouted in relief and pleasure, for he knew Sam Hardy was with him once more.

"Where are the others?" he panted as Sam floundered to his side.

"Still on board the lighter; but I'm not allowin' there's any great danger for 'em. It begins to look as if the clumsy hulk would clear the stranded steamer, in which case they have only to hold on till the surf-boat can be launched. Seein'



the life-boat, I took the chances of jumpin' so she wouldn't be swept out to sea, for it would be queer readin' if the Superintendent got a letter telling that we'd lost a craft like her. How did you happen to be here alone?"

In the fewest possible words Benny explained what had happened, and asked:

"How are we goin' to get ashore, Mr. Hardy?"

"That ain't troublin' me so much just now as is the question of how we're goin' to keep her from bein' driven back against the cliff. So far as I could see, all hands except you, got ashore without any very great trouble, an' they'll soon have the surf-boat over here. What we must do is to keep off the rocks, an' that'll be a reasonably hard job with such a cargo of water as we've got aboard."

"I can bail her."

"As well try to dip up the ocean, for every wave is sweepin' over us here in this broken water. We're all right for a spell, an' there's nothin' to prevent our watchin' the others."

Benny would have made an attempt to do whatever Sam Hardy might have suggested, however wild or impossible, and now did his best at peering through the gloom toward that dark mass which he knew was the lighter.

He could distinguish nothing on the shore; but the surfman, having had more experience, declared that he could see quite plainly the forms of their comrades.

"They don't dare spend the time to go after the surf-boat, but will trust to what they can do with ropes from the shore. The wreckers have left enough gear behind to furnish each man with a life-line, and since there's no longer any danger the lighter will strike the steamer, it won't be a hard job to bring every fellow ashore. I'm still wonderin' what made me jump when I saw the boat, Benny. It was a fool trick, after yonder hulk had taken such a turn as showed she'd strike a sandy bottom."

"It was mighty lucky for me that you did come, sir."

"Why, lad? I can't do the first thing toward helpin' us out of this plight, except by usin' the steerin'-oar when we're nearer in shore, an' you may as well have been alone."

"I'd have been terribly frightened; but now everything is all right."

Sam gathered the boy in his arms for an instant, but made no reply, and during those few seconds it seemed as if the two were nearer in spirit than they had ever been before.

"She's struck!" the surfman cried at length, referring to the lighter, and Benny saw a huge cloud of spray rise in the air as if against the base of a cliff.

"When we first went adrift, Joe Cushing figgered that the danger of bein' washed away wouldn't be very great, provided she went clear of the steamer, for the deck is so broad, and her depth so great, that the waves won't make a clean breach over her. In their places, I'd take the chances of stayin' there till the tide falls, rather than trust to a hand-rope through the surf."

Sam continued to gaze first at the huge hulk and then at the shore, regardless of his own danger, until Benny recalled him to the fact that the life-boat was being driven directly toward a cliff of brown rocks a quarter of a mile beyond where the life savers ashore were stationed.

"Hold on where you are till I give the word," Sam cried as he unshipped one of the spare oars from its becket and swung it out over the stern. "I'm not certain one man can do much more than hold this boat before the wind, and if we find that she ain't to be turned from her course, we'll try the surf again."

"Can't I help you?"

"Not a bit, lad, except by sittin' still an' obeyin' orders. Don't be frightened, for----"

"There's nothing to scare me now you're here," Benny replied with sublime confidence, and the surfman muttered a few words under his breath, the purport of which Benny failed to hear.

From this moment the two in the boat ceased to pay any attention to their comrades either on shore or aboard the lighter; their own situation demanded every thought, and while Sam Hardy would not have admitted as much to his companion, he was seriously concerned regarding the possibility of warding off the threatening danger.

Freighted with water as the life-boat was, she sailed sluggishly before the blast, with not sufficient headway to prevent the waves from breaking over her continuously, and it was necessary her crew should exercise every care to prevent themselves from being washed overboard.

There was no deviation from the course, however; straight toward that frowning cliff the wind and waves forced her, and the surfman knew full well, although he refrained from giving words to the fact, that it was not in the power of

man to aid them if they struck the rocks, where the waves would beat them to and fro until life was crushed out.

"We must take to the water, Benny," Sam Hardy said at length, doing his best to speak in a cheery tone. "It ain't an overly pleasant idee; but goes 'way ahead of stayin' aboard till we can't help ourselves. Can you swim any?"

"A little in smooth water."

"You've got a cork jacket on?"

"Yes, sir, and it kept me up in great shape before, so you needn't bother about me, for I sha'n't drown so long as I keep my courage."

"I ain't afraid but you'll contrive to do that last. Now listen: we're goin' to take to the water mighty soon; I'll go over, an' you're to follow close behind. Once we're afloat, keep a firm hold of my shirt collar from behind, an' see to it your grip is not loosened."

"Please don't try to drag me, Mr. Hardy. It's certain you'll come out all right alone, an' I'm afraid----"

"Benny, I'd sooner never go ashore than get there without you," Sam replied, speaking very gravely; "so we won't make any talk about that part of it. Do as I've said, an' we'll both be back at the station to-morrow mornin', or neither of us shows up there again. Are you ready?"

"Whenever you say the word, sir," Benny replied stoutly, although it seemed as if his heart was in his throat.

"I hate to leave the life-boat, but the Government can easier buy a new one than I can get another lease of life, so here goes. Stand close by my side, No. 8, an' jump with me."

The boy obeyed promptly, although the strongest man might well have been excused for hesitating at such a leap.



The water did not run in waves at this point, but swirled and foamed over the rocks beneath in eddying circles which threatened to suck down everything within reach until it was like a seething mass of boiling yeast.

"There's depth enough to prevent us from coming to harm against the bottom," Sam said reassuringly, "and we've only to swim a quarter of a mile before gaining a good landing-place, even if Tom Downey don't send some one to help us. All ready, lad! Keep your wits about you, an' leave the rest with me."

Then Sam flung his arm around the boy's waist, pressing the lad close to him as he leaped.

Down, down, until it seemed to Benny as if they would never reach the bottom, and then came the up-rising, followed by the blessed relief of being able to breathe once more.

It had not been the lad's purpose to follow Sam Hardy's instructions to the letter.

He had not intended to allow himself to be dragged through the waves at risk of weighting down his comrade, but proposed to strike out for himself; and the surfman must have feared some such intention, for, fastening his teeth in the sleeve of Benny's shirt, he held on as a dog might have done.

The boy understood that Hardy could swim more easily if he held himself up by clutching the latter's shirt collar, and as soon as he did this the surfman released his hold.

So low on the surface of the water were the two, it was impossible to gain any idea of where the life savers or the hulk might be.

They were alone amid those angry, seething waters, and it was not reasonable to suppose their comrades could see them.

Had he been dependent upon his own exertions, Benny must speedily have succumbed to the violent buffeting of the waves; but Sam Hardy shielded the lad whenever it was possible, in addition to dragging him past the frowning rocks, and finally, after it seemed to the lad as if half the night had been spent, they had arrived at a cove which offered a comparatively safe landing-place.

"Stand up as soon as your feet touch bottom, and run for dear life," Hardy said, speaking for the first time since they had flung themselves into the waves, and the words were no more than uttered when Benny was able to obey.

Hand in hand the two fled from the raging waters, only to be overtaken and hurled back at the very moment when it seemed as if a place of safety had been gained, and then came another wearying, disheartening conflict with the waves, during which Benny nearly lost his courage.

Once more it was possible to gain a foothold; once more they raced with death, and this time the venture was successful. The two gained the pebbly shore above the water-line, so sorely beaten and fatigued that speech or movement was impossible until after a rest of several minutes.

Then Sam asked solicitously:

"How are you feelin', lad?"

"I'm all right," Benny replied, panting so heavily that it was only with the greatest difficulty he could articulate.

"This ain't the kind of a night when a fellow can lay along the shore very long without running the risk of freezin' to death. We'd best be movin' as soon as you can walk."

"I'm ready now," and Benny rose to his feet.

