

F. Hopkinson Smith



*Caleb West,
Master
Diver*

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CHAPTER I

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THE CAPE ANN SLOOP

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The rising sun burned its way through a low-lying mist that hid the river, and flashed its search-light rays over the sleeping city. The blackened tops of the tall stacks caught the signal, and answered in belching clouds of gray steam that turned to gold as they floated upwards in the morning air. The long rows of the many-eyed tenements cresting the hill blinked in the dazzling light, threw wide their shutters, and waved curling smoke flags from countless chimneys.

Narrow, silent alleys awoke. Doors opened and shut. Single figures swinging dinner-pails, and groups of girls with baskets, hurried to and fro. The rumbling of carts was heard and shrill street cries.

Suddenly the molten ball swung clear of the purple haze and flooded the city with tremulous light. The vanes of the steeples flashed and blazed. The slanting roofs, wet with the night dew, glistened like silver. The budding trees, filling the great squares, flamed pink and yellow, their tender branches quivering in the rosy light.

Now long, deep-toned whistles—reveille of forge, spindle, and press—startled the air. Surging crowds filled the thoroughfares; panting horses tugged at the surface cars; cabs rattled over the cobblestones, and loaded trucks began to block the crossings.

The great city was astir.

At the sun's first gleam, Henry Sanford had waked with joyous start. Young, alert, full of health and courage as he was, the touch of its rays never came too early for him. To-day they had been like the hand of a friend, rousing him with promises of good fortune.

Dressing with eager haste, he had hurried into the room adjoining his private apartments, which served as his uptown business office. Important matters awaited him. Within a few hours a question of vital moment had to be decided,—one upon which the present success of his work depended.

As he entered, the sunshine, pouring through the wide windows, fell across a drawing-table covered with the plans of the lighthouse he was then building; illumined a desk piled high with correspondence, and patterned a wall upon which were hung photographs and sketches of the various structures which had marked the progress of his engineering career.

But it was toward a telegram lying open on his desk that Sanford turned. He took it in his hand and read it with the quiet satisfaction of one who knows by heart every line he studies. It was headed Keyport, and ran as follows:—

To Henry Sanford, C. E., Washington Square, New York.

Cape Ann sloop arrived and is a corker. Will be at your uptown office in the morning.

Joseph Bell.

"Dear old Captain Joe, he's found her at last!" he said to himself, and laughed aloud.

With a joyous enthusiasm that lent a spring and vitality to every movement, he stepped to the window and raised the sash to let in the morning air.

It was a gala-day for the young engineer. For months Captain Joe had been in search of a sloop of peculiar construction,—one of so light a draught that she could work in a rolling surf, and yet so stanch that she could sustain the strain of a derrick-boom rigged to her mast. Without such a sloop the building of the lighthouse Sanford was then constructing for the government on Shark Ledge, lying eight miles from Keyport, and breasting a tide running six miles an hour, could not go on. With such a sloop its early completion was assured.

The specifications for this lighthouse provided that the island which formed its base—an artificial one made by dumping rough stones over the sunken rock known as Shark's Ledge—should be protected not only from sea action, but from the thrust of floating ice. This Sanford was to accomplish by paving its under-water slopes with huge granite blocks, to form an enrockment,—each block to be bedded by a diver.

The engineer-in-chief of the Lighthouse Board at Washington had expressed grave doubts as to the practicability of the working methods submitted by Sanford for handling these blocks, questioning whether a stone weighing twelve tons could be swung overboard, as suggested by him, from the deck of a vessel and lowered to a diver while the boat was moored in a six-mile current. As, however, the selection of the means to be employed lay with the contracting engineer, and not with the Board,

Sanford's working plans had finally been approved. He had lacked only a sloop to carry them out. This sloop Captain Joe had now found.

No wonder, then, that the splendor of the early sunshine had seemed a harbinger of success, nor that as the minutes flew his eagerness increased to grasp the captain's hand.

