

Story for News;paper Syndicate.

Vol.6, No.3.

Subject.

"Boy to the rescue."

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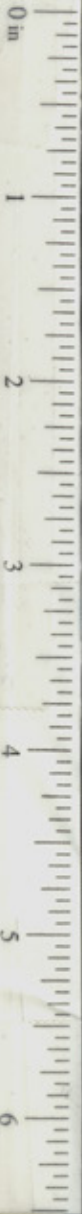
BURLINGTON, VT., 189

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Vol. 6, No. 3.

COLONIAL LINEN

Story for News, paper Syndicate.



A Boy to the Rescue.

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Bedloe's Island is situated westward across the channel from Governor's Island. This channel is a roadway in New York Harbor through which four-fifths of the large steamers pass and re-pass on their way to and from the ocean.

Bedloe's Island has but a few acres of land, not more than twenty or thirty in all. On its eastern front stands the great Statue of Liberty, which France in noble generosity presented to our country. On the western front of the island is a small marine station where there ~~is~~ ^{are} a hospital and a few inhabitants, directly or indirectly connected with the Lighthouse Department.

For, as every New Yorker can testify, the Goddess of Liberty, who constitutes the principal part of the statue, holds a torch terminated by a brilliant light in her elevated right hand. By some contrivances bright electric lights are thrown upon the pedestal of the statue in such a way as to produce marked effects ~~that were~~ not intended. At night the whole structure gives the appearance of a queen, crowned and ornamented with extended skirts of dazzling brightness.

It is, of course, the duty of the Lighthouse department to keep these lights burning during the night.

On the north side of the little island, until recently, there has been a small garrison of troops. This garrison did not generally exceed fifty men. The last detail sent there by the government was a company of the sixth infantry, U. S. army, commanded by Captain A. M. Wetherill.

At the time of which I am writing Capt. Wetherill had with him two or three lieutenants, among whom was Lieut. Frank D. Webster. The special duty of this command was to guard the statue against any or all persons who might be disposed to deface or otherwise

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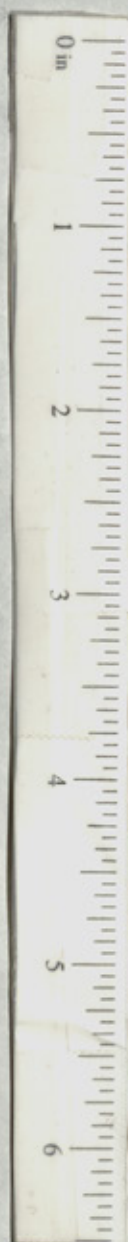
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injure it, and to preserve order, as a special police ^{might do} among the inhabitants and numerous visitors who are constantly coming and going.

Toward sunset on the eighteenth of January, 1893, the several officers and many of the men belonging to this garrison, which is designated in army orders as Fort Word, were skating on the ice which, in an unusual freeze-up, had formed so as to cover the whole stretch of ^{deep} water from Bedloe's Island to the New Jersey shore.

As twilight was approaching, the officers, excepting Lieut. Webster, and the men ^{who were on the ice} took off their skates and went back to the island. For just then they heard the first call for retreat, the final roll-call of the day. Webster lingered, probably to look after Max Wetherill (a boy of about fourteen years, the son of Capt. Wetherill), who continued skating. Scattered about on the ice were three or four children belonging to the lighthouse employees. Farther from the island, toward what are known as the National ~~Docks~~ ^{Docks}, could be seen the figures of a man and woman walking on the ice. The man was going toward the woman, having accomplished the object ^{a very natural one} that he had in venturing out upon the ice, that is to say, to be able to tell his friends that he had walked on ice all the way from Bedloe's Island to the National ~~Docks~~ ^{Docks}.

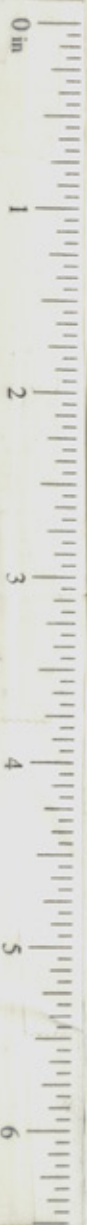
This worthy citizen, an engineer in the lighthouse department at Bedloe's Island, Mr. Charles Miller, had been but a short time married, and the woman seen upon the ice was his good wife. How could they better celebrate the termination of their Honeymoon than by taking a charming, almost miraculous evening walk upon the water! But, however praiseworthy and precious the original purpose the immediate consequences were not propitious. For, as on his returning steps, his venturesome wife drew near to meet him, he was filled with alarm and horror to behold her sinking through the treacherous ice.