"Throw off that cork-jacket; take hold of my hand, and once we've started, keep movin' as long as it's possible to breathe. We came out of that smother all right, an' now are bound to get back to the station in such shape that we'll be able to do our full share of the work."

"Will the crew try to do anything more, now that the life-boat is gone?" Benny asked as he followed at a rapid pace by Sam's side.

"We're obliged to do all we can to prevent wreck, an' a dip like this don't excuse us from a full share of duty when there's pressin' need."

"It would seem different if there was any one aboard the steamer or lighters."

"We are called on to save property as well as lives, lad, an' whatever danger we may have been in, or must face later, don't count."

There was no question in Benny's mind but that the three men had been taken safely from the hulk, because Sam Hardy declared they would be, which declaration was the same to him as a fact; therefore he felt no anxiety until they were within fifty yards of where the lighter lay stranded upon the sands.

"The boys are still there," the surfman said as he halted an instant to peer seaward. "I reckon they're right comfortable, though, for the surf doesn't break over them very badly, and it will soon be possible to give them a line."

"Where is Mr. Downey and the others?" Benny asked, gazing around but without seeing any sign of life upon the shore.

Sam Hardy stopped only sufficiently long to assure himself they were not in the vicinity, and then replied in a tone of conviction:

"Gone back to the station for the beach-wagon."

"Perhaps they never got ashore," Benny added in a whisper of awe.

"Don't get such an idea as that in your head, lad. I'd answer for it every one didn't go under, an' the fact that there are none here is proof each man answered to his name."

"What do you suppose they thought had become of us?"

"We didn't cut any figger in their thoughts, lad. Most likely Downey knew I jumped aboard the life-boat, an' after that he counted us out when reckonin' how many was in need of help. We'll push on, for it'll be a hard tug gettin' that cart over these rocks with only half a crew."

"Are the other lighters adrift?" Benny asked as he followed his comrade at a smart pace.

"Ay, lad, an' as near as I can make out, two of them are afoul of the steamer. There'll be a pretty mess there when the sun rises, an' we'll be hauled over the coals for it; but I'll thank anybody to tell me how we could have done more than we did."

At that moment Benny gave little heed to the fate of the stranded steamer; if the three men could be safely taken from the lighter he believed there would be cause for rejoicing, even though all hulks alongshore were dashed to pieces.

Before the two had traversed more than a third of the distance from the scene of the disaster to the station they came upon the remnant of the crew dragging the beach-apparatus.

Benny may have thought that the keeper would at least congratulate them upon their escape, but he did nothing of the kind. Danger was too frequent a visitor to cause much comment, save at the very moment of its appearance, and the keeper said quietly, as if they had been engaged in some ordinary duty:

"Got ashore, eh? Where's the life-boat?"

"The other side of Jefford's reef. While the wind holds in this quarter there's no fear she'll drift far, an' we can pick her up in the mornin'."

"Take hold here, and let us finish this job as soon as may be, for I don't like the idea of leaving the remainder of the coast without a patrol"; and he added after the wagon was in motion once more, with Sam and Benny in the rope harness, "Did the other lighters come in?"

"They're grindin' the steamer into toothpicks. Even if we had all hands out there in the big boat, it would be impossible to do anything."

"I know that," Downey replied impatiently, "an' yet it will seem to others as if we might have done more. A pretty story we've got to tell about this night's work! A crew of life savers wrecked in a life-boat! If we're not the sport of every man in the Service from this out, I'll eat my hat!"

"And yet there's no man livin' who could have foreseen what happened. It was the proper thing to send us on board the lighter, an' if her gear gave way, we're not to be blamed for it," Sam replied earnestly, and Tom Downey remained silent.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### A LETTER.

When the beach-wagon had been hauled into position, the work of rescuing the life savers from the lighter was trifling, and the three were no more than ashore before Keeper Downey cried sharply:

"Now then, let's get the apparatus home, and the patrol out as soon as may be. There's some show of excuse for our not being able to save the property here; but in case a vessel came ashore while we were foolin' around with a lot of lighters, and life should be lost, we'd find ourselves in a bad pickle."

The keeper was not the only member of the crew who feared that the night's misadventure might have some fatal ending. The same thought was in the mind of every man, and it was not necessary to urge them forward.

Benny welcomed the opportunity to restore the circulation of blood to his chilled limbs, and pushed with the utmost of his strength at the tail of the cart by the keeper's side.

The heavy wagon was dragged over the rocks and through the sand at a rate of speed which, under other circumstances, might have been impossible, and when they had nearly arrived at the station Tom Downey was less apprehensive regarding the possibility of a wreck, for at that moment they were passing over the highest point of the cliffs, from which a good view of the ocean could be had.

Save for a few fleecy clouds, the sky was clear, and the twinkling stars gave out sufficient light to show that not a sail was within their range of vision.

"I reckon we can count the worst of our work as bein' over for this night; but there won't be a very pretty picture alongshore to-morrow morning," the keeper said to Benny, and the latter replied with a tone of thankfulness in his voice:

"Things will look better than you believed at one time, Mr. Downey, for then it seemed as if you'd be called upon to hunt for the bodies of the crew among the wreckage."

"Right you are, my lad, and it's little less than a sin to grumble because two or three lighters and a stranded steamer may have been broken up, when the crew came safely through as tough a place as they were ever in. It's a great pity I allowed you to go with us."

"But I've come out of it without any more harm than any of the others, sir, and it will help me along in learning to be a surfman."

"You might have got the lesson in an easier fashion, lad. It's hard enough for tough men like us to have the clothing frozen to our bodies, but a boy like you can't well stand such hardships."

"But I'm all right, sir," Benny replied, striving in vain to prevent his teeth from chattering with the cold. "Leastways, I will be as soon as we get to the station, and this work with the cart warms a fellow up wonderfully."

Downey did not reply until after a long pause, and then he said emphatically:

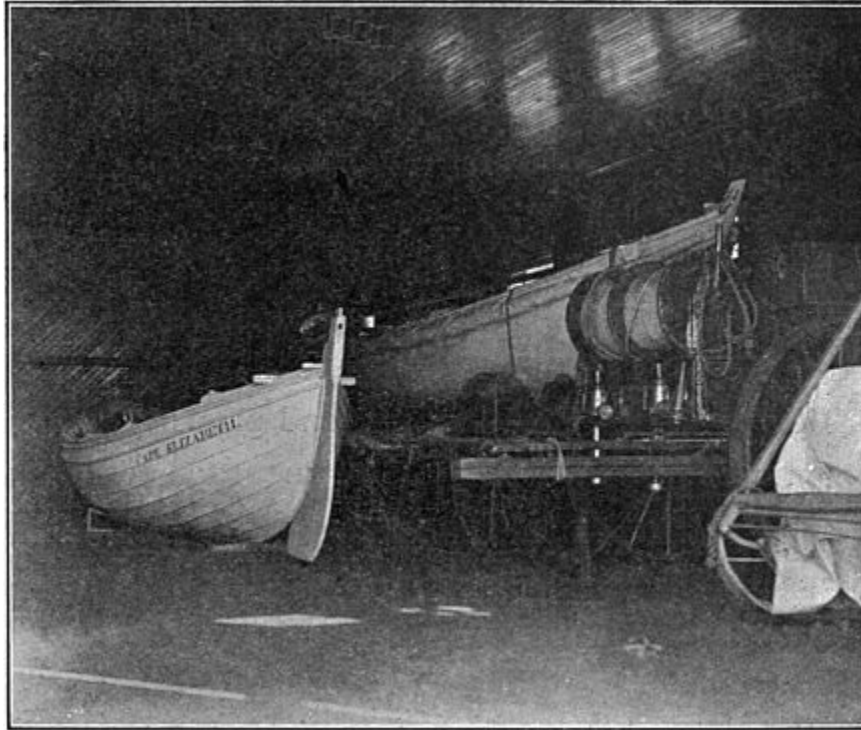
"If pluck is necessary in the making of a good surfman, you should be a rare hand at the business, No. 8, before another year has passed."

What a welcome it was which Benny received from Fluff when they finally arrived at the station and the beach-wagon had been hauled into the boat-house!

