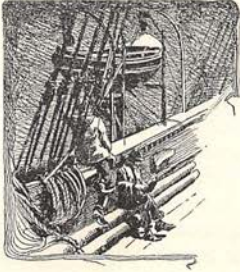


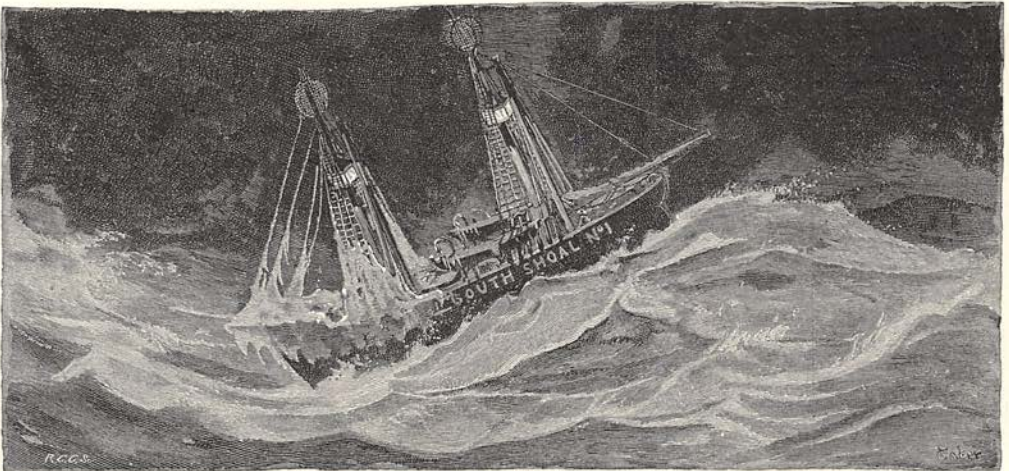
LIFE ON THE SOUTH SHOAL LIGHTSHIP.



NO. 1, Nantucket, New South Shoal, pitches and plunges, rears and rolls, year in and year out, twenty-four miles off Sankaty Head, Nantucket Island, with the broad ocean to the eastward, and rips and breakers to the westward, northward, and southward. No. 1, Nantucket, New South Shoal, is a lightship—the most desolate and dangerous station in the United States lighthouse establishment. Upon this tossing island, out of sight of land, exposed to the fury of every tempest, and without a message from home during all the stormy months of winter, and sometimes even longer, ten men, braving the perils of wind and wave, and the worse terrors of isolation, trim the lamps whose light warns thousands of vessels from certain destruction, and hold themselves ready to save life when the warning is vain. When vessels have been driven helplessly upon the shoals over which the South Shoal Lightship stands guard, her crew have not hesitated to lower their boat in seas which threatened every moment to stave or to engulf it, and to pull, often in the teeth of a furious gale, to the rescue of the shipwrecked, not only saving their lives but afterward sharing with them, often to their own great discomfort, such cheer as the lightship affords. Yet who ever heard of a medal being awarded

to the life-savers of No. 1, Nantucket, New South Shoal?

Before we left Nantucket for the lightship I gleaned from casual remarks made by grizzled old salts who had heard of our proposed expedition that I might expect something different from a cruise under summer skies. The captain's watch of five men happened to be ashore on leave, and when I called on the captain and told him I had chartered a tug to take Mr. Taber and myself out to the lightship and to call for me a week later, he said, with a pleasant smile, "You've arranged to be called for in seven days, but you can congratulate yourself if you get off in seven weeks." As he gave me his flipper at the door he made this parting remark: "When you set foot on Nantucket again, after you've been to the lightship, *you will be pleased.*" Another old whaling captain told me that the loneliest thing he had ever seen at sea was a polar bear floating on a piece of ice in the Arctic Ocean; the next loneliest object to that had been the South Shoal Lightship. But the most cheering comment on the expedition was made by an ex-captain of the Cross Rip Lightship, which is anchored in Nantucket Sound in full sight of land, and is not nearly so exposed or desolate a station as the South Shoal. He said very deliberately and solemnly, "If it were n't for the disgrace it would bring on my family I'd rather go to State's prison." I was also told of times when the South Shoal Lightship so pitched and rolled that even an old whalerman

