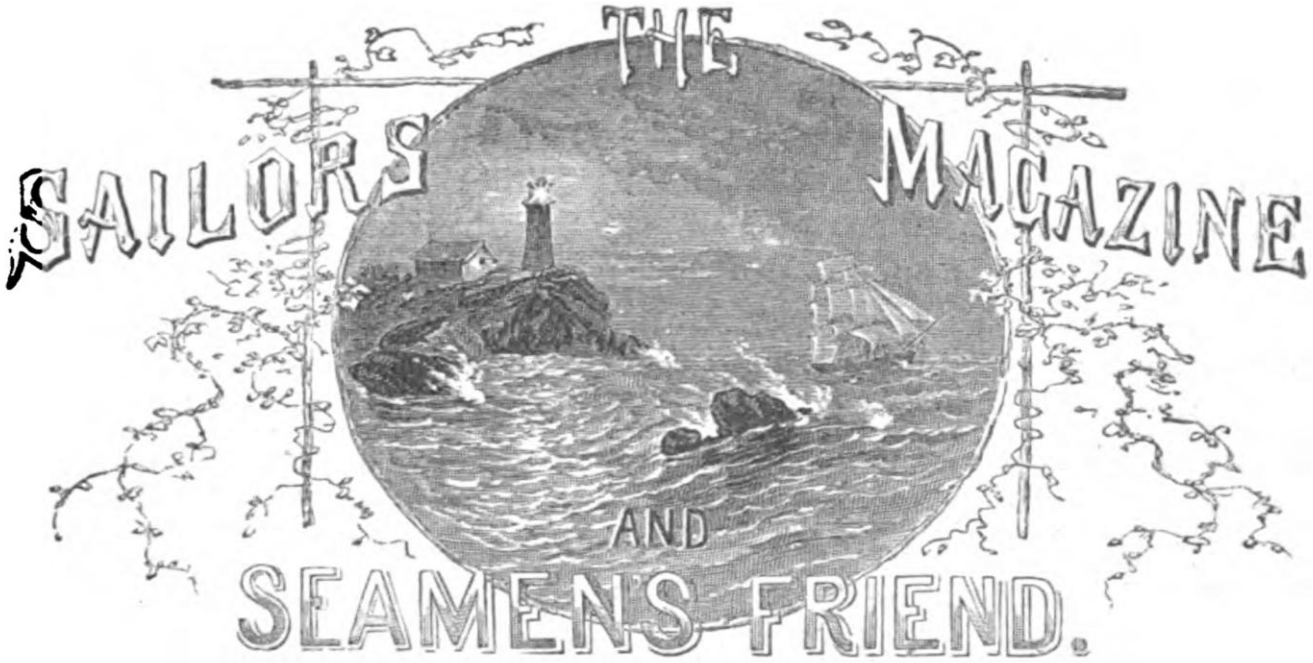


Vol. 44. FEBRUARY, 1872. No. 2.

# SEAMEN'S ORPHANS:

## A PLEA IN THEIR BEHALF.

*An Address delivered at the laying of the Foundation of the Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution, Sept.* 11, 1871.

BY REV. W. M. TAYLOR, OF BOOTLE, ENGLAND.

THE following address will be read with peculiar interest, in view of the fact that the gifted speaker has just accepted an invitation to the pastorate of the Broadway Tabernacle Church in this city.

It indicates a most excellent spirit, great large-heartedness, and an appreciation of the SEAMEN'S CAUSE. It prepares us not only to welcome Mr. TAYLOR, but also to expect his co-operation in whatever promises to improve the sailor's temporal and spiritual condition.

The proposed edifice will be an imposing structure, and provide accommodation for four hundred children. It is estimated to cost $100,000.—ED. MAG.

"I think myself happy, Mr. Mayor, my lords, ladies and gentlemen, that I am permitted to take a part in the interesting proceedings of this auspicious occasion. We have laid to-day the foundation stone of an institution which is destined, we trust, to stand for many years, and to confer on many destitute children for generations to come, the benefits of education and the blessings of religion. It was meet, therefore, that we should do this good work with every demonstration of enthusiasm, and with earnest prayer to Him without

