

STORIES of New Jersey

each day to tend the light.

The modern, snub-nosed sturdy ship, designed to ride out every kind of weather and withstand every strain, is a more comforting than beautiful sight. The dark hulk bobbing serenely on the waves or dimly glimpsed through the thick curtain of fog, its name painted in large letters on its side, assures the navigator of his position. From the tall masts, which in the larger ships raise the light 57 feet above the water, the flashing signal can be seen 14 to 20 miles at sea.

In addition to fog signals, all lightships are equipped with a radio beacon, which sends out an assigned dot and dash signal which can be picked up 100 miles or more at sea by any vessel equipped with the proper radio receiving apparatus. By this device an approaching vessel, even though far below the horizon and out of sight and sound of the lightship's other signals, can keep a check on its course.

Depending on the size of the ship and the importance of the station, the crew varies from 6 to 15 men. Except in the stormy season, when no one is allowed to leave the ship, the work is arranged so that the men have ample shore leave to compensate them for the monotony and loneliness of their life. The crews of the lightships have the most liberal vacation allowance of any men in the service. Time on duty and ashore is arranged in rotation so that each man has a maximum of 90 days leave without interfering with the operation of the ship.

At regular intervals each ship must make a trip to the nearest depot to be overhauled. Meanwhile a relief ship takes its place, sending out the same signals. Not for a moment is the station allowed to go unguarded.

Lighthouse tenders, the messenger boys of the service, carry supplies and equipment to all lightships and lighthouses in addition to inspecting and placing the various buoys, markers and other aids. In the stormy season special care is taken that the lightships have a full supply of food and equipment in case they are cut off from the shore by a protracted spell of bad weather.

Before the coast was amply provided with lightships and lighthouses, the shoals off New Jersey were a graveyard for ships, shipwrecked sailors and passengers. Among the many shipwrecks with dreadful loss of life were those of the passenger ships Powhatan and New Era in the sixties. From the former 311 lives were lost and 260 from the latter.

The duties of the men in the lighthouse service do not include life-saving. This work is delegated to the Coast Guard service, which has 39 stations along the coast equipped with devices for saving the lives of bathers from the shore and of shipwrecked travelers. Nevertheless, due to the exposed and isolated positions of lighthouses and lightships, there have been many instances of rescues undertaken voluntarily and at great risk. Employees receive no remuneration for such hardships endured or dangers faced. Commendation by the Department of Commerce or, in rare instances, the award of a medal are