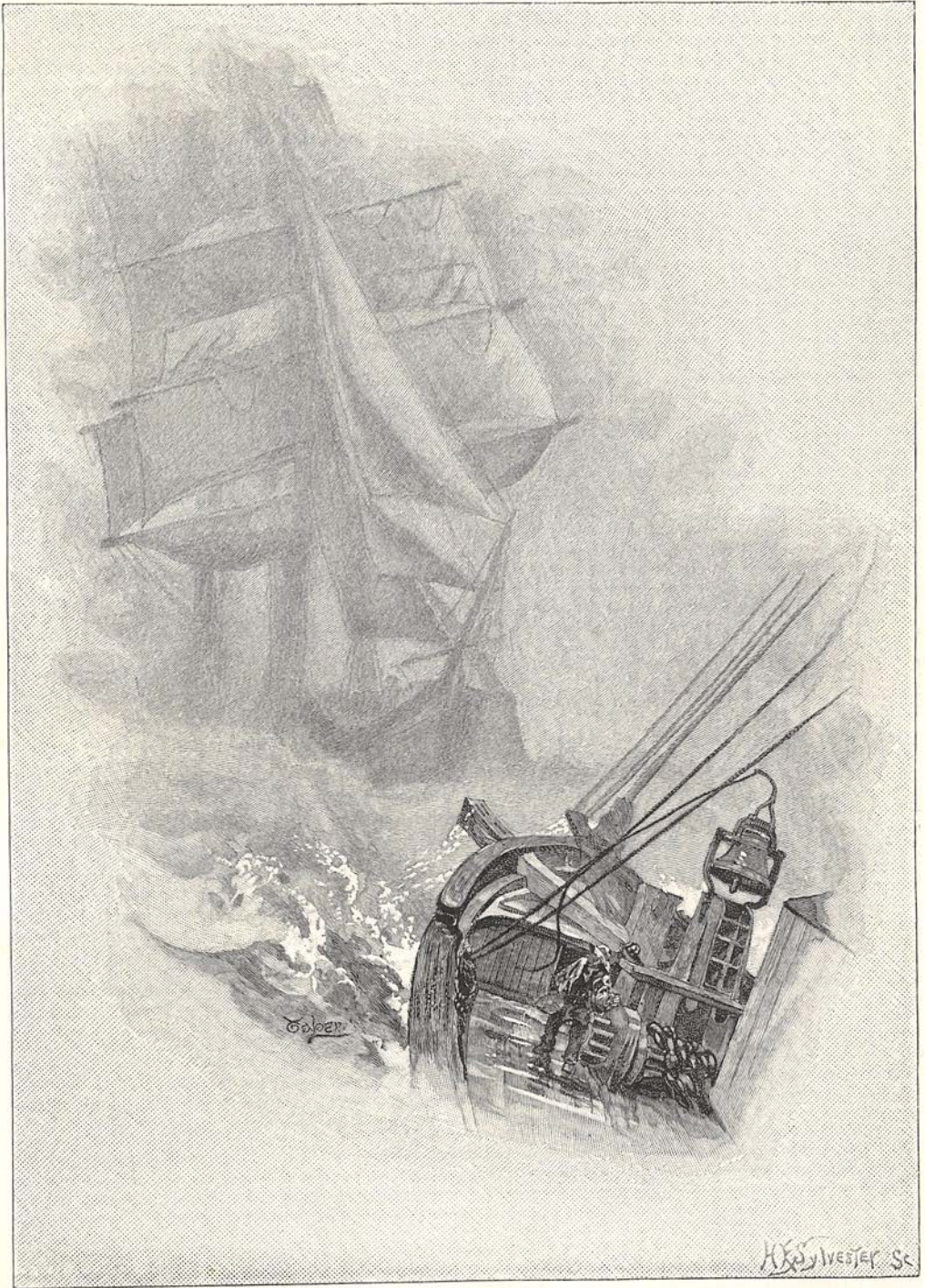


who had served on her seventeen years, and had before that made numerous whaling voyages, felt "squamous," which is the sailor fashion of intimating that even the saltiest old salt is apt to experience symptoms of *mal de mer* aboard a lightship. Life on a lightship therefore presented itself to us as a term of solitary confinement combined with the horrors of sea-sickness.

The South Shoal Lightship being so far out at sea, and so dangerous of approach, owing to the shoals and rips which extend all the way out to her from Nantucket, and which would be fatal barriers to large vessels, the trip can be made only in good weather. That is the reason the crew are cut off so long in winter from communication with the land. The lighthouse tender does not venture out to the vessel at all from December to May, only occasionally utilizing a fair day and a smooth sea to put out far enough just to sight the lightship and to report her as safe at her station. The tender is a little, black side-wheel craft called the *Verbena*, and is a familiar sight to shipping which pass through the Vineyard Sound; but during long months the crew of the South Shoal Lightship see their only connecting link between their lonely ocean home and their firesides ashore loom up only a moment against the wintry sky, to vanish again, leaving them to their communion with the waves and gulls, awakening longings which strong wills had kept dormant, and intensifying the bitterness of their desolation.