The tiny dog capered, and barked, and yelped until it seemed as if he realized how great had been the danger to which his master was exposed, and so violently loving were his demonstrations that Benny could not make any headway at changing his clothing until after having devoted a certain time to his pet.

Then the dog greeted each of the men in turn, and Joe Cushing said as he took him almost affectionately in his arms:

"You an' No. 8 make up such a team, small though you are, as I never had the good fortune to see before."



A pot of steaming coffee was on the stove, and the cook spread on the table such provisions as were most conveniently at hand, in order that those who were forced to go out on the coast again to do patrol duty might refresh themselves without waste of time.

Once the men had put on dry clothing it was as if all previous dangers were forgotten, and Sam Hardy suggested that they man the surf-boat in order to go in search of the life-boat.

"She'll pound herself to pieces on the rocks 'twixt now an' mornin', whereas by a bit of hard work at this time we may save her, an' in so doin' prevent it from bein' said along the shore that we allowed such a craft to be wrecked."

Tom Downey hesitated; he questioned whether he was warranted in risking human lives to save what might be replaced by an expenditure of dollars and cents, and perhaps would have turned a deaf ear to Sam's suggestion, but that every other member of the crew evinced a strong desire to make the attempt.

Their record for saving life and property was exceptionally good at the Department, as every man knew full well, and to get such a black mark as must be set down against them in case the life-boat should be lost, was anything rather than pleasing to contemplate.

"I claim that we are not warranted in taking the chances," Downey said slowly and thoughtfully; "but if you fellows are so set on it, we'll make the try."

As he spoke Benny began to overhaul the spare oil-skins--the suit he wore when they set out before having been thrown off when he with Hardy leaped into the water--, and Downey asked sharply:

"What are you about, lad?"

"There's another small coat here somewhere," and Benny hurriedly tossed over the assortment of waterproof garments.

"Well, and what if there is?"

"Didn't you say we were to go for the life-boat, sir?"

The crew laughed heartily, as if there was something exceedingly ludicrous in this question, and Benny looked around in astonishment.

"Do you count on going with us?" Downey asked, as soon as he could control his mirth sufficiently to speak.

"I thought you would let me, sir, seeing as how I went the first time."

"Because we were so foolish as to take you then, there is no reason for committing the same fault again. You are to stay here with the cook and Fluff C. Foster. Once in a night is enough for you to risk your life when there's no especial

call for so doing."

Benny appeared positively pained, and Sam Hardy whispered to him while the others were making their preparations:

"It wouldn't be right, lad, for us to take you, even though it might be convenient, which it isn't. We're goin' in the surf-boat, and there will be snug stowin' when the full crew is aboard. If it was a case of fair weather an' smooth water you'd have to stay behind, because we couldn't pack you in; so look cheerful, an' see to it that we have plenty of hot coffee on our return."

This explanation comforted the boy greatly, and he at once set about doing what he could to assist in the preparations for departure.

Then, after the boat had been launched and the men pulled off on their perilous work, with Fluff in his arms he stood at the entrance of the boat-house, watching until the tiny craft was swallowed up in the darkness, and when it was no longer possible to distinguish any object upon the heaving waters the lad returned to the mess-room, there to make ready an appetizing meal for his comrades.

The cook had taken advantage of the opportunity to go to bed immediately the crew returned with the beach-wagon, and Benny was in sole command of the kitchen with, as he said, "Fluff acting as mate."

Not until two hours had elapsed did the life savers return, and then they brought the life-boat with them, none the worse, so Dick Sawyer declared, for the pounding she had received upon the rocks.

Benny met them at the door of the boat-house, and, as might have been expected, was eager to learn whether any serious injury had been wrought.

As soon as the two boats were housed, and before they entered the mess-room, Sam Hardy gave an account of the work by saying:

"We found her just inside the broken water near where you an' I went overboard. It's likely she's been flung against the cliff a good many times; but, so far as we can make out, scratched paint is the only damage done. It wasn't a wonderfully easy job to get hold of her, but once we were there for that purpose you can make certain, No. 8, that none of us were minded to let any ordinary difficulties put an end to the work. That's all there is to the story, and it can be seen that you didn't lose anything, except a disagreeable time, by not going with us."

While Sam was speaking the remainder of the crew had entered the mess-room, and an exclamation of pleasurable surprise burst from the lips of all as they saw the meal which Benny had made ready.

"I've said before, an' this proves it, that the time ain't so far off when No. 8 will be able to pass examination as our cook," Joe Gushing exclaimed, and Tom Downey added gravely:

"I hope we can make something better of the lad than that. There's too much in Benny for us to tie him down to such work, and, unless I'm greatly mistaken, he is entitled to look many pegs higher than a job as surfinan."

Then the wearied crew sat themselves down for a pleasant half-hour, which would not have been enjoyed had they been forced to depend wholly upon the man who was paid for preparing their food.

Not until an hour past midnight did Benny go to bed, and next morning he was down-stairs with the earliest riser of the crew.

The wind had not spent its fury. On the contrary, it was blowing a full gale, bringing with it a downpour of sleet and snow which would prevent the wrecking tugs from returning to the scene of the disaster.

As soon as breakfast had been eaten all the men, with the exception of him whose duty it was to remain on watch, set out to ascertain the amount of damage done, and, as a matter of course, Benny accompanied them.

Fluff was given the choice of going with his master or remaining behind in the warm station, and after poking his pink nose out of doors for a single moment, he quickly retreated to the kitchen, giving evidence, as Sam Hardy declared, of "havin' a deal of sound common-sense."

The situation of affairs in the immediate vicinity of the steamer was even worse than had been anticipated. All the lighters but one had crashed into the stranded craft, making havoc of the timbers as they forced their heavy bows into the hull, and completely destroying what the waves had previously spared.

Along the shore in every direction were scattered fragments of lighters and steamer, until every cove which made in between the rocks was piled high with these evidences of devastation.

"We shan't be troubled much longer with wrecking crews," Joe Cushing said, when they had surveyed the entire shore in the vicinity. "There's nothin' to be done to the steamer except freight away such parts of her as are worth the

savin', and as for the lighters, they will do no more service unless it be as kindlin' wood."

"And yet all this might, perhaps, have been avoided if the wreckers had done their work properly; but since they didn't, we shall be asked to explain how it happens we allowed so much property to be destroyed," Tom Downey said with a sigh, and Sam Hardy added cheerily:

"If all hands tell the truth, I'm not afraid of an investigation concernin' last night's work, for the crew never lived that, unaided, could have prevented the heavy craft, fitted with rotten windlasses and apologies for cables, from goin' adrift while the wind was as strong as when we came out."

There was nothing the men could do even toward saving the wreckage nearest the shore while the storm continued so violent, and after an hour or more had been spent viewing the scene all hands returned to the station.

It was an idle day, save as concerned the men on watch, and after dinner, when Benny would have pored over the rules regarding drill, Tom Downey suggested that he make himself thoroughly familiar with the official instructions for saving drowning persons, printed for the benefit of the life-saving men.

During two hours or more No. 8 read and re-read the following lines, after which Sam Hardy questioned him on the different points until it was proven to the satisfaction of all that the lad had learned his lesson thoroughly.

Since it is to the advantage of every boy who ventures into the water for pleasure to know exactly what should be done when another is in danger of drowning, Benny's afternoon lesson is here set down exactly as he studied it:

"1. When you approach a person drowning in the water, assure him, with a loud and firm voice, that he is safe.

"2. Before jumping in to save him, divest yourself as far and as quickly as possible, of all clothes; tear them off if necessary, but if there is not time, loose at all events the foot of your drawers, if they are tied, as, if you do not do so, they fill with water and drag you.

"3. On swimming to a person in the sea, if he be struggling, do not seize him then, but keep off a few seconds till he gets quiet, for it is sheer madness to take hold of a man when he is struggling in the water, and if you do you run a great risk.