At the first sound of his heavy step in the hall outside, Sanford sprang from his desk and threw the door wide open to welcome the big, burly fellow,—comrade and friend for years, as well as foreman and assistant engineer on his force.

"Are you sure she'll handle the stones?" were the first words he addressed to the captain,—there were no formalities between these men. "Nothing but a ten-horse engine, remember, will lift them from the dock. What's the sloop's beam?"

"Thirty foot over all, an' she's stiff as a church," answered Captain Joe, all out of breath with his run up the stairs,—pushing his Derby hat back from his forehead as he spoke. "An' her cap'n ain't no slouch, nuther. I see him yesterday 'fore I come down. Looks 's ef he hed th' right stuff in him. Says he ain't afeard o' th' Ledge, an' don't mind layin' her broadside on, even ef she does git a leetle mite scraped."

"How's her boiler?" Sanford asked, with sudden earnestness.

"I ain't looked her b'iler over yit, but her cylinders is big enough. If her steam gives out, I'll put one of our own aboard. She'll do, sir. Don't worry a mite; we'll spank that baby when we git to 't,"—and his leathery, weather-tanned face cracked into smiles.

Sanford laughed again. The cheerful humor of this man, whose judgment of men never failed him, and whose knowledge of sea-things made him invaluable, was always a tonic to him.

"I'm glad you like her skipper," he said, taking from a pigeonhole in his perfectly appointed desk, as he spoke, the charter-party of the sloop. "I see his name is Brandt, and the sloop's name is the Screamer. Hope she'll live up to her name. The charter-party, I think, ought to contain some allusion to the coast-chart, in case of any protest Brandt may make afterwards about the shoalness of the water. Better have him put his initials on the chart," he added, with the instinctive habit of caution which always distinguished his business methods. "Do you think the shallow water round the Ledge *will* scare him?" he continued, as he crossed the room to a row of shelves filled with mechanical drawings, in search of a round tin case holding the various charts of Long Island Sound.

Captain Joe did not answer Sanford's question at once. His mind was on something else. He took off his hat and pea-jacket, hung them on a hook, moved back the pile of books from the middle of the table, with as little consideration as he would have shown to so many bricks, corked a bottle of liquid ink for safety, flattened with his big hands the chart which Sanford had unrolled, weighted its four corners with a T square and some color-pans, and then, bending his massive head, began studying its details with all the easy confidence of a first officer on a Cunarder.

As he leaned over the chart the sunlight played about his face and brought into stronger relief the few gray hairs

which silvered the short brown curls crisped about his neck and temples. These hairs betrayed the only change seen in him since the memorable winter's day when he had saved the lives of the passengers on the sinking ferry-boat near Hoboken by calking with his own body the gash left in her side by a colliding tug. But time had touched him nowhere else. He was still the same broad-as-he-was-long old sea-dog; tough, sturdy, tender-eyed, and fearless. His teeth were as white, his mouth was as firm, his jaw as strong and determined.

The captain placed his horn-tipped finger on a dot marked "Shark's Ledge Spindle," obliterating in the act some forty miles of sea-space; repeated to himself in a low voice, "Six fathoms—four—one and a half—hum, 't ain't nothin'; that Cape Ann sloop can do it;" and then suddenly remembering Sanford's question, he answered, with quick lifting of his head and with a cheery laugh, "Skeer him? Wait till ye see him, sir. And he won't make no *pro*-test, nuther. He ain't that kind."

When the coast-chart had been rolled up and replaced in the tin case, to be taken to Keyport for the skipper's initials, both men resumed their seats by Sanford's desk. By this time some of the young engineer's enthusiasm over the finding of the sloop had begun to cool. He seemed, as he sat there, a different man, as with businesslike address he turned to the discussion of various important details connected with the work.

"Anything left of the old house, captain?" he asked, taking from the table a rough sketch of the new shanty to be

built on the Ledge,—the one used while the artificial island was being built having been injured by the winter storms.

