

JOHN LAING, THE LIFE-BOAT MAN; OR, THE
WARNING UNHEEDED.

"THANK you, John, again and again. I always knew I had your confidence; but this is more than kind."

"Tush, Mary! we haven't lived as man and wife this long time without my knowing your worth. Why, it's twenty years ago—it seems but yesterday—since you left your comfortable home to marry me; twenty years ago this very morning! And this is my wedding-day gift, Mary. It should have been a large again. But for the life-boat, the good ship must have been lost, crew and cargo, on the Scroby Sands—but such as it is, it is yours, wife, yours and our boy's."

"Thank you again, John;—but much as I value it, you have given me a better wedding-day gift, John—hope."

"Ay, wife, I guess what you mean. There's been but one thing that has clouded our happy life, and that a fault of mine. You do well to remind me of it to-day, Mary."

There was no reproach in his tone, although his words might seem to suggest it, but his wife thought that she saw sadness in his downcast face, and went at once to his side. John Laing was a tall, strong, middle-aged man, with a tanned weather-beaten face set in a frame of thick grizzled beard. He was clothed in the beachman's rough, warm attire, and looked the frank, brave, honest man the captain of a life-boat's crew on the most dangerous coast of England should be. Upon his skill and courage human life had often depended: often, had his strong right-hand trembled, his shrewd head wavered, his brave heart failed him, the sea would have claimed fresh victims.

"You will forgive me, John," his wife said; "my heart was full of gratitude and joy."

"Hark ye, Mary," he replied, "I should not have spoken of this, but I cannot blame you for reminding me. We beachmen lead a hard life, and a dangerous one too. There's never a sun rises which we can reckon upon seeing out. 'Tis the same with all the world else; but we are more often face to face with death