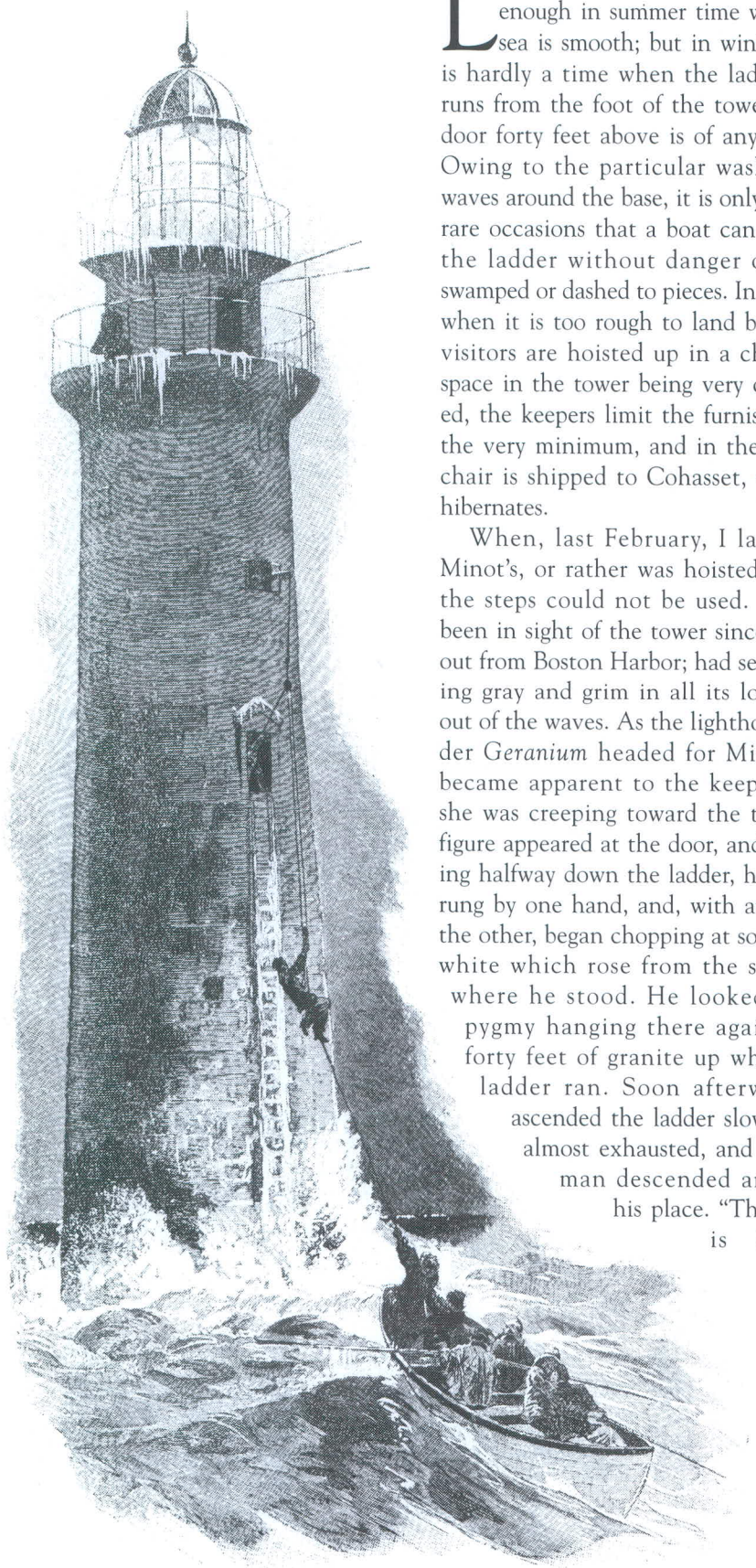
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Landing on the Ledge

Landing on Minot's Ledge is easy enough in summer time when the sea is smooth; but in winter there is hardly a time when the ladder that runs from the foot of the tower to the door forty feet above is of any service. Owing to the particular wash of the waves around the base, it is only on very rare occasions that a boat can lie near the ladder without danger of being swamped or dashed to pieces. In summer, when it is too rough to land by ladder, visitors are hoisted up in a chair; but space in the tower being very contracted, the keepers limit the furnishings to the very minimum, and in the fall the chair is shipped to Cohasset, where it hibernates.