"Not much, sir: one side's stove in an' the roof's smashed. Some o' the men are in it now, gittin' things in shape, but it's purty rickety. I'm a-goin' to put the new one here,"—his finger on the drawing,— "an' I'm goin' to make it o' tongue-an'-grooved stuff an' tar the roof to git it water-tight. Then I'll hev some iron bands made with turnbuckles to go over the top timbers an' fasten it all down in the stone-pile. Oh, we'll git her so she'll stay put when hell breaks loose some night down Montauk way!" and another hearty laugh rang out, shaking the captain's brawny chest, as he rolled up the drawing and tucked it in the case for safety.

"There's no doubt we'll have plenty of that," said Sanford, with a slight touch of anxiety in his tones. "And now about the working force. Will you make many changes?" he asked.

"No, sir. We'll put Caleb West in charge of the divin'; ain't no better man 'n Caleb in er out a dress. Them enrockments is mighty ugly things to set under water, an' I won't trust nobody but Caleb to do it. Lonny Bowles'll help tend derricks; an' there's our regular gang,—George Nickles an' the rest of 'em. I only got one new man so far: that's a young feller named Bill Lacey. He looks like a skylarkin' chap, but I kin take that out o' him. He kin climb like a cat, an' we want a man like that to shin the derricks. He's tended divers, too, he says, an' he'll do to look after Caleb's life-line an' hose when I can't. By the way, sir, I forgot to ask ye about them derricks. We got to hev four whackin' big sticks to set them big stone on top o' the concrete when we git it

finished, an' there ain't no time to lose on 'em. I thought maybe ye'd order 'em to-day from Medford?"

While Sanford was writing a telegram to a shipbuilder at Medford ordering "four clean, straight, white pine masts not less than twenty inches at the butt," and delivering it to his negro servant, Sam, whom he called from the adjoining room, Captain Joe had arisen from his chair and had taken down his pea-jacket and Derby hat, without which he never came to New York,—it was his one concession to metropolitan exactions: the incongruity between the pea-jacket and the Derby hat always delighted Sanford.

"But, Captain Joe," said Sanford, looking up, "you mustn't go; breakfast will be ready in a minute. Young Mr. Hardy is coming, whom you met here once before. He wants to meet you again."

"Not this mornin', sir. I've got a lot o' things to look after 'fore I catch the three-ten. I'm obleeged to ye all the same," and he humped his arms and shoulders into his weather-beaten pea-jacket and picked up the tin case.

"Well, I wish you would," said Sanford, with a hand on the captain's shoulder, and real disappointment in his tone, "but you know best, I suppose."

With the big brown hand of the captain in his own he followed him to the top of the stairs, where he stood watching the burly figure descending the spiral staircase, the tin case under his arm, spy-glass fashion.

"You'll see me in the morning, captain," Sanford called out, not wanting him to go without another word. "I'll come by the midnight train."

The captain looked up and waved his hand cheerily in lieu of a reply.

Sanford waited until the turn of the staircase hid him from view, then turned, and, drawing the heavy curtains of the vestibule, passed through it to his private apartments, flooded with the morning light.

CHAPTER II

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A MORNING'S MAIL

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Sanford dropped into a brown leather chair, and Sam, with the fawning droop of a water-spaniel, placed the morning paper before him, moved a small table nearer, on which his master could lay the morning's mail as it was opened, adjusted the curtains so as to keep the glare from his paper, and with noiseless tread withdrew to the kitchen. Whatever the faults of this product of reconstruction might have been,—and Sam had many,—neglect of Sanford's comfort was not one of them.

According to his lights he was scrupulously honest. Although he dressed with more care on Sunday afternoons than his master,—generally in that gentleman's cast-off clothes, and always in his discarded neckties and gloves,—smoked his tobacco, purloined his cigars, and occasionally drank his wine, whenever the demands of his social life made such inroads on Sanford's private stock necessary to maintain a certain prestige among his ebonized brethren, he invariably drew the line at his master's loose change and his shirt-studs. This was due, doubtless, to some drops of blood, trickling through his veins and inherited from an old family butler of an ancestor, which, while they permitted him the free use of everything his master ate, drank, and wore,—a common privilege of the slave days,—debarred him completely from greater crimes.

