

**JOSHUA JAMES,
LIFE-SAVER. [1909]**

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Joshua James, Life-Saver. [1909] by Sumner I. Kimball

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SUMNER I. KIMBALL

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BY

SUMNER I. KIMBALL

BOSTON

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION

1909

“ No wild hurrahs accompany
The deeds these men do dare;
No beat of drum, no martial strain,
No spirit-stirring air.

“ But in the cold and darksome night
They combat with the blast;
And gain, by dint of hardihood,
The victory at last.”

JOSHUA JAMES

NO finer examples of sturdy American manhood can anywhere be found than in the crews of the United States Life-Saving Service. These little groups of from seven to ten men each, numbering in the aggregate a scant two thousand, are composed of robust, warm-hearted, and strong-handed residents of the coast, chosen for the most part from those who, through their previous occupations as fishermen, boatmen, and wreckers, have gained a thorough familiarity with the changeful moods of

JOSHUA JAMES

the sea, and especially with the peculiarities of the currents, reefs, bars, and surf in the region of their respective habitations. The qualifications thus attained, supplemented by their daily drill after enlistment in the Service, equip them in the best possible manner for their subsequent arduous and hazardous work. They are hardly known to the great majority of their countrymen living inland; but to the inhabitants of the coast, especially that large portion interested in our sea and lake commerce, and to those who follow the sea, they are well known indeed! To the latter, when the tropical hurricane or the chilling blast of the Arctic winter storm is driving their helpless craft into danger and possible destruction,

JOSHUA JAMES

or when impenetrable fog envelops them for days at a time, rendering chart and reckoning worthless, the assurance that a practically continuous line of keen-eyed and sleepless sentinels march and countermarch along the surf-beaten beaches or stand guard with warning signals in hand upon the jutting cliffs and headlands reaching far out into the sea for unwary victims, lends a comfortable sense of security. That this confidence is not misplaced is attested by the statistics of the Service, which show that of more than a hundred thousand lives imperiled upon vessels wrecked or in distress within the scope of the operations of the station crews since the systematic organization of the Service in 1871, less than one per cent has

JOSHUA JAMES

been lost, and that a considerable portion of even this small percentage is made up of those whom no human agency could save — as, persons washed overboard before or at the moment of stranding, sailors drowned in attempting to land in their own boats, or victims of sudden capsize of small boats who perished before help could possibly reach them. The record includes all, every life lost within the reasonable bounds of station activity, from craft of all kinds, the diminutive canoe as well as the mammoth ocean steamship.

Another American organization for the relief and succor of the shipwrecked is the Massachusetts Humane Society, which has made a most honorable record, and stands credited