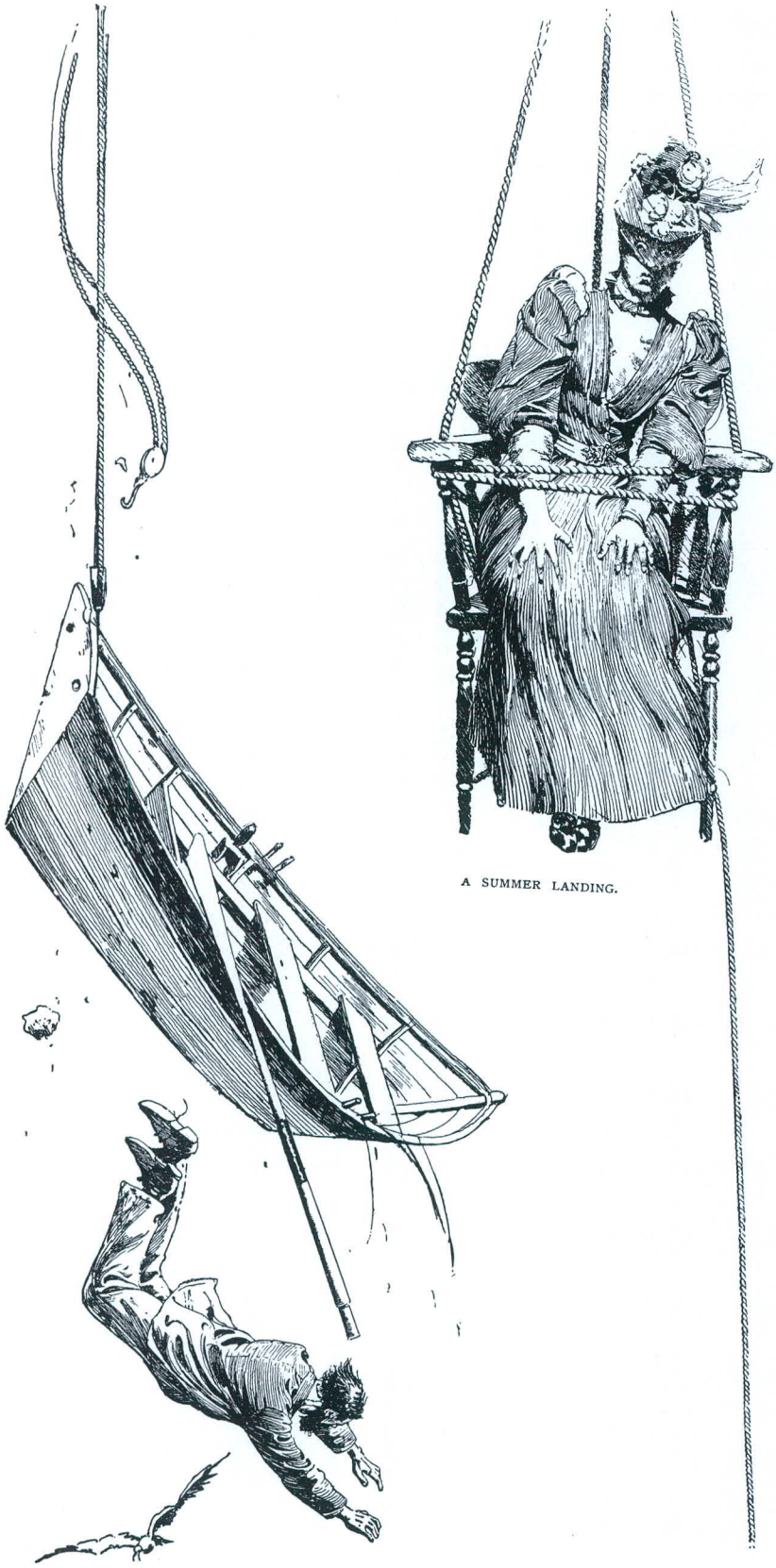
When, last February, I landed at Minot's, or rather was hoisted into it, the steps could not be used. We had been in sight of the tower since we put out from Boston Harbor; had seen it rising gray and grim in all its loneliness out of the waves. As the lighthouse tender *Geranium* headed for Minot's, it became apparent to the keepers that she was creeping toward the tower. A figure appeared at the door, and, climbing halfway down the ladder, hung to a rung by one hand, and, with an axe in the other, began chopping at something white which rose from the sea from where he stood. He looked like a pygmy hanging there against the forty feet of granite up which the ladder ran. Soon afterward he ascended the ladder slowly, as if almost exhausted, and another man descended and took his place. "The ladder is heavily iced up, and they're trying to clear it," said the captain of the *Geranium*, who had trained a spy-glass on the tower.