"4. Then get close to him and take fast hold of the hair of his head, turn him as quickly as possible onto his back, give him a sudden pull, and this will cause him to float, then throw yourself on your back also and swim for the shore, both hands having hold of his hair, you on your back and he also on his, and of course his back to your stomach. In this way you will get sooner and safer ashore than by any other means, and you can easily thus swim with two or three persons; the writer has even, as an experiment, done it with four, and gone with them forty or fifty yards in the sea. One great advantage of this method is that it enables you to keep your head up, and also to hold the person's head up you are trying to save. It is of primary importance that you take fast hold of the hair and throw both the person and yourself on your backs. After many experiments, it is usually found preferable to all other methods. You can in this manner float nearly as long as you please, or until a boat or other help can be obtained.

"5. It is believed there is no such thing as a death grasp; at least it is very unusual to witness it. As soon as a drowning man begins to get feeble and to lose his recollection, he gradually slackens his hold until he quits it altogether. No apprehension need, therefore, be felt on that head when attempting to rescue a drowning person.

"6. After a person has sunk to the bottom, if the water be smooth, the exact position where the body lies may be known by the air-bubbles, which will occasionally rise to the surface, allowance being of course made for the motion of the water, if in a tide-way or stream, which will have carried the bubbles out of a perpendicular course in rising to the surface. A body may be often regained from the bottom, before too late for recovery, by diving for it in the direction indicated by these bubbles.

"7. On rescuing a person by diving to the bottom, the hair of the head should be seized by one hand only, and the other used in conjunction with the feet, in raising yourself and the drowning person to the surface.

"8. If in the sea, it may sometimes be a great error to try to get to land. If there be a strong 'outsetting' tide, and you are swimming either by yourself, or have hold of a person who cannot swim, then get on your back and float till help comes. Many a man exhausts himself by stemming the billows for the shore on a back-going tide, and sinks in the effort, when, if he had floated, a boat or other aid might have been obtained.

"9. These instructions apply alike to all circumstances, whether as regards the roughest sea or smooth water."

When night came it was what sailors call a "dirty" one, and Sam Hardy announced that Benny would not be allowed to go on patrol.

"You know we made the agreement, lad, that you might share my watch with me except when the weather was too bad, and that's what I allow it to be now. There's no good reason why a boy of your years an' size should tramp up an' down this coast for four hours when nothin' more is to come of it than the toughenin' of him. Stay under cover with



Fluff, an' if it be so we're called on for work, you shall take your proper station as No. 8 of this 'ere crew."

Benny did his best, and succeeded fairly well, in keeping from his face the disappointment which came over him at thus being, for the first time, deprived of the opportunity to share in his comrade's tasks.

He went to bed while Sam was yet on patrol, and nothing disturbed his slumbers until next morning when the cook set about preparing breakfast.

The report from those who had been on duty was to the effect that no vessels had been sighted during the night, and that the stranded steamer had been breaking up rapidly during the past twelve hours.

The sky was yet cloudy, but the snow and sleet had ceased to fall, and the wind showed signs of abating.

Before breakfast was ready the wrecking tugs appeared off shore, and two hours later some of their crews visited the station.

Keeper Downey wrote out his report, and when that was done the work of the life savers, so far as the steamer and lighters were concerned, had come to an end, except as it might be possible later to pick up such wreckage as should drift ashore.

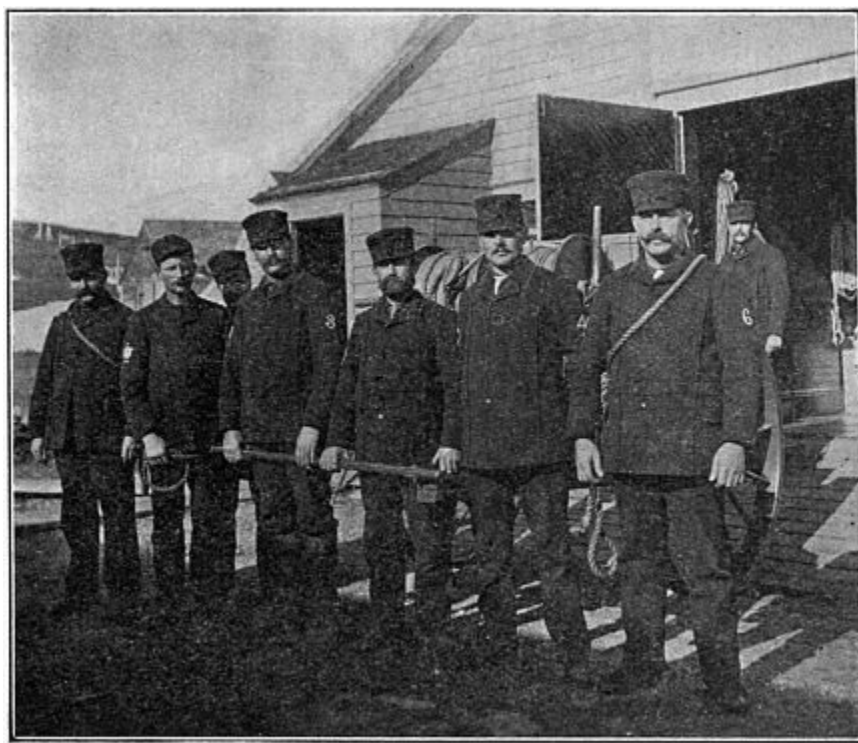
Then the crew settled down to the dull routine of pleasant-weather work, occupying the greater portion of the time in drilling and patrolling the coast.

Benny could give a very good synopsis of, and in many cases repeat verbatim, every chapter in the *Revised Regulations*. Each of the crew in turn had taught Fluff C. Foster a new trick, until his head was so stored with knowledge of this kind that a full hour was required in which to display all his accomplishments, and Joe Cushing had begun to lay his plans for the day when he and No. 8 were to visit the city clad in full uniform.

Then came a letter which disturbed all this serenity, and plunged the inmates of the station into a most painful state of perplexity and apprehension.

An ordinary-looking envelope covered the missive, such an one as might have brought an account of the simplest business transaction, and yet it threatened to change the whole course of affairs for this particular life-saving crew.

It was addressed simply to the keeper of the station, and bore the post-mark of a town in the interior of New York State.



Tom Downey opened it carelessly, read the lines hurriedly at first, and then more slowly, as if he found it difficult to understand the meaning.

He sat with his gaze fixed upon the page so long that Sam Hardy, who had been questioning Benny regarding the proper method of landing in a small boat through the surf, asked curiously:

"What's gone wrong? You look as if there was bad news in that letter."

"And at first glance it strikes me it *is* bad news," the keeper replied. "I was tryin' to make up my mind whether it would be well to let all hands know what may come to us, or if anything would be gained by keepin' it a secret for a spell."

"If it's bad news, the sooner we know it the better, accordin' to my way of thinkin'," Joe Cushing said promptly; and this remark decided Tom Downey, for without further hesitation he read the following aloud:

"MY DEAR SIR:

"I see by the newspapers that the ship *Amazonia* was wrecked near your station, and the sole survivor was a boy ten or twelve years of age, who gave his name as Benjamin H. Foster, stating that his father and mother had died in Calcutta.

"I have every reason to believe that boy to be my brother's son, in which case it shall be my duty to care for him.

"Will you kindly ask him his father's name? If it should have been "Stephen G.," then you may draw on me for sufficient money to pay young Benny's passage to this place, and for so much additional as he may be indebted to you for board and other necessities of life.

"Very respectfully yours,

"ANDREW FOSTER."

For fully a moment after Mr. Downey ceased reading no one spoke, and the silence was so profound that Fluff looked anxiously from one to the other as if fearing some disaster had befallen the crew.

Then it was Sam Hardy who spoke, and he found it necessary to clear his throat several times before it was possible to control his voice.

"What was your father's name, Benny?"

"It was Stephen G., but I don't believe the man who wrote that letter is my uncle, because if he is, why didn't I know something about him? Or, when father and mother were so sick, why didn't he write to them?"

"Of course that's a question we can't answer, lad. It may be your folks didn't send him word, or, perhaps the letters went astray. There are a dozen good reasons which might be found, and it ain't likely he'd be claimin' a boy he never saw if there wasn't any relationship between 'em."

