

# PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Vol. XX.

TORONTO, NOVEMBER 3, 1900.

No. 44.



THE LIFE-BOAT.

## At Maryport One Sunday.

BY MARIANNE FARNINGHAM.

Wild waves kept no Sabbath calm  
Round the coast of Cumberland,  
Wild winds rushed along the strand  
And broke in upon the psalm  
Which the children sang that day,  
Ere from school they passed away.

Ah! the storm had work to do,  
Cruel work! And strength gone mad  
The great gale that thundered had  
For its task. Most fiercely blew  
The strong winds, and did not care  
Aught for Sabbath or for prayer.

In the Firth the murderous gale  
Found a barque, and shrieked with glee  
As it struck and lashed the sea,  
Then, bronzed faces growing pale  
Looked upon the awful strife,  
Looked and said farewell to life.

Like an army of dire foes  
Rose the winds, and waves, and beat  
On the ship, and no retreat  
Had the sailors from their woes.  
So the barque was forced at last  
Where the sand-bank held it fast.

Shaken, smitten, and drawn down,  
Lower, lower—would the men  
Ever reach the land again?  
Must they slowly, surely drown?  
To the masts they cling, to wait,  
Wishing courage for their fate.

Oh, would any know? and care  
To come out amid the storm?  
Who would leave his fireside warm  
Conflict with that gale to dare?  
These men knew their fellows, and  
Strained their eyes toward the land.

News had spread in Maryport,  
"There's a vessel in distress!"  
No heart beat in carelessness;  
Ned there was not to exhort  
Men to courage. Once again  
Forward ran the lifeboat men.

Love and pride were in that cheer,  
Out upon the awful deep,  
Out where mighty billows leap,  
Go the men the town holds dear.  
Men and women breathlessly  
Watch the lifeboat out to sea.

Hearts that wait can always pray,  
Eyes can look through tears to heaven.  
Hopes and prayers most freely given  
Speed that boat upon its way;  
God be with the heroes brave,  
Saving life upon the wave.

Just in time! The shipwrecked men  
Catch the line; and through the foam  
They are drawn for life and home.  
And the boat goes back again,  
With the men the crew have won,  
To the crowd that cry well done!

British heroes are they all,  
These brave men around the coast  
Let us honour them the most  
When we keep our festival.  
Deeds are theirs of prayer and praise  
Meet for even Sabbath days.

## A NIGHT WITH A LIFE-BOAT.

BY JOHN OILMOUR.

During the whole of a bleak December day the wind had been blowing hard from the west-northwest; the weather had been very unsettled for some days, squally, with the cloud-scurd low and flying fast; now it is becoming worse, and the blasts more frequent and more fierce, rapidly growing into a continuous-rising and heavy gale. The weather signal hangs ominously from the flag-staff, giving a warning (for which experience has gained respect) of the dangerous winds which may be expected. The Downs anchorage is crowded with shipping—so much so, that the lights of the vesse' anchored there shed a glow upon their darkness, like the lights of a populous town.

In such a storm, anxious watchers are on the alert on all the stations of the coast. The coastguard-men, sheltered in nooks of the cliff, or behind rocks, or breasting the storm on the drear sands as they walk their solitary beat, peer out into the darkness, watching the signals from sea—the gun-flash or the rocket's light, which, while they speak of hope to the imperilled, tell to those on shore of lives in danger and of waiting death. Or the watchers listen for the dull throb of the signal gun, the sign of wild warfare and struggles for life amid breaking waves and dashing seas, and

call for the rescuers to rush into the contest that they may snatch their powerless brethren from the very jaws of death.

Often, too, the whisper runs along the telegraph wires telling of some distant scene of sad distress. It is so in this case. The expected challenge comes—a call to action that the crew do not one moment hesitate to accept. They know the hardship and peril, but do not think of these, for they know what it is for brother sailors to cling perhaps to a few spars of still-standing wreck, while the wild waves leap around, and only a few inches of creaking, yielding timber shield them from their fury. They are ready for any stern, deadly wrestle, to rescue their drowning fellow-creatures.

The order is given, and directly there is a rush to the life-boat. The men on board the ever-ready steam-tug "Aid" are no less prompt; and within half an hour both steamer and boat are making their way through the broken seas, and breasting the full fury of the gale. Imagine the picture that was hid in the pitch-darkness of that wild night. The lifeboat is almost burrowing its way through surf and sand. Each man bends low on his seat, and holds on by the thwart or gunwale; the boat, being towed in the

face of the gale and sea, does not ride over the waves as she should do if she were under canvas only, but is dragged on and on, cleaving their crests. The ends of the lifeboat are high, the airtight compartments in the bow and stern giving her the self-righting power; the waist is low, that she may hold as little water as possible. When a sea comes on board, it is rolled out over the low sides, or escapes through the valves in the floor of the boat, so that within a few seconds of being full of water, even up to the gunwale, she frees herself to the floor. At times, indeed, the water runs over the boat in volumes sufficient to wash every man out of her who is not holding on. She pitches and rolls with a motion quick as that of a plunging horse.

Upon nearing the light-ship they see on the sands the flare of blazing tar barrels, signals made from the vessel on shore, and they at once make preparations for going to the rescue. The men on board the boat cast off the tow rope, and the wind and sea at once swing the boat's head round, and she plunges into the broken water which is rushing over the sand. It is indeed a wild waste of water. It boils and foams in tumultuous uproar, as the waves break and rebound

and dash together, leap high in air, and then recoil and fall with the roar of an avalanche. It is a desperate strife of waters, and into the midst of it the boat rushes. All the men dare to do is to hoist a close-roofed foresail, the gale is so strong. But swiftly it bears the boat along, the waves battle around like hungry wolves, and at times the boat is so overrun with broken water and surf that the men can scarcely breathe. They cling resolutely to the boat, however, and again and again she shakes herself free of water, rises buoyantly over the tops of the waves, and the men are free for one moment again, and thus she undauntedly works her way in to the wreck. It is one o'clock in the morning; the moon gleams out through gulfs in the dark, deep clouds which sweep swiftly across her.

The men see a large ship hard and fast on the shore, and in a perfect boll of waters. The tremendous seas are shaking her from stem to stern, as they wildly leap against her. She is making all possible signals of distress. The boat makes in for the ship, the people on board see her, and cries and cheers of joy greet her approach. The anchor is thrown overboard, and the cable goes out by the run, and with a jerk it brings the boat up within sixty feet of the vessel, which they see to be an emigrant ship crowded with passengers. As the poor people see the boat stop short their cries for help are frantic, and sound dimly in the men's ears as slowly and laboriously they haul in the cable, and get up the anchor before making another attempt to fetch alongside the ship. In the meantime they answer the people with cheers, and the moon shining out, the emigrants see they are not deserted. They now sail within fifty fathoms of the ship before they heave the anchor overboard again. They let the cable out gradually and drop alongside. The captain and pilot of the vessel (the "Fusilier") shouts out, "How many can you carry?—we have more than one hundred on board, more than sixty women and children."

It was with no little dismay that the passengers looked down upon the boat half buried in spray; and wondered how she could be the means of rescuing such a crowd of people. Two of the boatmen spring as the boat lifts, catch the man-ropes, and climb on board the ship. The light from the ship's lamps and the faint moonlight reveal the mass of people on board—some deadly pale and terror-stricken, some fainting, others in hysterics, while many are more resigned.

But this night had not been one of unreasoning fear to all. There were those on board who, filled with a calm heroism,

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LIFE-BOAT IN A STORM.