The day on which we steamed out of Nantucket Harbor on the little tug *Ocean Queen*, bound for the lightship, the sky was a limpid, luminous, unruffled blue, and the sea a succession of long, lazy swells; yet before we reached our destination we encountered one of the dangers which beset this treacherous coast. We had dropped the lighthouse on Sankaty Head and were eagerly scanning the horizon ahead of us, expecting to raise the lightship, when a heavy fog-bank spread itself out directly in our course. Soon we were in it. Standing on until we should have run our distance, we stopped and blew our whistle. The faint tolling of a bell answered us through the fog. Plunging into the mist in the direction from which the welcome sound seemed to come, we steamed for about half an hour and then, coming to a stop, whistled again. There was no answer. Signal after signal remained without reply. Again we felt our way for a while, and again whistled. This time we heard the bell once more, but only to lose it as before. Three times we heard it, and three times lost it, and, as the fog was closing in thick about us, it seemed hopeless for us to continue our search any longer at the risk of losing the opportunity of putting back to shore before nightfall and the possible com-

ing up of a blow. Then, more than three hours after we had first heard the bell, it rang out to windward clearer and stronger than before. Then there loomed out of the fog the vague outlines of a vessel. There was a touch of the weird in this apparition. Flying mist still veiled it, and prevented its lines from being sharply defined. It rode over the waves far out at sea, a blotch of brownish red with bare masts; and the tide, streaming past it out of some sluice between the shoals, made it appear as if it were scurrying along without a rag set—a Flying Dutchman, to add to the terrors of reefs and rips. The weirdness of the scene was not dispelled until we were near enough to read in bold white letters on the vessel's side, No. 1, Nantucket, New South Shoal. After groping around in the fog, and almost despairing of finding the object of our search, we felt, as we steamed up to the lightship, a wonderful sense of relief, and realized the feeling of joy with which the sight of her must inspire the mariner who is anxiously on the lookout for some beacon by which to shape his course. Two days later we had what was perhaps a more practical illustration of the lightship's usefulness. It was a hazy morning, and the mate was scanning the horizon with his glass. Bringing it to bear to the southward, he held it long in that direction, while a look of anxiety came over his face. Several of the crew joined him, and finally one of them said, "If she keeps that course five minutes longer she'll be on the shoal." Through the haze a large three-masted schooner was discernible, heading directly for a reef to the southwest of us. She was evidently looking for the lightship, but the haze had prevented her from sighting us, although our sharp lookout had had his glass on her for some time. Then too, as the mate remarked with a slightly critical smile, "These captains feel so sure of their course that they always expect to raise us straight ahead." Suddenly there was evidence that she had sighted us. She swung around as swiftly as if she were turning upon a pivot. She had been lunging along in an uncertain way, but the sight of us seemed to fill her with new life and buoyancy. Her sails filled, she dashed through the waves with streaks of white streaming along each quarter like foam on the flanks of a race-horse, and on she came, fairly quivering with joy from keel to pennant. Such instances are of almost daily occurrence, and if we add to them the occasions—and they must run far up into the hundreds, if not into the thousands—when the warning voice of the fog-bell and the guiding gleam of the lamps have saved vessels from shipwreck, it seems as though the sailor must look upon the South Shoal Lightship as one of the guardian angels of the deep.



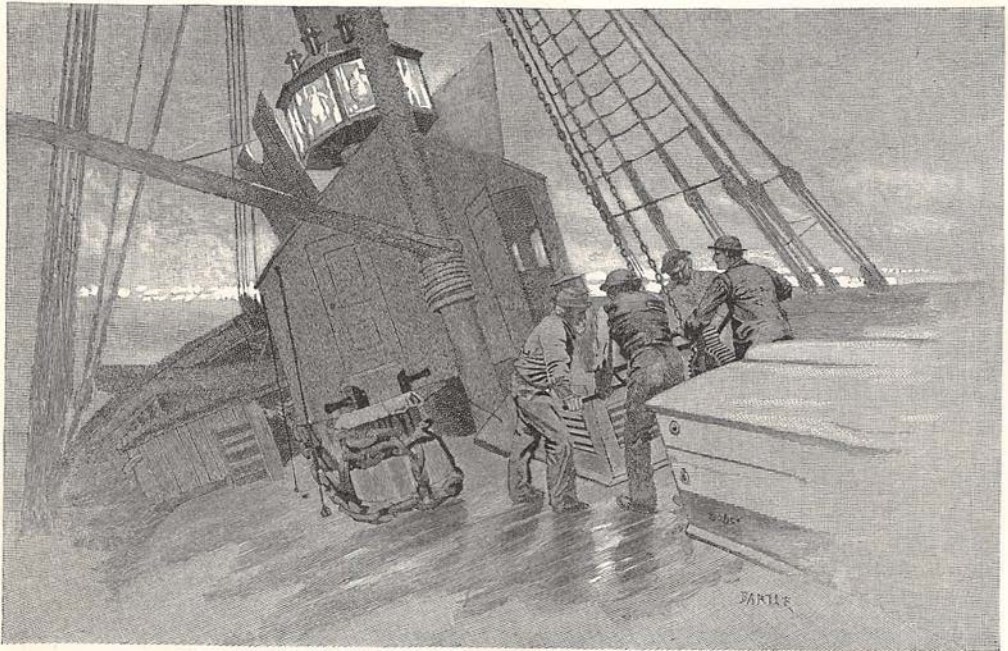
Bober

H. E. WESTER S.

A HAZY MORNING.