His delinquencies—all of them perfectly well known to Sanford—never lost him his master's confidence: he knew the race, and never expected the impossible. Not only did he place Sam in charge of his household expenditures, but he gave him entire supervision as well of his rooms and their contents.

In these apartments Sam took the greatest pride. They were at the top of one of those old-fashioned, hip-roofed, dormer-windowed houses still to be found on Washington Square, and consisted of five rooms, with dining-room and salon.

Against the walls of the salon stood low bookcases, their tops covered with curios and the hundred and one knickknacks that encumber a bachelor's apartment. Above these again hung a collection of etchings and sketches in and out of frames, many of them signed by fellow members of the Buzzards, a small Bohemian club of ten who often held their meetings here.

Under a broad frieze ran a continuous shelf, holding samples of half the pots of the universe, from a Heidelberg beer-mug to an East Indian water-jar; and over the doors were grouped bunches of African arrows, spears, and clubs, and curious barbaric shields; while the centre of the room was occupied by a square table covered with books and magazines, ashtrays, Japanese ivories, and the like. Set in among them was an umbrella-lamp with a shade of sealing-wax red. At intervals about the room were smaller tables, convenient for decanters and crushed ice, and against the walls, facing the piano, were wide divans piled high with silk cushions, and near the window which opened on a balcony

overlooking the square stood a carved Venetian wedding-chest, which Sanford had picked up on one of his trips abroad.

Within easy reach of reading-lamp and chair rested a four-sided bookcase on rollers, filled with works on engineering and books of reference; while a high, narrow case between two doors was packed with photographs and engravings of the principal marine structures of our own and other coasts. It was at once the room of a man of leisure and a man of work.

Late as was the season, a little wood fire smouldered in the open fireplace,—one of the sentiments to which Sanford clung,—while before it stood the brown leather chair in which he sat.

"I forgot to say that Captain Bell will not be here to breakfast, Sam, but Mr. Hardy is coming," said Sanford, suddenly recollecting himself.

"Yaas, sah; everything's ready, sah," replied Sam, who, now that the telegram had been dispatched and the morning papers and letters delivered, had slipped into his white jacket again.

Sanford picked up the package of letters, a dozen or more, and began cutting the envelopes. Most of them were read rapidly, marked in the margin, and laid in a pile beside him. There were two which he had placed by themselves without opening: one from his friend Mrs. Morgan Leroy, and the other from Major Tom Slocomb, of Pocomoke, Maryland.

Major Slocomb wrote to inform him of his approaching visit to New York, accompanied by his niece, Miss Helen Shirley, of Kent County,—*"a daughter, sir, of Colonel Talbot*

Shirley, one of our foremost citizens, whom I believe you had the honor of meeting during your never-to-be-forgotten visit among us."

The never-to-be-forgotten visit was one that Sanford had made the major the winter before, when he was inspecting the site for a stone and brush jetty he was about to build for the government, in the Chesapeake, near those famous estates which the Pocomokian inherited from his wife, "the widow of Major Talbot, suh."

During this visit the major had greatly endeared himself to the young engineer. Under all the Pocomokian's veneer of delightful mendacity, utter shiftlessness, and luxurious extravagance, Sanford had discovered certain qualities of true loyalty to those whom he loved, and a very tender sympathy for the many in the world worse off than himself. He had become convinced too that the major's conversion from a vagabond with gentlemanly instincts to a gentleman with strong Bohemian tendencies might easily be accomplished were a little more money placed at the Pocomokian's disposal. With an endless check-book and unlimited overdrafts, settlements to be made every hundred years, the major would be a prince among men.