"I hung 'round Calcutta long enough for him to claim me if he'd wanted to, an' surely he must have known father was dead, 'cause I've heard mother say it was reported among the shippin' news in all the American papers."

"You don't seem to be very much pleased at the idea of havin' an uncle up in 'York State?" Sam Hardy said, speaking a trifle more cheerfully than before, and Benny cried excitedly:

"Pleased! Of course I ain't! He can't be much of an uncle, else he would have helped father an' mother along when they needed it. He can write a dozen letters before I'll go anywhere to live off of people that ain't wantin' me very bad, else I'd have heard from 'em long ago."

"This ain't a matter to be settled off-hand, Benny," Keeper Downey said gravely. "If the man who wrote this letter is your uncle, and it seems he is, I'm not certain but that he could force you by law to go with him. At all events, it's his duty to give you some help in the world, and we must look at the matter from all sides before deciding."

"If you'd rather I wouldn't stay here, Mr. Downey, Fluff an' me will go off somewhere else; but we won't take up with his offer."

"Now look here, Benny," and Sam Hardy, reaching over, took the boy by the hand. "There's no question about our wantin' you to stay here, for we've come to look on you as belongin' to us, an' I'll venture to say I'm speakin' now what's in the heart of every man here. We like you because you're a sensible mate, an' industrious lad, an' one's who's doin' his level best to get into a hard callin'. If we thought only of ourselves that letter would go into the fire before you could say 'Jack Robinson.' It's your future that must be considered. By stayin' here you'll never be more 'n a surferman, an' a lad of your age should aim higher than that, whether he reaches the mark set or not. I ain't lookin' down upon the business I've followed all my life, an' I'll always uphold that it's an honor to any man to be a member of a life-saving crew; but at the same time I know, an' you know, that it's possible for a lad to go a good bit higher. What's decided on now affects your whole life, an' settles whether you're to stay in the life-saving service, or, perhaps, be a shinin' light in the world. I vote that all hands of us study over this thing till to-morrow after breakfast, and then let each one, includin' Benny, give

the result of his figgerin."

"That's the proper way," Tom Downey said quickly, catching eagerly at the suggestion. "You'll remember all Sam Hardy has said, Benny, for it's true, so far as regards yourself an' us. We want you with us; but I hope there's nobody in this crew who would be willing to keep you at the expense of your future. Think it all over calmly and quietly, lad, as Sam proposes, an' you can count on this crew doin' their level best for whatever may be to your future good."



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A CONSULTATION.

Benny was in a state of mind bordering on despair when the crew postponed any decided action on the letter from this uncle of whom he had never heard before. For the moment it seemed as if almost any decision would have been better than the suspense.

It appeared as if his comrades avoided even so much as looking toward him, and this gave him a sense of loneliness such as had come into his heart when he found himself amid strangers, the only survivor of the *Amazonia*.

As a matter of fact there was not a member of the crew but that would have enjoyed taking the lad in his arms and declaring that he should never leave the station, no matter how many uncles might send for him; but every man understood the question was too important to be decided hastily, and also that it would be cruel, perhaps, to speak such words as might influence the boy.

Benny waited a moment or more, hoping Sam Hardy might give him some consolation; but as the surfman remained silent with averted face, the sore-hearted lad, gathering Fluff in his arms, went out upon the wind-swept rocks to struggle as best he might with the great grief which had so suddenly come upon him.

Seating himself within view of the reef upon which the *Amazonia* had gone to pieces, and covering Fluff with his coat as best he might, the lad gave himself up to reflection--not as to what was best for him to do regarding the matter of going to his uncle; but concerning the cruel tricks which fortune seemed to be playing him.

"I know neither mother nor Mrs. Clark would want us to go off to that old man who never cared for us a cent's worth till he saw the news of the shipwreck in the papers, and it's horrible for him to interfere just when we'd got into such a nice place!"

The dog licked his master's face, and interpreting this as meaning Fluff fully agreed with him, Benny continued mournfully:

"We won't go, Fluffy, and that's all there is to it. If the crew say we can't stay here because that man claims the right to order us 'round, we'll run off somewhere by our own two selves, an' see if it won't be possible to make another home. But we'll never find such a pleasant place as this, no matter how much good luck we have! It seemed as if the men liked us, an' after there'd been time to grow, we'd come out as regular surfmen."

The dog whined because he was cold, but Benny fully believed it to be in reply.

"Of course you're sorry, Fluff! Anybody'd be; an' what *is* to become of us? You've got a collar and a medal, and there's my two suits of clothes; but we'll need some place to sleep in the very first night of leaving here, and where'll we find it? The money the passengers gave us is in the bank, and I suppose Andrew Foster will think it belongs to him, so we can't count on that."

Fluff twisted and squirmed until he escaped from his master's arms, for the embrace was much too close to please him, and as he capered and danced, begging to be taken back to the station Benny's grief increased:

"I know you want to stay here, Fluffy; but how can I fix things? It's going to be terrible hard on you to go where folks won't want you in the house 'cause you're a dog, an' we can't be together much of the time. Oh, what shall we do, you poor little man!"

Believing himself hidden from view of the life savers, the lad gave way to the grief in his heart, and, lying face downward upon the rocks, he allowed the tears to flow unchecked.

It was Sam Hardy who, missing Benny from the station, had come out fearing to find him in much such a frame of mind.

During two or three minutes the kindly-hearted surfman stood over him in silence, while Fluff remained near by wagging his tail as if asking what had gone wrong so suddenly, and then, bending over, Sam Hardy lifted the sorrowing boy in his arms.

"Look you, lad, it's wrong to get all down to the heel in this fashion when a question comes up which is to be settled as nearly for your good as we can figger it out. A life-savin' station ain't the kind of a home which is needed by a boy of your age."

"It's the only kind I want!" Benny sobbed. "Fluffy an' I'll never find another so good!"

"That's what you believe now, No. 8; but----"

"Why do you call me No. 8? If I'm to be sent away from here it shows I never was one of the crew!"

"But you have been, an' always will be, Benny, lad. Even if you go away we shall never speak or think of you except as 'No. 8,' the gritty little mate who brought something like sunshine into the dull station, and kept the gleam there every minute he stayed with us."

"Don't talk like that, Mr. Hardy, *please* don't talk like that! When you say you're sorry, and yet keep on talking as if it was settled that I'd got to go, it breaks me all up!"

"Poor little chicken, it strikes me you're badly broken up already!" And Sam stroked the boy's hair with his huge, rough hand, while Fluff crept under the life saver's arm as if asking that he be given due share of the caresses. "If we of the crew did only that which pleased us best, you'd never have a show for leavin'; but, as Tom Downey says, we're bound to think only of what may be for your good, an' in making up our minds it is with the hope we'll go right for your sake."

"That man, Andrew Foster, don't care about Fluffy an' me, 'cause he never so much as saw us!"

"That same thought has been in my mind, Benny, lad, an' Joe Cushing has been makin' similar talk. If we were certain he'd care for you as we do, the matter would be settled, for it stands to reason you should have a different home than this. But I don't like the way his letter reads, nor do the rest of the boys; so you see, lad, the question ain't settled by a long chalk yet."

"Please try to make the men want to keep me! Please try, Mr. Hardy."

"Bless your heart, No. 8, there's no need of my tryin' to do anything of the kind. The only trouble is we're so eager for you to stay that we're afraid of ourselves--afraid we sha'n't be actin' square by you. Here's Tom Downey been sayin' that he'd be willin' to give up ten dollars a month out of his pay for so long a time as he is in the service, for the sake of havin' you 'round, an' Dick Sawyer is threatenin' all sorts of terrible things against your uncle because he wrote the letter. We want you, lad, as badly as you want to be with us, an' that's what's makin' it so hard to settle the matter."

Benny twined his arms around the surfman's neck, and the latter, lifting him as tenderly as he would an infant, carried him back to the station, Fluff following close at his heels, barking with delight because they had finally decided to go in out of the cold wind.

