

THE SEA'S GIFT
By Francis Knowles

Jim Thorpe had been in charge of Lowestoft light for seven and twenty years.

When the young fisherman had taken his bride there he had been very proud and both very happy. Their honeymoon had lasted seven years, until the girl died. She died very suddenly and there was no time to summon medical aid. It was not until she had been laid to rest in the churchyard of the little village that Thorpe realized that his life, too, was ended.

For five years he brooded over his loss. They had never had a child. That had been their great sorrow. Thorpe was absolutely alone in the world, with nothing but his light.

He tended it through the great storm of his fifth lonely year, but it did not save the great liner that was dashed to pieces on the Lowestoft rocks. In the morning Thorpe put out in the lifeboat. The ship had broken on the rocks and there seemed to be no survivors. But on a narrow ledge of rock he found a baby girl—asleep!

How she had escaped was a miracle. Thorpe took her back to the lighthouse and fed and tended her. Gradually, as the days passed, fierce love and jealousy for her replaced the void in his heart. She grew up in the lighthouse.

Twenty years passed. Emily Thorpe regarded herself as the keeper's daughter. He sent her to school in the village, but she always came back at nightfall, pulling the heavy lighthouse boat. Thorpe would watch during those years every evening for the sight of the slender figure, running along the sands toward him. Then a hand would be waved, a cry of joy would come to him, and presently the big boat would lumber along with Emily at the oar.

The thought that she would some

day marry and leave him was the one black, unbearable one which he put back into the deepest recesses of his consciousness.

But Emily did not seem to care for any of the fisherboys of the little place. Her manners were instinctively those of a lady. She was above them all; she had the inherent grace and knowledge of one born in a high rank of life. Thorpe had tried to



She Always Came Back at Nightfall.

learn who her parents had been, but he never discovered.

Every seven years, they say, a wild storm devastates the Lowestoft coast. There had been two since Emily came to Thorpe. The third happened when she was 21, and again a big liner went ashore in the same place on Lowestoft rocks.

Again the lifeboat was put out, this time manned by half a dozen villagers, and this time the bulk of the passengers were saved. One of