The niece to whom the major referred in his letter lived in an adjoining county with a relative much nearer of kin. Like many other possessions of this acclimated Marylander, she was really not his niece at all, but another heritage from his deceased wife. The major first saw her on horseback, in a neat-fitting riding-habit which she had made out of some blue army kersey bought at the country store. One glance at her lovely face, the poise of her head, the easy grace of her

seat, and her admirable horsemanship decided him at once. Henceforward her name was to be emblazoned on the scroll of his family tree!

It was not until Sanford had finished the major's letter that he turned to that from Mrs. Leroy. He looked first at the circular postmark to see the exact hour at which it had been mailed; then he rose from the big chair, threw himself on the divan, tucked a pillow under his head, and slowly broke the seal. The envelope was large and square, decorated with the crest of the Leroy's in violet wax, and addressed in a clear, round, almost masculine hand. "My dear Henry," it began, "if you are going to the Ledge, please stop at Medford and see how my new dining-room is getting on. Be sure to come to luncheon to-morrow, so we can talk it over," etc., and ended with the hope that he had not taken cold when he left her house the night before.

It had contained but half a dozen lines, and was as direct as most of her communications; yet Sanford held it for a long time in his hands, read and re-read it, looked at the heading, examined the signature, turned it over carefully, and, placing it in its envelope, thrust it under the sofa-pillow. With his hands behind his head he lay for some time in thought. Then taking Mrs. Leroy's letter from under the pillow, he read it again, put it in his pocket, and began pacing the room.

The letter had evidently made him restless. He threw wide the sashes of the French window which opened on the iron balcony, and looked for a moment over the square below, where the hard, pen-line drawing of its trees was blurred by the yellow-green bloom of the early spring. He

turned back into the room, rearranged a photograph or two on the mantel, and, picking up a vase filled with roses, inhaled their fragrance and placed them in the centre of the dainty breakfast-table, with its snowy linen and polished silver, that Sam had just been setting near him. Reseating himself in his chair, he called again to the ever watchful darky, who had been following his movements through the crack of the pantry door.

"Sam."

"Yaas, 'r," came a voice apparently from the far end of the pantry; "comin', sah."

"Look over the balcony again and see if Mr. Hardy is on his way across the square. Why! what's become of the fellow?" he said to himself, consulting the empire clock with broken columns which decorated the mantel. "It's after ten now. I'll wager Helen wrote him by the same mail. No wonder he's late. Let me see! She gets here in three days. Jack will be out of his head." And Sanford sighed.

"I 'spec's dat's him a-comin' up now, sah," Sam called. "I yeared de downstairs do' click a minute ago. Here he is, sah," drawing aside the curtain that hid the entrance to the outer hall.

"Sorry, old man," came a voice increasing in distinctness as the speaker approached, "but I couldn't help it. I had a lot of letters to answer this morning, or I should have been on time. It don't make any difference to you; it's your day off."

"My day off, is it? I was out of bed this morning at six o'clock. Captain Joe stopped here on his way from the train; he has just left; and if you had stayed away a minute more, I'd have breakfasted without you. And that isn't all. That

sloop I've been looking for has arrived, and I go to Keyport to-night."

"The devil you do!" said Jack, a shade of disappointment crossing his face. "That means, I suppose, you won't be back this spring. How long are you going to be building that lighthouse, anyhow, Henry?"

"Two years more, I'm afraid," said Sanford thoughtfully. "Breakfast right away, Sam. Take the seat by the window, Jack. I thought we'd breakfast here instead of in the dining-room; the air's fresher."

Jack opened his coat, took a rose from the vase, adjusted it in his buttonhole, and spread his napkin over his knees.

He was much the younger of the two men, and his lot in life had been far easier. Junior partner in a large banking-house down town, founded and still sustained by the energy and business tact of his father, with plenty of time for all the sports and pastimes popular with men of his class, he had not found it a difficult task to sail easily through life without a jar.