Only the peculiarly dangerous character of the coast could have warranted the Government in placing a lightship in so exposed a position. Nantucket is a veritable ocean graveyard. There are records of over five hundred disasters to vessels on its shores and outlying reefs. How many ships, hidden by fog or sleet

one hundred and three feet long over all, with twenty-four feet breadth of beam, and stanchly built of white and live oak. She has two hulls, the space between them being filled through holes at short intervals in the inner side of the bulwarks with salt—"to keep her sweet," as the nautical paradox runs. These holes are closed



TAKING IN THE LIGHT.

from the watchers on shore and never heard from, have been lost on the latter, is a question to which the sea will never give answer; but many a poor fellow whose end has remained a mystery to anxious hearts at home has laid his bones upon the sands of the Nantucket shoals, which are a constant menace both to coasters taking the outside route for New England and Dominion ports and to European shipping, which shapes its course for New York after sighting the South Shoal Lightship. This vessel, therefore, stands guard not only over the New South Shoal, near which it is anchored, but over twenty-four miles of rips and reefs between it and the shore of Nantucket.

It has been on this station since 1856. A lightship was placed on the Old South Shoal, some miles farther in, during 1855; but its cable parted in one of the winter storms, and the vessel was wrecked on Montauk. Meanwhile the New South Shoal had been discovered, and the new lightship was anchored some two miles to the southeast of it. The shoal itself is marked by a red buoy.

No. 1, Nantucket, New South Shoal, is a schooner of two hundred and seventy-five tons,

by black plugs which are attached to the bulwarks by short bits of tarred rope, and the line of plugs running the length of the vessel forms a series of black dots near the rail which at once strikes the eye as a distinguishing mark between this and other ships. She has fore-and-aft lantern-masts seventy-one feet high, including topmasts, and directly behind each of the lantern-masts a mast for sails forty-two feet high. Forty-four feet up the lantern-masts are day-marks, reddish brown hoop-iron gratings, which enable other vessels to sight the lightship more readily. The lanterns are octagons of glass in copper frames five feet in diameter, four feet nine inches high, with the masts as centers. Each pane of glass is two feet long and two feet three inches high. There are eight lamps, burning a fixed white light, with parabolic reflectors in each lantern, which weighs, all told, about a ton. Some nine hundred gallons of oil are taken aboard for service during the year. The lanterns are lowered into houses built around the masts. The house around the main lantern-mast stands directly on the deck, while the foremast lantern-house is a heavily timbered frame three feet high.



THE SOUTH SHOAL LIGHTSHIP.

This is to prevent its being washed away by the waves the vessel ships when she plunges into the wintry seas. When the lamps have been lighted and the roofs of the lantern-houses opened,—they work on hinges, and are raised by tackle,—the lanterns are hoisted by means of winches to a point about twenty-five feet from the deck. Were they to be hoisted higher they would make the ship top-heavy.

A conspicuous object forward is the large fog-bell swung ten feet above the deck. The prevalence of fog makes life on the South Shoal Lightship especially dreary. During one season fifty-five days out of seventy were thick, and for twelve consecutive days and nights the bell was kept tolling at two-minute intervals, until the crew became so used to its iron voice that when the fog lifted they had to

accustom themselves to getting along without it, the silence actually disturbing their sleep the first night. Shackled to the keelson is a chain of two-inch thickness, which runs through a deck-pipe to the deck and over the latter forward to a hawse-pipe, through which it runs into the water full one hundred and five fathoms to the "mushroom," an anchor shaped like an inverted saucer and weighing 6500 pounds, which holds the vessel in eighteen fathoms of water. It is difficult to imagine that any power could part a chain of such strength, yet the South Shoal Lightship has been adrift twenty-three times, leaving a regular mushroom plantation at the bottom of the sea around the spot over which she is anchored. On one of these occasions she was fourteen days at sea, and on another she came to anchor in New York harbor. In spite of her two sail-masts she is rather indifferently rigged for such emergencies. Carrying only trysails to the sail-masts, a square-sail to the fore lantern-mast, a forestaysail, and a jib, she cannot beat against the wind, and hence when she parts her cable in an offshore gale she is blown out to sea until the wind shifts to a favorable point.

