

**THE WRECK OF THE
HOMEWARD-BOUND;
OR, THE BOAT OF MERCY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649265558

The wreck of the Homeward-bound; or, the boat of mercy by Nicholas Michell

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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NICHOLAS MICHELL

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OR

The Boat of Mercy.

BY

NICHOLAS MICHELL,

AUTHOR OF "RUINS OF MANY LANDS," "PLEASURE," ETC.

LONDON:
WILLIAM TEGG.
—
1862.

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TO
VICE-ADMIRAL,
HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND,
K.G., F.R.S. &c.,
P R E S I D E N T
OF
The Royal National Life-Boat Institution;
THE FOLLOWING LITTLE POEM
IS,
WITH EVERY SENTIMENT OF RESPECT,
INSCRIBED,
BY
HIS GRACE'S HUMBLE, OBEDIENT SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.

PREFATORY REMARKS.

WHEN we reflect how many thousands of vessels annually leave our ports, and return from distant countries, while thousands more, engaged in home trade, are continually sweeping around our shores, we must feel it a matter of no surprise that shipwrecks occur so frequently; but, at the same time, it is a matter of extreme regret that the results are oftentimes so deplorable.

The loss of life last season, though not unusually large, was very considerable, and some of the details given us were of a heart-rending description.

Great Britain has ever been regarded as a maritime power, and her wealth is drawn, not from internal resources, but from her foreign commerce. To say nothing of our naval armaments, the men engaged on the high seas for commercial purposes must be regarded as the most valuable of England's labouring population. They carry on, at the peril of their lives, her great "sea-business," bringing to her ports the luxuries as well as the essentials of life, from every distant corner of the globe. In a word, to the activity and boldness of her seamen, England, it is patent to all, mainly owes her present exalted position among the nations of the earth.

Nothing is more admirable than the spirit now abroad, which, in a miraculously short period, has called up, as by the wave of a necromancer's wand, an army of Volunteers, ready to defend our household gods and our hearthstones from foreign aggression; but while we contemplate thus taking the lives of each and all who, in hostile spirit, dare approach our dearly-beloved shores, oh! let us think also how we shall *save* lives! Let us devote at least some of our energies to the support of a peaceful and an efficient fleet, in order to do battle with those elements which every winter send to untimely graves so many of our "wealth-makers"—brave patriots of the seas—the thews and sinews of this land.

As a means, then, of lessening the great annual loss of life by shipwreck, the Life-boat must be maintained. We do not here enter into a description of this interesting defier of the wave and storm, or attempt to narrate its history. Suffice it to say, that, prior to the year 1780, no boat, constructed for the purpose of saving life, appears to have been known in our islands. In 1785, a patent was granted to Mr. Lukin, for a life-boat of a peculiar construction; but shortly afterwards a very superior boat was built at South Shields, by Mr. Greathead. It was lined throughout with cork, and would float when loaded with men and filled with water. This boat is said to have saved, in fourteen seasons, three hundred lives from ships wrecked near Tynemouth Haven.

Since the above period, many improvements have been made by scientific men, so that the Life-boat may now be considered as most efficient for the purpose designed.

The average length of the crafts built for the National Life-boat Institution,

is about thirty feet, and, with the crew, each will carry from thirty to forty men. The buoyancy is principally obtained by air-tight compartments, along the sides, and air-boxes in the bow and stern. The cost of each boat, exclusive of its carriage, is about £180.

The National Life-boat Institution needs nothing but its humane purpose to recommend it. It appeals to the sympathies of every British heart, and calls on a great maritime nation for support.

Its object is to place and maintain a Life-boat at every port and exposed part of our coast where its services may be required. The number of valuable lives which this purely philanthropic Society has been instrumental in saving, can be accurately shown. In 1860, and the beginning of the present year, no less than 400 lives were saved by its boats, under circumstances when no other means would have availed in rescuing the shipwrecked men from watery graves. Since the Society's establishment in 1824, to the close of 1860, the total number saved from shipwreck, either by its boats, or for which it has granted rewards, amounts to 11,856.

The Institution has now a fleet of nearly 120 Life-boats, stationed on the coasts of Great Britain and Ireland; and, numerous as these appear to be, many more in reality are needed.

A native of Cornwall, where, on the rock-bound northern shores, from Bude-Haven to the Land's End, shipwrecks so frequently occur, the author of this little Poem may be permitted, perhaps, to take a peculiar interest in the subject of Life-boats, and the objects of the National Life-boat Institution. If by his imperfect description of a scene which, some time since, took place on a

dangerous part of our coast, he succeeds in raising a little sympathy in the bosoms of any on behalf of those whose lives are passed on the mighty waters, his narrative will not have been vainly written.

. Should any profit accrue from this slight publication, it will be placed at the service of the National Life-boat Institution.