"What do you hear from Crab Island, Jack?" asked Sanford, a sly twinkle in his eye, as he passed him the muffins.

"They've started the new club-house," said Jack, with absolute composure. "We are going to run out that extension you suggested when you were down there last winter." He clipped his egg lightly, without a change of countenance.

"Anything from Helen Shirley?"

"Just a line, thanking me for the magazines," Jack answered in a casual tone, not the faintest interest

betraying itself in the inflections of his voice. Sanford thought he detected a slight increase of color on his young friend's always rosy cheeks, but he said nothing.

"Did she say anything about coming to New York?" Sanford asked, looking at Jack quizzically out of the corner of his eye.

"Yes; now I come to think of it, I believe she did say something about the major's coming, but nothing very definite."

Jack spoke as if he had been aroused from some reverie entirely foreign to the subject under discussion. He continued to play with his egg, flecking off the broken bits of shell with the point of his spoon. With all his pretended composure, however, he could not raise his eyes to those of his host.

"What a first-class fraud you are, Jack!" said Sanford, laughing at last. He leaned back in his chair and looked at Hardy good-humoredly from under his eyebrows. "I would have read you Slocomb's letter, lying right before you, if I hadn't been sure you knew everything in it. Helen and the major will be here next week, and you know the very hour she'll arrive, and you have staked out every moment of her time. Now don't try any of your high-daddy tricks on me. What are you going to do next Tuesday night?"

Jack laughed, but made no attempt to parry a word of Sanford's thrust. He looked up at last inquiringly over his plate and said, "Why?"

"Because I want you to dine here with them. I'll ask Mrs. Leroy to chaperon Helen. Leroy is still abroad, and she can

come. We'll get Bock, too, with his 'cello. What other ladies are in town?"

Jack's face was aglow in an instant. The possibility of dining in Sanford's room, with its background of rich color and with all its pretty things that Helen he knew would love so well, lent instant interest to Sanford's proposition. He looked about him. He made up his mind just where he would seat her after dinner: the divan nearest the curtains was the best. How happy she would be, and how new it would all be to her! He could have planned nothing more delightful. Then remembering that Sanford had asked him a question, he recovered himself and nonchalantly gave the names of several young women he knew who might be agreeable guests. But after a moment's reflection he suggested as a second thought that Sanford leave these details to Mrs. Leroy. Jack knew her tact, and he knew to a nicety just how many young girls Mrs. Leroy would bring. The success of bachelor dinners, from Hardy's present standpoint, was not dependent upon the attendance of half a dozen extra young women and *two* men; quite the reverse.

The date for the dinner arranged, and the wisdom of leaving the list of guests to Mrs. Leroy agreed upon, the talk drifted into other channels: the Whistler pastels at Klein's; the garden-party to be given at Mrs. Leroy's country-seat near Medford when the new dining-room was finished and the roses were in bloom; the opportunity Sanford might now enjoy of combining business with pleasure, Medford being a short run from Shark Ledge; the success of Smearly's last portrait at the Academy, a photograph of which lay on the table; the probable change in Slocomb's fortunes, now that,

with the consent of the insurance company who held the mortgage, he had rented what was left of the Widow Talbot's estate to a strawberry planter from the North, in order to live in New York; and finally, under Jack's guidance, back to Helen Shirley's visit.

When the two men, an hour later, passed into the corridor, Sanford held two letters in his hand ready to mail: one addressed to Major Slocomb, with an inclosure to Miss Shirley, the other to Mrs. Morgan Leroy.

Sam watched them over the balcony until they crossed the square, cut a double shuffle with both feet, admired his black grinning face in the mirror, took a corncob pipe from the shelf in the pantry, filled it with some of Sanford's best tobacco, and began packing his master's bag for the night train to Keyport.