The most thrilling experience of this kind fell to the lot of the Cross Rip Lightship, which is anchored in Nantucket Sound. Her position is not so exposed or so desolate as the South Shoal, but she happens to have once parted her cable under peculiarly perilous circumstances, no word of her or her crew being received for over a month, when, after both ship and men had been given up for lost, the mate telegraphed the safe arrival of all hands in New Orleans. On the night of December 27, 1867, the captain being ashore, the Cross Rip Lightship took a heavy, icy gale from the southwest and rolled and plunged until one o'clock in the morning, when, the gale having increased to a perfect hurricane, she parted her cable, at the same time shipping a sea that carried away her life-boat. The harbor anchor was then cleared away, the mate giving her the whole of the chain. In spite of the terrible strain, she rode on this chain about ten hours, when she parted it some twenty fathoms from the anchor. The wind was then directly from the west. With her small sail area and her bow heavily weighted by the chains she was dragging, the handling of her was a difficult matter. There was not a cold chisel aboard with which the chains could be cleared away, for, owing to the frequent parting of the South Shoal, the Lighthouse Board suspected the crew of having tampered with the cable and had adopted rigorous measures to prevent any one taking a cold chisel aboard a lightship.

About one o'clock in the afternoon the light-house on Great Point, Nantucket, was made,

and the mate endeavored to beach the vessel; but finding she would go on the rip, he wore ship and stood out to sea. At three o'clock the mainsail split, and an examination showed four feet of water in the lower hold. She was fairly sheathed with ice, which had to be cleared away from around the pump before the men could get to work at the latter. At eight o'clock that night the foresail split, and, with a gale still blowing and a heavy sea running, there was nothing to do but to keep the pumps manned to prevent the ship, which was now at the mercy of wind and waves, from sinking. At eight o'clock on the morning of the 30th the crew were nearly exhausted, and the water had gained so that the vessel was settling. In this predicament, rendered more desperate by the loss of the boat, which left them absolutely without means of saving themselves, a sail was sighted to windward. The colors were set union down, and three hours later a vessel, which proved to be bound for New Orleans, spoke the distressed lightship, and, lowering a boat, took off the crew. They were saved just in time. Before they sailed out of sight the Cross Rip Lightship took her last plunge.

The South Shoal, like all lightships, is very high in the bow and heavily timbered—built to stay and built to kill. A lightship is in frequent danger of collision from other vessels, and as its preservation is of such importance to shipping interests it is constructed so that of the two ships it will be the one to survive the shock. Life aboard a lightship is in itself so desolate that the men's quarters are made as roomy as possible. The captain and the mate have a pleasant cabin aft, with two staterooms, a large table, lockers, and the ship library, a small case of miscellaneous books supplied by the Lighthouse Board. It cannot be said of the South Shoal's crew that they make much use of the library. About the only book aboard that looks well thumbed is a little pamphlet giving a record of the vessels that have met with disaster on the Nantucket coast. This is often referred to as an authority in settling disputes regarding the date and circumstances of certain wrecks. A door leads from the cabin into the berth-deck, which occupies the space usually taken for the upper hold. On each side are bunks which slope in towards the middle so that their occupants will not be thrown out by the violent rolling and lurching of the ship. In front of these bunks are the men's chests, which they also use for seats. Forward on the berth-deck is the cooking-stove and beyond it the mess-table. The lightship version of the "dinner under difficulties," familiar to every ocean traveler, is, if anything, a little livelier than the original. The method of keeping the table



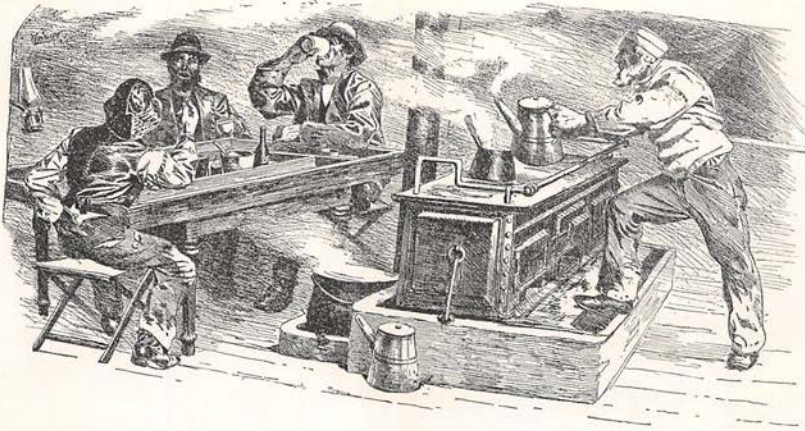
THE FOG-BELL.

service in place is, however, somewhat more primitive than that in use on the ocean greyhounds. There are holes in the table into which pegs are fitted, and around each dish and cup is a little fence of these pegs. Sometimes, however, a plate will clear the fence on a running jump and deposit its contents in a dish of quite a different character, the result being a conglomeration mysterious enough to puzzle even a person who has solved the most profound problems of the culinary art. The mainstays of life aboard a lightship are scouse and duff.

