



# *The* **LIGHTKEEPER**

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## FIVE GENERATIONS IN A LIGHTHOUSE.

### UNIQUE FAMILY RECORD OF LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS.

By courtesy of "Horner's Weekly."

**L**IKE father like son" frequently applies as much to the trade and occupations of men as to their physical resemblance. Many sons, and specially those who are the firstborn, turn naturally to their father's occupation as part of their inheritance in life. But it is not frequent, we are inclined to think, that this process is continued from generation to generation for a century or two. Yet this is the remarkable record that can be claimed by the family of Mr. H. T. Knott, a veteran who was recently superannuated from the lighthouse keeping service, after a term of thirty-five years.

For nearly two hundred years there has been a member of the Knott family in this branch of the service, for five generations of Knotts have devoted themselves to the lonely and hazardous task of lighthouse keeping. The first connection of the Knott family with the warning beacons on our sea coast goes back to the year 1730. Needless to say, as son has succeeded father, many changes in the service have been witnessed. Indeed, the history of this family covers the whole period of the development of the modern ocean beacon that now flashes its warning shafts of light over leagues of wild ocean.

The first to enter this arduous work was the last Mr. Knott's great-great-grandfather, who was appointed, in the year 1730, to the South Foreland light. The figures convey little to the mind of how long ago this actually was. Some idea of the



THREE OF THE LIGHTKEEPERS REFERRED TO IN THIS ARTICLE.

remoteness of the date may be gained by the fact that the method of illuminating the lighthouses in those days was the primitive one of keeping a big coal fire blazing on the flat top of the tower.

After fifty years' work, this veteran was succeeded at the South Foreland light by his son, who, in his turn, saw forty-one years of service on this danger-spot of the Channel. One stage in the development of the illumination of the lighthouse was witnessed during his term of office, for the coal fire was superseded by lamps fed by sperm oil.

The next member of the family, the grandfather of Mr. H. T. Knott, succeeded his father at the same lighthouse in 1821, and, in his turn, retired after forty-five years' service. This Mr. Knott, whose portrait is the first on this page, saw a further stage in lighting successfully passed, when colza oil was used in place of sperm, with a marked improvement in the candle-power of the lamps.

The representative of the next generation was Mr. George Knott (middle photograph), who was appointed assistant-keeper to his father when only eighteen years of age, in 1847. After serving for fourteen years in the lighthouse that was now historic so far as his family was concerned, Mr. George Knott was promoted to the post of

principal keeper at the famous Eddystone Lighthouse. From this beacon he went to Bideford Bar Lights, and later to Bull Point Light at Morthoe, a spot that is doubtless well known to many of our



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readers who have visited North Devon on pleasure bent.

His son, Mr. H. T. Knott, who was only superannuated a few years ago, was keeper for thirty-five years. It was during the term of service of this last Mr. Knott that the principal development of lighthouse illumination took place. During his time, the colza oil was superseded by paraffin, and the lamps were increased in size from three and four consecutive wicks each to five, six, eight, and then to ten wicks per lamp, one wick outside the other. Then the latest improvement took place by the introduction of the incandescent oil burner, by which the oil is converted into a gas or vapour, and burns with a kind of gas flame, surrounded by a large Welsbach mantle giving a powerful white light.

Mr. H. T. Knott, who went to live at Crewe after retiring from the service by reason of a paralytic stroke, had an unusually eventful career. On not less than eight different occasions he had some remarkably narrow escapes from death.

When at the Skerries Lighthouse, he was one day painting its roof, and somewhat thoughtlessly stepped on to some wet paint. This resulted in a slip, and he somehow turned a complete somersault upon the roof and slid down almost to its very edge.

By what appears to be a remarkable interposition of Providence, he rolled near enough to be able to hook himself to an iron stay, and this alone prevented his being precipitated on to the concrete base eighty feet below.

On another occasion, at the Skerries, a vessel was one day cast on the rocks, and was fast breaking to pieces. Mr. Knott set out to the rescue of the crew in a small boat, and succeeded in getting close enough to the dangerous spot to take off some of the unfortunate crew, including the captain and his wife. Several times in the momentous journey to the wreck and back, the little boat was in imminent peril of being smashed to bits by the angry sea.

This brave act was at the time reported as an act of gallant lifeboat service, but, as a matter of fact, these lives had been saved by Mr. Knott's heroism before the lifeboat reached the Skerries.

Well is it for those who go down to the sea in ships, that such brave men as those of the Knott family devote their lives to the lonely and often risky work of keeping our lighthouses sick and span and efficient for their beneficent work of giving light and saving life.

### THE LIGHTHOUSE.

THE plunging storm flies fierce against the pane,  
And thrills our cottage with redoubled shocks;  
The chimney mutters and the rafters strain;  
Without, the breakers roar along the rocks.

See, from our fire and taper-lighted room,  
How savage, pitiless, and uncontroll'd  
The grim horizon shows its tossing gloom  
Of waves from unknown angry gulfs uproll'd;

Where, underneath that black portentous lid,  
A long pale space between the night and sea  
Gleams awful; while in deepest darkness hid  
All other things in our despair agree.

Nor shout they, passing brothers to inform  
What weariness they feel, or what affright;  
But tranquilly in solitude and storm  
Abide from month to month and show their light.

But lo! what star amidst the thickest dark  
A soft and unexpected dawn has made?  
O welcome Lighthouse, thy unruffled spark,  
Piercing the turmoil and the deathly shade!

By such a glimpse o'er the distracted wave  
Full many a soul is re-possessed  
Of courage and of order, strong to save;  
And like effect it works within my breast.

Three faithful men have set themselves to stand  
Against all storms that from the sky can blow,  
Where peril must expect no aiding hand,  
And tedium no relief may hope to know.

WILLIAM ALLINGHAM.