Meanwhile the tender had been hove to and the boat lowered. Pulling to a spar buoy some three hundred feet from the tower, we passed a line around it, and, paying out from the buoy, allowed the boat to drift within hailing distance of the keeper. The tower was weather streaked and its base up to high-water mark was covered with a greenish black ooze. Around the base the sea was gurgling. Occasionally a breaker swept threateningly toward the boat, and the mate in the stern would haul her in by the cable toward the buoy while the crew backed water clear of the combing crest, which would have swamped her but for this maneuvering.

Out of the ocean before us rose course after course of solid masonry leading to a deep, narrow doorway far above us. The answer to our hail came back faintly above the noisy sea. It was too rough to land at the ladder, and if it were not, the lower half was so thickly encrusted with ice that no one could retain a foothold on it; but if the block and tackle could be rigged before the sea roughened, I might be hoisted into the tower. The assistant inspector had told me before I left the tender that this might be the only way of landing me, adding, "If you don't like the looks of the rig, come back, and we'll try some other day." I had determined to make the attempt, no matter what the risk.

In a deep porthole two stories above the door a spar had been rigged. To this was attached a block through which ran a rope ending in a loop. A coil of line fastened to the loop was held in the hand of the keeper, who stood in the doorway. The boat was paid out from the buoy, the keeper threw the line, and, as it fell across the boat, one of the crew seized it and hauled it in. Straddling the loop and grasping the rope above it with both hands, I gave the signal and the keepers began hoisting while one of the boat's crews slowly paid out the line to which the loop was attached. I was literally hanging between sea and sky, being hoisted upward and at the same time across the tower. It was a gray day.

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A SUMMER LANDING.

THE ACCIDENT TO THE KEEPER.

Where the sea below me shallowed over the jagged rocks around the tower, I saw a tangle of slimy seaweed swirl halfway up to the surface and sink slowly out of sight. The little craft was rising upon the waves, lying on the trough of the sea, backing toward the buoy, moving away from it, according to the changing conditions of the sea—and at Minot's it is ever changing. An accident to the boat or to the man who held the loop, and no earthly power would have prevented my being dashed against the tower. But at last I had been raised to a level with the door, and was allowed to swing slowly into the arms of the keeper, who hauled me in, and was apparently as glad as I was to see me safely landed.

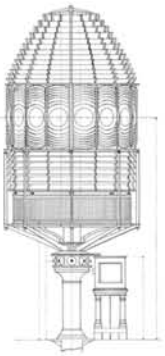
I found myself in a circular, brick lined room, or rather cell, which received its only light through the deep narrow door so high above the base of the tower that, as one looked out through it from the center of the room, it framed in nothing but a distant vista of heaving sea and gray, scurrying clouds. In the wall opposite the door was a small, deep window, like the port-hole in a casement. Its heavy wooden shudder was securely bolted, yet water was dripping from the granite recess into a bucket on the floor, with such force does the sea strike the tower on Minot's Ledge.

This article is about getting aboard the Minots Ledge Lighthouse and is an excerpt from an 1891 Century magazine. Article by Gustav Kobbe.

The illustration on the opposite page is titled "Winter Landing" and you might recognize it as the illustration of the envelope in which the Log is mailed.

The illustration of the woman in the chair is called "Summer Landing" and the one of the keeper taking a dive is "The Accident to the Keeper."

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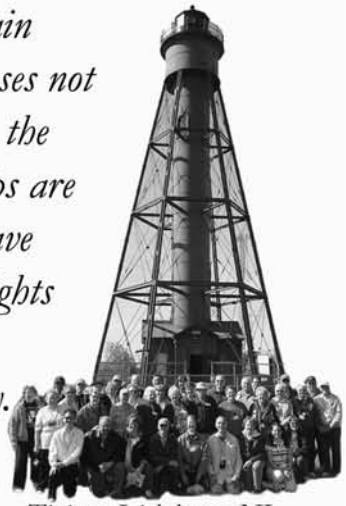
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