Scouse is a wonderful commingling of salt beef, potatoes, and onions, with varied trimmings. Duff seems substantially like the dumplings served in Yorkshire pudding with a sauce of melted brown sugar. Plum duff—with raisins—is a great luxury; but often the plums are nothing more than "Nantucket raisins"—in plain English, dried apples. Now it is easy to imagine the result if a rolling sea causes the scouse and the duff, with its sugary sauce, to fraternize. The cook's duties on the South Shoal are performed under similar difficulties. So ve-

herent is the pitching and rolling of the vessel that the pots and kettles are lashed to the stove to prevent them from winging their flight into various corners of the berth-deck. Despite these precautions, however, certain courses have at times been served with unexpected expedition. Thus, on one occasion during our stay, the pork made a flying leap from the pot into one of the port bunks, the occupant of which, while gratified at the generous propor-

remarkably long time when the desolate character of the service is considered. This is probably due to the fact that the dangers of this exposed station warn off all but those inured to the hardships of a seafaring life. The men who have been there so long are old whalers, accustomed to voyages of several years' duration and to the perils of a whaler's life. The pay aboard the South Shoal is somewhat higher than on other lightships. The captain receives



HOT COFFEE.

tions of the ration, expressed his preference for a service less automatic and rapid.

The routine of work on a lightship is quite simple. At sunrise the watch lowers the lights. At six A. M. the captain or the mate stands in the doorway leading from the cabin into the berth-deck and shouts, "All hands!" The men tumble out of their bunks and dress, breakfast being served at twenty minutes past six. At half-past seven the lamps are removed from the lanterns and taken below to be cleaned and filled. In smooth weather this duty can be performed in about two hours, but if the vessel is rolling and pitching the task may be prolonged an hour or two. When the lamps have been returned to the lanterns there remains nothing for the crew to do except to clean ship and to go on watch until sundown, when the lamps are lighted and the lanterns hoisted. The crew is divided into the captain's watch and the mate's watch of five each. Twice between spring and winter each watch goes ashore for two months, so that each member of the crew is aboard the lightship eight months in the year. It is not believed that they could stand the life longer than this. In fact, many men throw up their work as soon as they can get ashore. Three members of the South Shoal crew have, however, seen unusually long terms of service—twenty-one, nineteen, and seventeen years respectively, and others have served on her a

\$1000, the mate \$700, and the crew \$600. These sums may not seem large, but it must be borne in mind that even the prodigal son would have found it impossible to make way with his patrimony on the South Shoal Lightship, especially as the Government furnishes all supplies. Opportunities for extravagance are absolutely wanting. Occasionally a member of the crew may remark in a sadly jocose tone that he is going around the corner to order a case of champagne or to be measured for a dress-suit; but there is no corner.

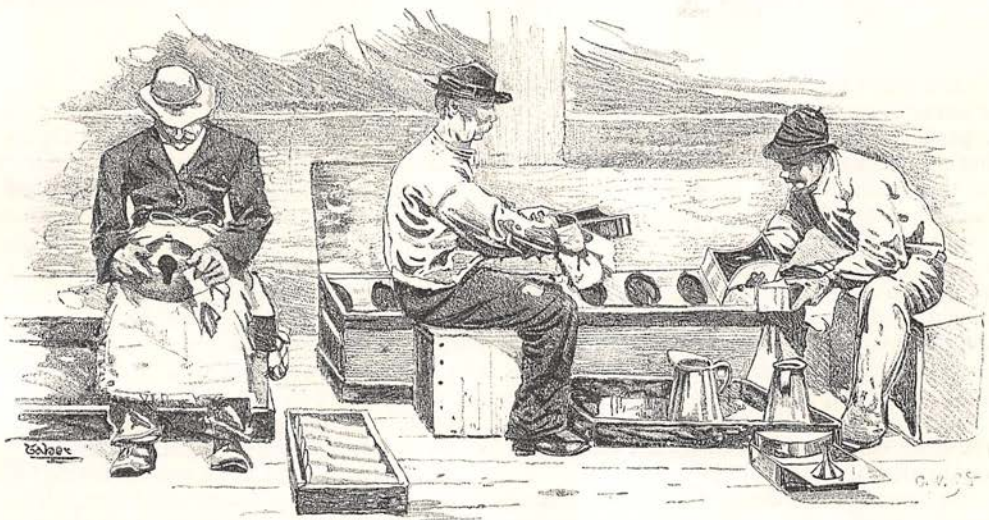
A number of stores in Nantucket sell what are known as lightship-baskets. They come in "nests," a nest consisting of five or eight baskets of various sizes fitting one into the other. These baskets are made only on the South Shoal Lightship. Their manufacture has been attempted ashore, but has never paid. This is because there is a very narrow margin of profit in them for the lightship crew, who make them chiefly for the purpose of whiling away the weary winter hours. In summer the crew occupies its spare time "scrimshawing," an old whaling term for doing ingenious mechanical work, but having aboard the South Shoal the special meaning of preparing the strips of wood and ratan for the manufacture of the baskets in winter. The bottoms are turned ashore. The blocks over which the baskets are made have been aboard the ship since she was first anchored