Now it was that Benny's grief became more intense; this time because of the unusual tenderness and attention shown by every member of the crew. Each man appeared as if striving to show the boy some particular attention as proof of the esteem in which he was held, and try as he might, No. 8 could not hold back the tears of mingled pleasure and sorrow.

During the remainder of the day each member of the crew went around softly, hardly speaking above a whisper, as one does when in the presence of some great affliction, and the cook positively forbade Benny's going into the kitchen for the purpose of assisting in the work.



"It seems as if I was going right off in the morning," No. 8 said confidently to Sam Hardy, his voice breaking now and then because of the sobs. "But suppose it is decided that I must leave, will I have to start right off?"

"Why, bless you, lad, there'd be no call for anything like that. Writing to your uncle an' getting an answer back will take a week at the best, and then we shall try to--Well, there, No. 8, what's the sense of our talkin' about your goin' away? When it comes right down to the fact, I ain't sure as I could say that you'd best go to this Andrew Foster, even though I might know it was for your good. Let's put master Fluff through his lessons, and see if we can't work something like cheerfulness into this crew, for it's gettin' to be as solemn a time as I ever took part in."

Fluff was ready and even eager to do what he might to dispel the gloom, although it is not to be supposed that he had such an idea in his white head when he obeyed the surfman's command to "sit up and smoke his pipe."

During the evening the men, and with them Benny, grew more cheerful. Now and then one would speak of what No. 8 must do as soon as the warm weather came, as if the matter was already settled that the lad should remain.

The cook exerted himself to prepare a most appetizing supper, and it was served half an hour earlier than usual so that all hands, save the lookout on the hill, might be present. The men told stories and made jokes during the meal as if

the sole object was to prevent their own and No. 8's thoughts from roaming into the future.

Yet after all these efforts it was impossible to impart a thorough air of gayety to the scene, and it was with something like a sense of relief that the crew heard the hoof-beats of a horse over the stone road, telling that a visitor was near at hand.

Dick Sawyer opened the door to welcome this opportune arrival, and as he peered out into the twilight an exclamation of glad surprise burst from his lips.

"Why, it's Mr. Bradford! Most likely he's come to see how the new uniform fits, an' accordin' to my way of thinkin', he couldn't have appeared in a better time, for now we'll be able to get a bit of advice on a difficult question from one who is interested in the case."

The gentleman whose coming was thus announced must have been surprised by the warmth with which he was received. The members of the crew greeted him as an old friend, and each appeared eager to engage him in conversation.

Benny, holding Fluff in his arms, stood in the background, waiting until his comrades had come to an end of their words of welcome, and, catching a glimpse of him, Mr. Bradford made his way toward that portion of the room, in total disregard of the fact that Dick Sawyer was doing his best to explain how an unusually large bag of ducks might be taken in a certain cove not far from the building.

"Why, my boy, you're lookin' as solemn as an owl, and even young Mr. Fluff isn't as cheerful as when I saw him last! What's the matter? Didn't the uniform fit?"

"Oh, yes, sir, and it's beautiful--beautiful; and I sha'n't be able to wear it because I've got to go away."

Then a particularly big sob came into Benny's throat, and he found it impossible to speak further.

"Go away?" Mr. Bradford repeated in surprise, and turning to the others he asked, "What does the lad mean?"

It was proper Tom Downey should act as spokesman, and, recognizing this fact, he began the necessary explanations by handing the visitor the letter which had caused so much sorrow at the station.

"Take off your overcoat, and make yourself comfortable here by the table while you read this; then you'll know what Benny means. But he goes a little too far when he says he's *got* to leave, for we haven't settled the question yet, and since you're here, if the rest of the crew are willing, I go in for leavin' it to you. We want him to stay; yet are afraid of doin' what mightn't be to his best interests, therefore it puts us in a bad fix, so far as makin' up our minds is concerned."

Mr. Bradford looked thoroughly mystified, as he had good cause for being, but he did as the speaker had suggested, in the way of making himself comfortable, and then read the letter from Mr. Andrew Foster, studying it so long that Benny began to fear perhaps he did not wish to venture an opinion on the subject.

Meanwhile the life savers seated themselves around him, each man looking inquiringly, eagerly, at the one whom they had thus suddenly decided should be the judge.

Finally Mr. Bradford looked up from the paper toward Benny and asked:

"When did you hear from your uncle--before this, I mean?"

"I never knew there was such a man, and wish he'd kept his letters to himself."

"Was your mother sick long before she died?"

"Only two weeks, sir."

"And didn't she mention the name of Andrew Foster--never speak of your Uncle Andrew?"

"I don't think so, sir; I am sure she never said very much about him, and I can't remember ever having heard his name."

"Not a very affectionate letter, eh, Downey?" and Mr. Bradford held out the missive as if thinking the keeper might like to see it again before replying.

"That's the way it struck all hands of us, and is one thing which has caused us to think perhaps it would be as well for Benny to stay here."

"You want to keep him?"

"Yes, Mr. Bradford; we would like to have him and Fluff stay, if it so be the lad wouldn't be injurin' his prospects in life. We've come to look upon him as belongin' to us in a sort of way. Perhaps you can't understand it; but we who live here alone, tied down to the station day and night, get kind of peculiar, I reckon. You see, we're mostly by ourselves all

winter, and run into whims an' fancies more than other men. The sea brought the boy to us, so to speak, and, even though he's where he can hear it, I must say a better lad never lived--leastways, so far as my experience goes. Here's the whole hitch: we can't hope to make more than a surfman out of him, and it may be the good Lord has fitted him for something better, though he couldn't follow a more honest callin'. Now if this uncle of his would send him to college, and start him out into the world as many a boy is started, we'd put aside our own feelin's, knowin' No. 8 was to be benefited; but if he's goin' 'way up there in the middle of York State to do the drudgery of a farm, or some such kind of work, why, then, unless it's contrary to law, we'd hold him here in spite of his uncle."

"Have you answered this letter?"

"No, sir. You see, it didn't get here till a few hours ago, an' we had agreed not to make up our minds before to-morrow mornin'."

"Don't you think it would be a good idea to find out who Mr. Andrew Foster is, and whether he's likely to give the boy a good home?"

"It would, for a fact, sir; but how might that be done? We are not allowed to leave the station for a longer time than twenty-four hours, and then only one of the crew can have a furlough."

"There are many easier methods of learning all the public may know concerning a man than to send a messenger in search of the knowledge. Suppose you authorize me to make the necessary inquiries--it won't cost you anything,--and in the course of perhaps a week I shall be able to tell you as much regarding Benny's uncle as his neighbors can. I suppose, as a matter of fact, that by applying to the courts he may have himself appointed guardian for the lad and take him away; but I question whether an uncle who wasn't spoken of in terms of affection by the boy's father and mother would take such trouble."

"It's no use talkin', we ain't fit to settle any kind of a discussion," Sam Hardy exclaimed emphatically. "Here we've been moonin' 'round tryin' to make up our minds whether Benny should go or not, an' never once thinkin' of what would have come into another man's mind at the jump. Of course we want to know who Andrew Foster is, and what he's likely to do for Benny? Then it's only a question of sayin' who will give the boy the best start in the world."

"An' you'll look after this matter for us, Mr. Bradford?" Tom Downey asked, an expression of relief coming over his face.

"Certainly I will, and be glad of the opportunity of doing a favor for No. 8. Cheer up, my lad," he added turning toward Benny who, as the conversation progressed, had been gradually drawing nearer the friendly visitor. "You're a long ways from leaving this crew yet, and I'll be surprised if the matter comes out differently from what you wish. With all hands of us to consider which may be the best move, there shouldn't remain any chance for mistake. Choke back those sobs; go up and put your uniform on, and let me see how you and Fluff C. Foster look on parade."

It was really astonishing what a change Mr. Bradford had wrought by a few commonplace words.

The expression of gloom disappeared from all the faces, and the men whose time for going on patrol had arrived set about making ready for the duty with the greatest alacrity.

Benny ran up-stairs, eager to do as this kindly friend suggested, and in an instant, as it were, something very like joy reigned where lately all had been mourning.

