(c. spring 1888)

ON THE SAYBROOK BREAKWATER

Winter Life at the Light Station

With the advent of cold weather in the fall, the novelties and pleasures, attendant upon a lighthouse keeper's existence depart, and he is closely confined within the strong structure for the next six months, with only an occasional visit ashore for the purpose of procuring the necessaries of life.

To be sure, he has a commodious and comfortable residence, solidly built of iron and masonry, and founded upon a rock, and it is well supplied by Uncle Sam with fuel and staple articles for housekeeping, but all that does not detract from the terrible monotony of the place in being isolated from civilization during the long and tedious winter.

The duties of a light-keeper are not arduous, and but very little work is to be done, consisting mostly in the care of the house, and lighting and webbing (like Aladdin) of the wonderful lamp, that beams forth brightly each night to guide the mariner.

All his enjoyments are confined to his home, and you are quite certain of finding him with his family every evening. No down street business for him after supper; no lodge meetings or clubs to occupy his evenings and keep him away from his pleasant little sitting-room. In this sort of a boudoir, which is located on the second floor of the light-house, is where Captain Frank W. Parmelee whiles away the long winter evenings. He don't lack for entertainment there, for his most esteemed wife is a fine musician, playing

equally well upon either the organ or banjo. Then he has recourse to a library of standard works, which is furnished by the United States Lighthouse Establishment. Games are quite often introduced, the Captain being an adept at chess and checkers, and he's not very slow in playing the pasteboards for all they are worth.

With all these home comforts and pleasures, life cannot, after all, be so unbearable as one might first suppose, and at times we even envy the happy skipper his lot.

In a letter received a short time ago from our old time friend, Captain Parmelee, he tells us of the stability of his home on the breakwater. Even during the fiercest storms, the wind has no effect upon the staunch structure, and the mighty seas beating against it, barely make a perceptible jar. Of the late terrible snow storm, he jocosely remarks that "for once we had the best of the people on shore, for we did not get snowed in and had no snow to shovel, but there was lots of it passed by". He states that while the blizzard was in progress, the sea came upon the deck of the lighthouse from the north'ard, striking the front door, a like occurrence never happening before during his residence at the station, nearly two years. As the wind was off shore, the seas did not run very high, but sufficient spray flew to cause considerable ice to form on the house.

So far, during the cold weather, he says, there has not been much of interest going on about here. There has been very little running ice, not enough to hinder going ashore almost any time. Occasionally a passing vessel was seen, and one day not long since, two right whales came up and spouted a short

distance to the south'ard.

The worst misfortune that has happened to the captain during the winter was the spraining of his ankle while climbing on the breakwater, which compelled him to use crutches in order to get around for about two weeks. He's all right again now.

One of the events which a lighthouse keeper is always looking forward to, with not a little concern, is the visit of the Inspector. As it is rather uncertain about the date of his appearance, the utmost care must be exercised in keeping everything in apple pie order, especially in the lantern room. For the slightest neglect in this particular, the keeper is liable to be severely censured, and thus it behooveth him to be always ready. In the case of Capt. Parmelee it matters but little when the inspector comes, for everything about the establishment is just as neat as wax; his lantern is as clear as crystal, and the brass work and lamps shine like gold. the consequence of this was, when the inspector came on Friday, March 8th, in the person of Commander Frederick Rogers, the Captain received a word of approbation, and was credited with a long mark for excellence in the performance of the duties imposed upon him. Commodore Benham has formerly inspected the stations in this vicinity.