off the New South Shoal in 1856. The sides of the baskets are of white oak or hickory, filled in with ratan, and they are round or oval, of graceful lines and of great durability, the sizes to a nest ranging from a pint to a peck and a half.

But notwithstanding these various attempts at killing time, life on the South Shoal Lightship is at its best a life of desolation, with only a few gulls or Mother Carey's chickens for visitors, who seek refuge aboard in stormy weather. The red buoy bobbing up and down two miles to westward has become almost as much endeared to the crew as if it were a human companion. A man rarely comes up from below without casting a look over the bulwarks to see if the buoy is still there. Fog is dreaded, not only because it throws a pall over the sea and because the dismal tolling of the bell adds to the depression aboard, but also because it hides the buoy from sight; and as the fog recedes all eyes anxiously scan the horizon until the bonny buoy looms up out of the mist. As the ship swings around a good deal with wind and tide, the buoy marks a fixed

towards them from over the sea; and when the mirage melted away, and they felt again that twenty-four miles of ocean rolled between them and land, they turned away dejectedly and silently went below. Once, so one of the crew told me next morning, the mirage had been so strong that they had seen Nantucket plainly enough to discern the dories on Sunset Beach, and that this fleeting sight, of land, after they had been exposed for nearly five months to the weary life of the lightship, had so intensified their longing for home that they were dejected enough to have been a set of castaways on a desert island, without hope of ever laying eyes on their native shores.

The emotional stress under which this crew labors can hardly be realized by any one who has not been through a similar experience. The sailor on an ordinary ship has at least the inspiration of knowing that he is bound for somewhere; that in due time his vessel will be laid on her homeward course; that storm and fog are but incidents of the voyage: he is on a ship that leaps forward full of life and energy



CLEANING THE LAMPS.

point of the compass for the crew, and thus the men have grown to regard it with a feeling of affectionate reliance. When that buoy parts and drifts away, as it sometimes does, the crew seem as depressed as if they had lost their only friend in the world.

One night when I was on deck the mate, who had the watch, rushed to the hatch and shouted down into the berth-deck, "Sankaty!" It seemed but an instant before the entire crew had scrambled up the gangway and were crowded at the bulwarks watching the light from Nantucket's grandest headland flash out

with every lash of the tempest. But no matter how the lightship may plunge and roll, no matter how strong the favoring gales may be, she is still anchored two miles southeast of the New South Shoal.

Those who endeavor to form an idea of the motion of the South Shoal Lightship must remember that she is as much at the mercy of the waves as a vessel stripped of sails or deprived of motive power in mid-ocean. Even in smooth weather the motion is entirely different from that of a ship under way. For a few minutes she will lie on an even keel, and



A RESCUE.

then without warning she will roll so that the water streams in through her scuppers. In the expressive language of her captain, "She washes her own decks." For this reason the port-holes of the cabin and the berth-deck are never opened, she being liable at any moment to swing around into the trough of the sea and to roll so as to take in water at them. In winter the violence of the pitching and rolling is such as to try the hardihood of the men to the utmost. On one occasion she rolled so sheer to starboard that she filled the starboard life-boat, which was swung high on davits, and then rolled so sheer to port that the boat emptied itself down the hatch into the berth-deck, drenching every one.

In winter, when the rigging begins tuning up until it fairly shrieks like a gigantic æolian harp at the touch of the hurricane, the poor fellow who, while dreaming of home, is awakened to take his turn at the watch on deck is exposed to the full fury of the elements. Then the ship, being unable to "use herself," butts at the waves so that the bow is submerged one moment and the boom the next, while the spray flies like a "living smoke" all over her, sheathing even the masts to the height of fifty feet with ice. At times the water and spray freeze so quickly upon her that the ice extends for twelve feet or more on each side of the bow, and a thick layer of it covers her deck, while the bulwarks are built up with it until holes have to be chopped through it to enable the crew to

look out to sea. It also forms to the thickness of a barrel around the rigging. In fact, it has covered the ship so completely that not a splinter of wood could be seen. In some seasons the severest storms have burst over the vessel about Christmas time, so that on Christmas eve each man has passed his watch standing forward on the icy deck pulling at the rope of the lightship bell, with the wind shrieking in the stays, the spray dashing over him, and sleet drifting wildly about him. What a celebration of the most joyous festival of the year, with the thought of wife and children ashore!