No. 8 displayed himself in all his finery; Fluff performed his tricks in the most approved fashion; the keeper and the surfmen told stories which were not all concerning wrecks and loss of life; the cook made a lobster salad as his portion of the merrymaking, and the evening which had bade fair to be such a gloomy one, was, as all declared, the most enjoyable that had been spent in the station for many a month.

Then, promising to report by telephone whenever he should have gained any information, the visitor took his departure, and it was time for Sam Hardy and No. 8 to do their share of patrol work.

"Come, lad," the surfman said cheerily. "I had counted on your stayin' under cover to-night; but seein' 's how you're likely to hold on here, for I believe Mr. Bradford will fix things accordin' to our likin', you may just as well continue to toughen up."

Then the two went out into the night, and it would be difficult to say which carried the lighter heart in his bosom.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE DECISION.

Although Mr. Bradford's advice and willingness to take charge of Benny's business had given great relief of mind to all concerned, the fears of the crew concerning the future were by no means dispelled.

When the gentleman had stated so positively that several weeks must necessarily elapse before the question could properly be settled, even Benny felt as if a great load of care had suddenly been removed; but on the following morning, after the men had had time to view the matter from every point, there appeared much in it which was not pleasing.

"It's just like this," Sam Hardy said to Joe Cushing when the two met behind the engine-house for a private conversation on the morning following Mr. Bradford's visit. "It's just like this: If Andrew Foster turns out to be some crusty old curmudgeon who's bound to have his own way, he'll insist on Benny's goin' to him the very minute he finds out we want to keep the lad, therefore it stands us in hand to keep mighty quiet as to our wishes."

"Well, supposin' he does claim the lad?" Joe Cushing replied hotly. "I've thought this thing over a good bit since Mr. Bradford left, an' have made up my mind that, so far as I'm concerned, No. 8 is at liberty to stay with us if he says the word. What's the reason he won't make as much of a man while stoppin' here as if he was in York State? I go in for tellin' Andrew Foster that we haven't got the time to run around huntin' up his relations; but we count on keepin' the boy who was given to us by the sea."

"The rest of the crew wouldn't agree to anything quite so strong as that," Hardy suggested thoughtfully.

"What's the reason they wouldn't? Dick Sawyer, Henry Robbins, and Henderson said not half an hour ago that they'd back me in holdin' on to the lad, never mind how many uncles flashed up."

"What about Downey?"

"He wants to keep Benny with us, an' would come out strong except that he's afraid it will work the boy some harm in the future."

"Was that why you wanted me to come out here?"

"Yes; I counted that you'd agree with us, an' we might settle the question without waitin' for what Mr. Bradford may pick up in the way of information."

"I reckon it'll be wiser to wait, Joe. There's plenty of time to take a bold stand after we know whether Andrew Foster really wants the boy, or if he's sayin' so simply because he thinks folks will make queer talk if he don't."

Joe Cushing was by no means satisfied to follow this advice; but he could not persuade Sam Hardy to do as he had proposed, and the interview came to an end.

During the week which ensued the members of the crew talked often, one with another but not in a body, regarding what should be done in case Benny's uncle demanded that the boy come to him, and the general opinion appeared to be that the decision ought by right to be left to No. 8 himself.

As a matter of course no one suggested such an idea to Benny. He was given to understand that everything depended upon the information procured by Mr. Bradford, and a most anxious time it was to him.

More than once he referred to the matter when alone with Sam Hardy, but the surfman refused to discuss it, and only to Fluff could he pour out all that was in his heart. That he would run away rather than go to this uncle, who had written concerning him as if he was no more than a bale of merchandise, he told Fluff again and again, and in order to be prepared for such a move, Benny questioned the cook concerning the surrounding country, until the latter believed it his duty to inform the keeper.

"The lad is makin' ready to give us the slip if it turns out that the crew believe he should leave," the "captain of the kitchen" said to Tom Downey. "From what I've seen of him there's no doubt in my mind but that he'll do it rather than go to this uncle of whom he never heard before."

Because of the fear that Benny might be tempted to do something desperate in case the information Mr. Bradford received was of such a nature as warranted a careful consideration of Andrew Foster's claim, it was decided that the lad be kept in ignorance regarding what the gentleman might succeed in learning until the crew could weigh the matter well in joint discussion.



It so chanced, however, that Benny himself was the first to hear from Mr. Bradford, and the crew were thwarted in their good intentions by that piece of mechanism known as the telephone.

The boy was alone in the station on the fifth day after Andrew Foster's letter was received, and, hearing the bell ring, answered the call.

"Hello!" he cried, replying as he had often heard Mr. Downey, and then, placing the receiver to his ear, he awaited the message.

"Is this the Life-Saving Station?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who's at the 'phone?"

"It's me--Benny Foster."

"Hello, Benny, how is young Foster? It is Bradford who is speaking."

"Fluffy is very well, thank you. All the crew, and even the cook, are outside, sir. Shall I call any one?"

"Perhaps it will be as well if I speak with you first, and then we'll have a word with the keeper. Heard anything from your uncle?"

"No, sir, and I hope I sha'n't. Say, Mr. Bradford, would you go to him if you were in my place and had such a good home as this, where Fluffy can do almost whatever he wants to? You know some folks think a dog ain't nice to come into the house, and I don't know what the poor little man would do if he was sent into the shed or a barn to sleep."

"So you're having it very comfortable out there, eh?"

"Indeed we are, Mr. Bradford. Maje has got through bothering Fluff, and the men are as kind to me as if we was own folks. I'd feel awful bad to go away; but that's what I'll have to do if Andrew Foster says I must live with him."

"Ain't thinking of running off are you, Benny?"

"That's just what Fluff and I have made up our minds to do, sir, though I wouldn't like for you to tell Mr. Downey. We'll never go off with folks we don't know."

"Your uncle might give you a much better home than you have now, Benny."

"He couldn't do it, sir. No one would ever be as good to me as are the members of this crew, and, what's better than all the rest, I can earn my own way here--everybody says I do."

"Then you've quite made up your mind not to leave the station?"

"Oh, sir; I'll have to leave if the men decide that I must, but neither Fluff nor I will go to Andrew Foster."

"Then where do you count on going?"

"That's what we don't know, sir. I was coming in first to ask you where we might find a place to work for enough to pay our way."

"Would you like to hear what your uncle has to say regarding the matter?"

"It won't make any difference to us, sir; we won't go to him."

"What I mean is, would you like to hear the letter read which I have just received from him?"

"Does he say I've got to go where he lives?"

"Listen while I read, bearing in mind that I wrote the day after leaving the station, explaining how you were situated, and asking if he believed it was best to take you from those who were willing to assume all charge. The letter has just been received, and you shall hear it: 'I am in receipt of your favor of the 4th, and it pleases me to learn that my nephew, for I have no doubt as to his being my brother's son, has found such good friends. I am not really in a position to give a young boy that care which he should have, and would never have written asking that he be sent on, but that I deemed it my duty. I am an old man, living alone with servants, and of such a disposition that even my only brother could not agree with me. If the boy is comfortable and happy, and I can be assured the life savers will give him proper care, he shall receive from me the sum of two hundred dollars each year in quarterly payments, dependent only upon his writing me a truthful account of his situation at least once every twelve months, but not oftener. In case you are willing to burden yourself with the transaction of the business, I shall be glad to leave everything in your hands, agreeing to do in the premises whatever you may believe to be right, providing I am not called upon for more than I have stated herein.' That is the letter, Benny, exactly as he wrote it, and I have read every word."

No. 8 stood with the receiver pressed tightly to his ear, a look of perplexity on his face, and after a long pause

asked hesitatingly:

"Didn't he say anything more, sir?"

"I can't see but that he has covered the subject fully, my boy."

"But does he still think I must go where he lives?"

Benny could hear Mr. Bradford laughing, and he wondered why the gentleman should have thought there was anything comical in a question so important to him.

"Are any of the crew within call?" Mr. Bradford asked at length.

"I think Mr. Hardy is in the oil-room, sir."