CHAPTER III

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CAPTAIN BRANDT AT THE THROTTLE

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The sun was an hour high when Sanford arrived at Keyport and turned quickly toward the road leading from the station to Captain Joe's cottage, a spring and lightness in his step which indicated not only robust health, but an eagerness to reach at once the work absorbing his mind. When he gained the high ground overlooking the cottage and dock, he paused for a view that always charmed him with its play of light and color over sea and shore, and which seemed never so beautiful as in the early morning light.

Below him lay Keyport Village, built about a rocky half-moon of a harbor, its old wharves piled high with rotting oil-barrels and flanked by empty warehouses, behind which crouched low, gray-roofed cabins, squatting in a tangle of streets, with here and there a white church spire tipped with a restless weather-vane. Higher, on the hills, were nestled some old homesteads with sloping roofs and wide porches, and away up on the crest of the heights, overlooking the sea, stood the more costly structures with well-shaved lawns spotted with homesick trees from a warmer clime, their arms stretched appealingly toward the sea.

At his feet lay the brimming harbor itself, dotted with motionless yachts and various fishing-craft, all reflected upside down in the still sea, its glassy surface rippled now and then by the dipping buckets of men washing down the

decks, or by the quick water-spider strokes of some lobster-fisherman,—the click of the row-locks pulsating in the breathless morning air.

On the near point of the half-moon stood Keyport Light,—an old-fashioned factory chimney of a Light,—built of brick, but painted snow-white with a black cigar band around its middle, its top surmounted by a copper lantern. This flashed red and white at night, over a radius of twenty miles. Braced up against its base, for a better hold, was a little building hiding a great fog-horn, which on thick days and nights bellowed out its welcome to Keyport's best.

On the far point of the moon—the one opposite the Light, and some two miles away—stretched sea-meadows broken with clumps of rock and shelter-houses for cattle, and between these two points, almost athwart the mouth of the harbor, like a huge motionless whale lay Crotch Island, its backbone knotted with summer cottages. Beyond the island away out under the white glare of the risen sun could be seen a speck of purplish-gray fringed with bright splashes of spray glinting in the dazzling light. This was Shark's Ledge.

As Sanford looked toward the site of the new Light a strange sensation came over him. There lay the work on which his reputation would rest and by which he would hereafter be judged. Everything else he had so far accomplished was, he knew, but a preparation for this his greatest undertaking. Not only were the engineering problems involved new to his experience, but in his attitude in regard to them he had gone against all precedents as well as against the judgments of older heads, and had relied almost exclusively upon Captain Joe's personal skill and

pluck. While it was true that he never doubted his ultimate success, there always came a tugging at his heartstrings and a tightening of his throat whenever he looked toward the site of the lighthouse.

Turning from the scene with a long drawn breath, he walked with slackened step down the slope that led to the long dock fronting the captain's cottage. As he drew nearer he saw that the Screamer had been moored between the captain's dock (always lumbered with paraphernalia required for sea-work) and the great granite-wharf, which was piled high with enormous cubes of stone, each as big as two pianos.

On her forward deck was bolted a hoisting-engine, and thrust up through the hatch of the forecastle was the smoke-stack of the boiler, already puffing trial feathers of white steam into the morning air. She had, too, the heavy boom and stout mast used as a derrick. Captain Joe had evidently seen no reason to change his mind about her, for he was at the moment on her after-deck, overhauling a heavy coil of manilla rope, and reeving it in the block himself, the men standing by to catch the end of the line.

When Sanford joined the group there was no general touching of hats,—outward sign of deference that a group of laborers on land would have paid their employer. In a certain sense, each man here was chief. Each man knew his duty and did it, quietly, effectually, and cheerfully. The day's work had no limit of hours. The pay was never fixed by a board of delegates, one half of whom could not tell a marlinespike from a monkey-wrench. These men had enlisted for a war with winds and storms and changing seas,

and victory meant something more to them than pay once a month and plum duff once a week. It meant hours of battling with the sea, of tugging at the lines, waist-deep in the boiling surf that rolled in from Montauk. It meant constant, unceasing vigilance day and night, in order that some exposed site necessary for a bedstone might be captured and held before a southeaster could wreck it, and thus a vantage-point be lost in the laying of the masonry.