Besides enduring the hardships incidental to their duties aboard the lightship, the South Shoal crew have done noble work in saving life. While the care of the lightship is considered of such importance to shipping that the crew are instructed not to expose themselves to dangers outside their special line of duty, and they would therefore have the fullest excuse for not risking their lives in rescuing others, they have never hesitated to do so. When, a few winters ago, the *City of Newcastle* went ashore on one of the shoals near the lightship and strained herself so badly that although she floated off she soon filled and went down stern foremost, all hands, twenty-seven in number, were saved by the South Shoal crew and kept aboard of her over two weeks, until the story of the wreck was signaled to some passing vessel and the light-house tender took them off. This is the largest number saved at one time by the South Shoal,

but the lightship crew have faced greater danger on several other occasions. One stormy morning about the middle of January the watch descried a small, dark object over the water several miles to windward, and drifting rapidly away on the strong tide. The captain, on examining it through the glass, thought he perceived signs of life. In spite of the heavy sea that threatened every moment to stave the life-boat, it was lowered, and the crew pulled in the teeth of the furious gale towards the object. As they drew nearer they made out a man feebly waving a cloth. A full view, as they came up, disclosed the evidence of an ocean tragedy. Here, driven before wind and tide, and at the mercy of a winter storm, was a small raft. Stretched upon it was a corpse, held fast by the feet, which had caught under the boom. On the corpse sat a man, his face buried in his hands, and nearly dead with exposure. The man who had waved to them stood upon the grating holding himself upright by a rope which, fastened at two ends of the raft, passed over his shoulder. Having taken the two men who were still alive into the boat, the captain of the South Shoal at once asked them what disposition he should make of the corpse. Being, like all sailors, superstitious, he was unwilling to take the dead body into the boat and bury it from the South Shoal, lest it should sink directly under the lightship and bring ill luck upon her. The poor fellow's shipmates agreed that he should be given over to the sea then and there. So the captain, raising his voice above the storm, pronounced a verse of Scripture, and, drawing the corpse's feet from under the boom, allowed it to slide off the raft. But the sleeves of the dead man's oilers, having filled with air, prevented him from sinking, and, as it would have been a bad omen had he been allowed to float, one of the lightship crew slit the sleeves, and the waves closed over the frozen body of poor Jack. Often vessels lie to near the lightship for provisions and water, and during the war, when the Confederate cruiser *Tallahassee* destroyed the fishing fleet on St. George's Bank, three of the crews, rather than be made prisoners, took to their

boats and pulled all the way in to the South Shoal.

It might be supposed that after the crew have been subjected to the desolation of a winter twenty-four miles out at sea, their hearts would bound with joy when the *Verbena* heaves in sight in the spring. But the sight of her is as apt to raise the anxious thought, "What news does she bring from home?"

But after all is said of the hardships endured by the crew of No. 1, Nantucket, New South Shoal, the fact remains that the men are about as hale a looking set of fellows as one can find anywhere. Then, too, they at times discover in very gratifying ways that their vocation is appreciated. A fruiterer may lie to long enough to transfer to the lightship a welcome gift of bananas or oranges, and not infrequently passing vessels signal their readiness to take the crew's mail off the ship and to forward it from port.

The lightship's utter isolation from other parts of the world is, from certain points of view, a great hardship, but from others it has its advantages. When there is a heavy sea running, the view of the ocean as one "lays off" in a warm sun is unrivaled. The proximity of the rips and shoals gives the scene a beauty entirely its own. On every shoal there glistens at regular intervals the white curve of a huge breaker. Sunsets can be witnessed from the deck of this vessel which, if faithfully reproduced on canvas, would be unhesitatingly pronounced the gorgeous offspring of the artist's imagination. I remember one evening when the sun vanished beneath a bank of fog, permeating it with a soft purple light and edging it with a fringe of reddish gold. Right above it the sky melted from a soft green into the lovely blue that still lingered from the glorious day. Overhead the clouds were whipped out in shreds of fiery yellow, while in all directions around the ship was an undulating expanse of rose-colored sea. Gradually the colors faded away; the creaking of the winches, as the crew raised the lanterns, broke upon the evening silence; two pathways of light streamed over the waves—and No. 1, Nantucket, New South Shoal, was ready to stand guard for another night.

Gustav Kobbé.



TIRED OUT.