"Tell him I am at the 'phone."

Sam was coming toward the station when Benny opened the door, and on being told who desired to speak with him, he hurried forward, an expression of anxiety appearing on his face.

There was a decided change in his countenance five minutes later, and then he dropped the receiver very suddenly to grasp Benny's hands.

"It's all right, No. 8! The whole matter is settled in great shape, an' I'm beginnin' to think Andrew Foster is a decent sort of an old fogey after all."

"Am I to stay here?" Benny cried, trembling violently because of the prolonged suspense.

"That's exactly what you are to do, my boy, and your uncle will pay two hundred dollars a year towards puttin' you through school in proper shape."

"I don't want him to pay us anything so long as we can stay here," Benny replied quickly, tears of joy and relief welling up in his eyes.

"But it's right he should do it, No. 8, an' it shows that he's got a decent heart, even though it may be moss-grown. Now you are one of us, an' it'll be strange if seven able-bodied men can't provide one little lad with food, lodgin', an' schoolin', particularly since he earns a good deal more'n he costs."

Then Sam ran to the door, shouting for the members of the crew at the full strength of his lungs, and in a few moments all were gathered, waiting to learn the reason for the sudden summons.

It was a difficult matter for the surferman to tell the story intelligibly; but after a time he succeeded in making his comrades understand that there was no longer any cause to fear that No. 8 might be taken from them, and then ensued such a merrymaking as, perhaps, no life-saving station has ever witnessed.

The men congratulated each other, then Benny, and, finally, Fluff, who had been sitting up begging for information-or sugar; and when this had been done, went through the same ceremony again and again, until Tom Downey declared that such "crazy antics must come to an end," lest some visitor should suddenly appear and think the crew had gone mad.

Nor were they wholly quieted down when Mr. Bradford arrived early in the evening, and then the reading of Andrew Foster's letter aroused them to yet more noisy hilarity.

Amid all the confusion Benny was strangely quiet. He held Fluff pressed tightly in his arms, and gazed first at one and then the other in such a serious fashion that Mr. Bradford finally asked:

"What is it, Benny? You don't seem to be as happy as I had expected?"

"Happy, Mr. Bradford! Fluffy and I are so happy that we don't dare to make much noise for fear we'll wake up and find it's all been a dream. No dog and boy in this world ever had it so nice as Fluffy an' I, and it makes us almost frightened for fear we shan't do enough to keep the crew glad all the time 'cause we're here."

"We're not afraid that you won't do enough, No. 8," Tom Downey said gravely. "The greatest trouble is that you may try to do too much. We are the ones who should fear lest we fail in giving you all the chances other boys enjoy. We count on seein' that you have a good education, and then if it so happens that you believe the life-saving service is good enough for you, we'll be satisfied; but we're countin' on your makin' such a mark in the world as will puff us all up with pride."

Benny made no attempt to reply; he did not dare trust his voice, and at such a time tears would have shamed him; but he put Fluff on the floor, ordering him to "stand up," and the two remained erect for several seconds, silently giving thanks for the great kindness and loving tenderness displayed toward these homeless ones.

It would be a pleasing task to depict Benny as he advances through life, winning the praise and admiration of those around him for the sterling qualities displayed; but as yet he has not made very much progress in carving for himself a name.

He is now at school, and Fluff remains at the station, happy all the time, but particularly so from Friday night until Monday morning, when his young master "comes home" to the station.

No. 8's teachers report that he is a studious, well-behaved boy, and both Sam Hardy and Joe Cushing declare whenever the subject is brought up, that if he so desires, Benny shall "get all the schoolin' that's to be had for money."

Yes, he received the medal of honor for life-saving, when his successful work on the night the crew were taken from the stranded steamer had been properly represented at headquarters, and every Sunday he and Fluff wear their decorations, much to the satisfaction of their guardians, the men of the Life-Saving Service.

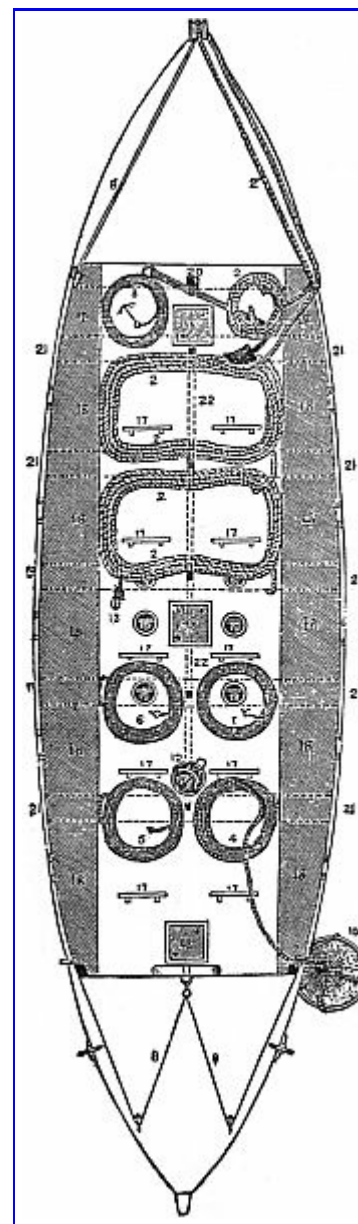
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## DECK-PLAN OF A SELF-RIGHTING LIFE-BOAT, SHOWING THE MANNER IN WHICH THE GEAR IS STOWED.

### *List of Articles Shown.*

1. Anchor.
2. Cable.
3. Bow heaving-line or grapnel-rope and grapnel.
4. Drogue-rope.
5. Stern heaving-line.
6. Veering lines.
7. Veering lines.
8. Jib outhaul or tack.
9. Mizzen-sheets.
10. Drogue.
11. Life-buoy.
12. Loaded cane, heaving-line, and tub.
13. Tailed block.
14. Pump-well hatch.
15. Deck ventilating hatches.
16. Deck ventilating hatches.
17. Foot-boards for rowers.
18. Side air-cases.
19. Relieving tubes and valves.
20. Samson's post.
21. Thwarts.
22. Central batten, to which the masts and boat-hooks are lashed.

*Boat and Gear.*



## GENERAL RULES OBSERVED IN STOWING THE ABOVE GEAR.

1. Every rope made securely fast to a thwart by one end, the other end being kept clear for immediate use.
2. Each rope coiled, as much as possible, under a seat.
3. Each rope coiled in a loose coil, so as to allow the air to have access to all parts of it.

## REGULATIONS.

1. The keepers of life-boat stations will be held responsible to the Government for the proper care and order, cleanliness, and efficiency of the life-boat, and everything pertaining to her.

2. The keeper of each life-boat station will frequently open the doors and windows of the boat-house; keep the pump-well hatch and ventilating-hatches of the boat open when the boat is not in use; and often examine such of her gear as would suffer injury from dampness, and dry it by exposure to the sun or wind. He will exercise proper precautions against the warping of the oars by their remaining long in one position, and see that they are not left supported only at the ends.

3. The keeper will keep all the boat's gear as far as possible in the boat, except the lantern (which has first to be trimmed and is only wanted for night service) and the life-belts, so that no delay may take place in handing gear into the boat when going on service, and no risk be run of leaving anything behind.

4. The ropes and other gear of the life-boat must on no account be used for private purposes, nor, where avoidable, for any other purpose than that for which they are provided.

5. Whenever any small articles are injured or destroyed, they should be instantly repaired or replaced, and the Superintendent of the district informed accordingly; and when any ropes or other articles of importance are worn-out or destroyed, the fact should be made known at once to the Superintendent.

6. Whenever the life-belts have been wet through with salt water, they should be dipped and washed in fresh water if practicable, and perfectly dried as soon as possible, their durability, without repair, much depending upon this being done.

7. Where there is a carriage to the boat, the wheels should be taken off at least twice a year and the axle-arms greased and the roller-skids should be kept in good order by oiling their axle-bolts occasionally.

8. The life-boat will be manned by the keeper, a bowman, and as many boatmen as the boat pulls oars, and the keeper will have charge of the boat as coxswain.