LIVING IN A LIGHT HOUSE.
Boston Daily Globe 1872; Jul 18, 1889; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Boston Globe (1872 - 1923)
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LIVING IN A LIGHT HOUSE.

How "Red Flashes" are Worked.

Visit to Keeper Lowe in His High House On Wood End Light.

Story of a Man Who Has Seen Much Strange Adventure.

PROVINCETOWN, July 17.—Situated nearly at the extreme tip end of Cape Cod, and at a place so narrow that it is not a stone's throw from the waters of the harbor to those of Cape Cod bay, stands the Wood End lighthouse, erected by the government in 1872 as a guide to the harbor and a warning beacon to vessels to keep clear of the dangerous and treacherous Wood End bar. The government had been for a long time urged to place a lighthouse there, but with its usual slowness had neglected to do so until in November, 1871, the schooner William H. Atwood of Wellfleet, bound from Virginia to Boston, after a hard struggle in getting around the cape, and when within a few minutes' sail of perfect safety in the harbor, struck on the bar and became a total wreck, and all of her crew perished, not one of the bodies ever being found.

In view of this calamity the citizens, by urgent appeals to the government, at last succeeded, and the lighthouse was built and lighted in November the following year. Wading through the shallow ponds at the western end of the harbor made by the receding tide, struggling with the wirey beach grass and the entangling beach pea bush, THE GLOBE man, tired and weary, at last reached the dwelling of the light keeper, and was warmly welcomed by the keeper and his wife, the only persons at the light. After resting, an invitation was given to inspect the light, which stands only a few yards from the dwelling-house and a little nearer the bay shore. A plank walk connects the two buildings. Ascending the tower by an iron stricase the visitor entered the lamp room. The light is a red flash light, and some delicate machinery of clockwork is necessary to have the flashes occur at the regular stated intervals. Keeper Lowe very kindly set the apparatus in motion for a few moments and explained the workings.

Punctually at sunset, the time prescribed in the regulations, the lamp was lighted, the machinery set in motion and the red glare shone out its warning to the sailor. Seated in the cosy sitting-room of the dwelling that evening we listened to a story of

Travel and Adventure

full of interest to us, a story told without egotism or any attempt to display or claiming any merit for what in many instances were really meritorious actions. When but a mere lad, like many other Yankee boys, Keeper Lowe had a desire to go to sea, so he left home, came to Wellfleet, and shipped to go fishing in the schooner Good Hope, Capt. Amos Fielding. He remained in the fishing business until the breaking out of the Mexican war. He then shipped in the American navy and was made one of the crew of the frigate Ohio. While serving on her he was present and assisted in the capture of Vera Cruz and Tuspan, and while on this station took part in a number of boat expeditions, capturing the smaller places on the coast that would not admit of the large ships entering, on account of the shallowness of the harbor waters. About the same time some trouble occurred between the United States and Brazil, the Ohio was ordered to New York, where she took on board the minister plenipotentiary and sailed for Rio Janeiro. After landing the minister the frigate kent on around Cape rforn to the western coast of Mexico, assisting to capture Mazatlan and other places. The United States sloop-of-war Warron was then lying at Monterey, and Lowe, with some others, was transferred to her, taking passage for that port in an old leaky brig which was also short of provisions, and what they did have was of such poor quality that it was hardly fit for food. Soon after going on board the Warren orders were received to go to Lower California and join the fleet there. At Cape St. Lucas the fleet was met, and a number of political Mexican refugees were put on board the sloop, which took them to San Francisco, which in those early days consisted of only two or three small huts and a small building built of the "adobe" or sun-burnt brick. He kept the ship at San Francisco, and was at that place when news was brought that gold had been discovered at Sutter's mill on the American river. Joining a party bound for the mines he went there and worked in the very same mill race in which the gold was first discovered. This was in '49, and he worked with varied success in different places along the north and middle forks of the American river for some time. While at Yuba City news was brought in that a large party of emigrants were snowed in, in one of the passes of the Sierra Nevada mountains, and were in danger of perishing from cold and starvation, and a call was made for help to go to their rescue. A party of 50 men was soon formed to go their relief, and

Mr. Lowe Was One of the Number.

Each man was provided with two mules, one to ride, and the other to carry supplies of food for the emigrants. After a great deal of hard struggling through snowbanks from one to 10 feet deep, and encountering a fearful gale and storm in one of the passes the emigrant camp was reached, which was found to consist of about 100 persons, many of whom were women and children. The scene around the camp was pitiful in the extreme. The cattle were all dead or dying of starvation, as the supplies for them had given out, and the snow was so deep that no forage could be obtained. About all the wood in the vicinity had been cut and burned, and but for the timely arrival of the relief party the entire band of emigrants would have soon perished from cold and starvation.

The camp was abandoned, nothing being taken but what was absolutely needed. The women and children were placed on the mules, and then commenced a cold and weary tramp for the settlements. Storm after storm was encountered in the mountains, and encumbered with the helpless females, and many of the men were also badly used up and unable to help themselves, the progress was slow and tedious. Some idea of the labor and hardship endured by these men can be judged from the fact that they were three weeks in going only 15 miles. At last they got out of the mountains, and descending struck Pleasant valley, from which to the settlements things were comparatively easy, and all hands were saved.

Capt. Lowe's description of life in the mines in those early days is very interesting; also the means used to keep good order in their little communities. A party, after establishing themselves, would elect one of their number alcade or governor, and his word was law. All crimes committed were tried before a jury, and theft was considered as bad a crime as murder, and in most cases was punished with death. By these strict rules life and property were as safe and more so than after the mines became more thickly settled and officers of the law were appointed for in those early days every well disposed person considered himself an officer and personally responsible for the good government of the community where he was. One instance was told us where a young lad at work in the mines made complaint that he had been robbed of his bag of gold, but could not think who had done it. The camp was instantly aroused, and it was soon ascertained that the man that tented with the boy was missing. Each man took his rifle and started in pursuit in squads of two or three in different directions; the thief had about five hours the start, and it so happened that the party in which was Capt Lowe overtook the thief at a mining camp. On being questioned, he stated that he had come there to see a friend, but intended to return to the old camp. Upon being

Charged with Stealing,

he denied it. Search was made, and several small buckskin bags of gold were found, which he claimed were his own. These were taken away, and with arms tied together he was marched back to their camp. A jury was picked out and the trial before the alcade commenced. The bags of gold were placed on the table and the lad was asked if he could identify his bag. He said yes, and picked out one. As all the miners kept their gold in similar bags the question was then asked if there was any very peculiar shaped piece of gold in it. The reply was yes, a piece that looks just like a little dog sitting down. The bag was opened and the piece found as he described, almost an exact imitation. This was proof positive and the culprit would have been shot but for Capt. Lowe and a few others interceding for him, as previous to this he had borne a good character. The sentence was a good flogging on the bare back and driven from the camp, which was immediately carried out, nearly all in camp having a hit at him as he passed along the line.

After several years at the mines Capt. Lowe went to Lower California and took up a section of land and went to farming. The life of a farmer however was not suited to his Yankee restlessness, so he sold his farm and went to Callao, Peru. After remaining ashore there a short time he left in a clipper ship for the Chincha Islands and loaded guano for Baltimore. The passage home was made around Cape Horn without anything of note taking place. After the close of the war his health unfitting him for hard labor, he sought and obtained the position of assistant light keeper at the Highland light from which position he was promoted to head keeper, which he held until parties with more political influence succeeded in displacing him and another keeper was appointed. When the Wood End lighthouse was built he received the position as keeper and lit the lamp the first time it was lighted, and has cared for it ever since.

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