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He instantly flew to her assistance, for he thought only of her extreme peril. But, as soon as his feet touched the plate of ice, already cracking in spangles, he also broke through and like his wife sank to his chin.

Now, chilled by the plunge, both of them were throwing forward their arms, and by their desperate struggles causing the edges of the broken ice to crumble before them.

The tide-current was at this time swift and incisive and every spring Mr. Miller made to throw himself upon the surface, crushed out and drove away cakes newly severed from the mass.

All that they really effected for their own relief was done by keeping their heads above the black waters and calling loudly for help.

Webster and Max Wetherill, when this double catastrophe was taking place, were some three hundred yards off, still skating.

The lad Max, probably hearing the alarming cries, was the first to catch sight of this imperilled couple, but dimly seen in the evening haze.

He shouted to the lieutenant, and both started, swiftly skating to the rescue. Webster, being stronger and an expert, arrived first at the place of disaster. Knowing the danger of approaching too closely the edge of the crackling ice, the young lieutenant wisely threw his overcoat to the engineer, cheering and encouraging him by his voice. He thought rightly that before it became wet through and heavy the sufferers could spread it before them on the ice, lean upon it and so gain time.

While they were trying to obey his orders and heed his suggestions he ventured a little nearer, and there, lying prone upon his face, stretched out his hands to the now frightened and shivering woman, she being the nearest to him.

Max meanwhile had come up quite too close for safety and was

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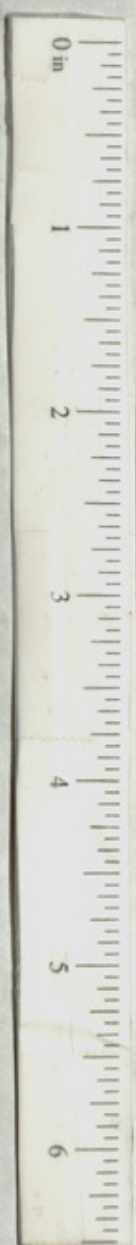
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wager to do something toward the rescue.

"What can I do?" he cried.

"Catch my feet, and hold them securely," answered the lieutenant.

This the boy did, but the water, increasing above the ice showed it to be still sinking, and the rescuers themselves were already in imminent danger. Just at that time, several soldiers belonging to Captain Wetherill's company, having ^{heard} Max's shrill outcry, had run toward them with all their might and were now approaching the scene.

Among the soldiers were Leroy S. Hotchkiss and Dennis Ginney, who were thoughtful enough to bring ropes, and Charles F. Rodenstein, who had the good sense to provide himself with a board.

Hotchkiss at once bravely exchanged places with the lieutenant, while the latter extended the board as near to the woman as possible. Hotchkiss now grasped both her hands, for she was too paralyzed to make further effort, and drew her upon the board, a line with clasped hands having been formed to give them necessary assistance to the firmer ice. Thus Mrs. Miller was saved.

While this effort was succeeding, Dennis Ginney had thrown a rope after the manner of the Mexican lariat over the head of Mr. Miller, who had by this time become so benumbed that he could not use his hands enough to hold it. He however, to prevent its choking him, seized the rope with his teeth and by this means was slowly drawn out of the water.

It has taken some time to relate these incidents of rescue but all the work was speedily accomplished, yet none too soon, for the whole field of ice was fast becoming too weak to hold up so large a party.

There was great joy at the island as soon as all,--the rescuers and the rescued,--were safe upon the dry land.

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Wetherill the veritable hero of the occasion.

At the next annual encampment of Captain Wetherill's company, "A" of the sixth infantry, at Fort Niagara, not far from Buffalo, New York, as department commander I had the privilege and honor of presenting government medals to each of the above named rescuers. There was a large assembly and a formal parade of the garrison, and one may imagine the pride and pleasure which Captain and Mrs. Wetherill experienced when the name of Alexander Macomb Wetherill, - for that was Max's full name; was called, --

When he, covered with blushes, stepped out to the front of the parade and received his medal of honor, a spontaneous shout of applause greeted him.

His father, now that ^{you may} ~~he~~ is approaching the requisite age, has sought for the lad an appointment to a cadetship at the military academy.

We are glad indeed to notice and record such noble acts of heroism put forth in the saving of human life; and indeed it is better to save than to destroy.

Oliver O. Howard

Portland, Oregon,

Dec. 8, 1894.

Maj.-Gen. U. S. Army,

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