Each man took his share of wet and cold and exposure without grumbling. When, by some accident, a cowardly and selfish spirit joined the force, Captain Joe, on the first word of complaint, handed the man his money and put him ashore. The severity of the work was never resented. It was only against their common enemies, the winds and the seas, that murmurs were heard. "Drat that wind!" one would say. "Here she's a-haulin' to the east'rd agin, an' we ain't got them j'int's in the masonry p'inted." Or, "It makes a man sick to see th' way this month's been a-goin' on,—not a decent day since las' Tuesday."

Sanford liked these men. He was always at home with them. He loved their courage, their grit, their loyalty to one another and to the work itself. The absence of ceremony among them never offended him. His cheery "Good-morning" as he stepped aboard was as cheerily answered, but no other demonstration took place.

Captain Joe stopped work only long enough to shake Sanford's hand and to present him to the newcomer, Captain Bob Brandt of the Screamer.

"Cap'n Bob!" he called, waving his hand.

"Ay, ay, sir!" came the ready response of his early training.

"Come aft, sir. Mr. Sanford wants ye." The "sir" was merely a recognition of the captain's rank.

A tall, straight, blue-eyed young fellow of twenty-two, with a face like an open book, walked down the deck,—one of those perfectly simple, absolutely fearless, alert men found so often on the New England coast, with legs and arms of steel, body of hickory, and hands of whalebone: cabin-boy at twelve, common sailor at sixteen, first mate at twenty, and full captain the year he voted.

Sanford looked him all over, from his shoes to his cap. He knew a round full man when he saw him. This one seemed to be without a flaw. Sanford saw too that he possessed that yeast of good nature without which the best of men are heavy and dull.

"Can you lift these blocks, Captain Brandt?" he asked in a hearty tone, more like that of a comrade than an employer, his hand extended in greeting.

"Well, I can try, sir," came the modest reply, the young man's face lighting up as he looked into Sanford's eyes, where he read with equal quickness a ready appreciation, so encouraging to every man who intends to do his best.

Captain Brandt and every member of the gang knew that it was not the mere weight of these enrockment blocks which made the handling of them so serious a matter; twelve tons is a light lift for many boat-derricks. It was the fact that they must be loaded aboard a vessel not only small enough to be easily handled in any reasonable weather, but with a water-draught shoal enough to permit her lying safely

in a running tide alongside the Ledge while the individual blocks were being lowered over her side.

The hangers-on about the dock questioned whether any sloop could do this work. All winter, in fact, they had discussed it about the tavern stoves.

"Billy," said old Marrows, an assumed authority on stone-sloops, but not in Sanford's employ, although a constant applicant, "I ain't sayin' nothin' agin her beam, mind, but she's too peaked forrud. 'Nother thing, when she's got them stones slung, them chain-plates won't hold 'er shrouds. I would n't be s'prised to see that mast jerked clean out'er her."

Bill Lacey, the handsome young rigger to whom the remark was addressed, leaned over the sloop's rail, scanned every bolt in her plates, glanced up at the standing rigging, tried it with his hand as if it were a tight-rope, and with a satisfied air answered, "Them plates is all right, Marrows,—it's her b'iler that's a-worryin' me. What do you say, Caleb?" turning to Caleb West, a broad-shouldered, grizzled man in a sou'wester, who was mending a leak in a diving-dress, the odor of the burning cement in a pan beside him mingling with the savory smell of frying pork coming up from the galley.

"Wall, I ain't said, Billy," replied Caleb in a cheery voice, stroking his bushy gray beard. "Them as don't know better keep shet."

There was a loud laugh at the young rigger's expense, in which everybody except Lacey and Caleb joined. Lacey's face hardened under the thrust, while Caleb still smiled, a quaint expression overspreading his features,—one that