Brasswork
or
The Lighthouse Keeper’s Lament

Oh what is the bane of a lightkeeper’s life
That causes him worry, struggle and strife,
That makes him use cuss words, and beat at his wife?
It’s Brasswork.

What makes him look ghastly consumptive and thin,
What robs him of health, of vigor and vim,
And cause despair and drives him to sin?
It’s Brasswork.

The devil himself could never invent,
A material causing more world-wide lament,
And in Uncle Sam’s service about ninety per cent,
Is Brasswork.

The lamp in the tower, reflector and shade,
The tools and accessories pass in parade
As a matter of fact the whole outfit is made
Of Brasswork.

The oil containers I polish until,
My poor back is broken, aching, and still
Each gallon and quart, each pint and each gill
Is Brasswork.

I lay down to slumber all weary and sore,
I walk in my sleep, I awake with a snore
And I’m shining the knob on my bedchamber door.
That’s Brasswork.

From pillar to post, rags and polish I tote
I’m never without them, for you will please note
That even the buttons I wear on my coat
Are Brasswork.

The machinery clockwork, and fog-signal bell
The coal hods, the dustpans, the pump in the well
Now I’ll leave it to you mates, if this isn’t—well
Brasswork.

I dig, scrub and polish, and work with a might,
And just when I get it all shining and bright,
In comes the fog like a thief in the night:
Good-by Brasswork.

I start the next day and when noontime draws near,
A boatload of Summer visitors appear,
For no other purpose, than to smooth and besmear
My Brasswork.

So it goes all the Summer, and along in the Fall,
Comes the district machinist to overhaul
And rub dirty and greasy paws over all
My Brasswork.

And again in the Spring, if perchance it may be,
An efficiency star is awarded to me
I open the package and what do I see?
More Brasswork.

Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud,
In the short span of life that he is allowed
If all the lining in every dark cloud
Is Brasswork?

And when I have polished until I am cold
And I’m taken aloft to the Heavenly fold
Will my harp and my crown be made of pure gold?
No, Brasswork.

The Keepers Log—Winter 1985