whom nothing is holy and nothing is strong. The vindication of those who have inaugurated this enterprise, if vindication be required, is to be found in the necessity, which has been felt among us for some worthy edifice wherein the children of those seamen who have died in the service of our merchants, might be housed and educated. I know, indeed, that it is unwise unduly to multiply our charities, especially at a time when it has been felt to be difficult to sustain the efficiency of those already in existence; but the Seamen's Orphan Institution, while not coming into competition with any similar charity, will supply a place which has somehow been left vacant until now,—and so, by filling its own particular niche, it will supplement and complete the work of the orphanages by which our town is already adorned. To indicate the necessity which has long existed for such a building as this is to be, and the benefits which may be expected from it, I may perhaps be allowed to refer for a moment or two to my own experience, similar as I know it to be to that of numbers of my ministerial brethren. During my sixteen years' ministry in the northern quarter of the town, among a people largely connected with our mercantile marine service, it has often been my sad duty to go to a home and announce the heavy news that the father of the family was no more. Scarcely a year of those sixteen has passed over my head that I have not been sent with some black-bordered note or some ill-omened telegram once, twice, sometimes even thrice in twelve months, to different homes, to tell the heart-rending tidings that the husband, who had gone to sea a few weeks before in happy health, would return again no more. Naturally, in such circumstances, I have been led to take a deep interest in providing for the widows and children; but though I have used all the means at my command, I have not been able to introduce into existing orphanages, exclusive of this institution, more than one or two children in all these years. These orphanages, indeed, are beyond all praise of mine, and they are open, up to the measure of their capacity, to all who can be admitted in conformity with their rules. But many of them are fettered with conditions as to the birthplace of the children and the residence of the parents; and many others are restricted to children who have been deprived of both parents. Now, this last condition, wherever it exists, almost of necessity excludes the sailors' children, for his life—I speak of the average—owing to the hazardous nature of his occupation, is shorter than that of his wife, and so if only the children who are orphaned of both parents are eligible to an orphanage, very few sailors' children will be found within it. In the case of this institution, however, there are no such conditions.—

(" Hear, hear !" and cheers.) All that is required is that the child shall be that of a sailor—a preference being given to the child of one who for five years has sailed out of the port of Liverpool—and the fact that already there have been 260 children applying for admission to the benefits of the Seamen's Orphanage, not more than a dozen of whom are destitute of mothers, is a proof at once of the need that exists for it, and of the benefits that shall result from it. Now, admitting the necessity for such an institution, where could it be placed more appropriately than in a town like this ? A month or two ago, I had the honor of being conducted by General Howard, of Washington, over the field of Gettysburg, where for three days was fought one of the bloodiest battles in modern history, and hard by the cemetery where the soldiers were buried, I saw a soldiers' orphanage, fringing with its border of benevolence the dark mantle of sadness which was spread over the scene. It was a fitting sight, I thought, for such an institution, and considering that our sailors day by day are doing battle with the winds of heaven, and with the waves of the ocean, where shall we find a more suitable site for the dwelling of their orphan children than here, in the immediate neighborhood of the port from which they sailed, and almost within sight of the deep blue on which they have made their home, and under which so many of them find a grave ? To whom, also, can we look for the support of this institution, more appropriately, than to those whose fortunes have been reared on the enterprise of our seamen ? If we look around us here, and ask what has lined our river with these matchless docks ? what has covered the site of our town with its streets and warehouses and stores ? what has raised the value of our land ?—what, in a word, sustains the whole community of which we form a part ?—we must answer, our commerce. But who have made our commerce if not our sailors ? Hence, if there should be a specialty in the benevolence of Liverpool, that specialty should undoubtedly be in favor of our sailors. We should make them feel that, in our estimation, our prosperity is inseparably associated with their welfare. So far from looking down upon them, and acting as if we thought they were a burden and a reproach to us, we ought to look up to them, and let them feel that they are our glory and our pride. We should do what we can to promote their comfort when they are afloat, and to protect them from land-sharks and sharpers when they are on shore; we should prepare for them an asylum, when their sea-going days are over, that they may spend in comfort their closing years, for that in my judgment, is as urgently needed just now as almost anything else; and when by accident, or storm,

or other casualty, they are removed from earth, we should make their children our peculiar care. If, then, the people of Liverpool desire to do a kindness which shall be most appropriate as an expression of gratitude to our seamen; if they wish to bestow their charity where imposture is impossible, and where their help shall be effectual in teaching others to help themselves—above all, if they have any ambition to show their appreciation of the gallantry, the self-sacrifice, the heroism, and the generosity of our British sailors, let them subscribe to this noble institution.—(Loud applause.) But I cannot conclude without making a yet higher appeal. We have inaugurated this building most fittingly to-day by prayer; it cannot therefore be out of place for me to remind you that orphans are specially designated by God as the objects of his care. They are cast, to use the beautiful words of Edward Irving, "on the fatherhood of God." Therefore, let me add, they ought to be provided for by all God's children. He asks us to show, by doing kindness to them, our gratitude to Him for the benefits which He has conferred on us. Surely He will not ask in vain. You know the touching story of the German boy in one of the educational hospitals for which Germany is famous. The night was tempestuous, and the children were sitting down to supper. The superintendent repeated the usual grace—"Come, Lord Jesus, and be our feast at this time;" when a little boy looked up and said, "You always ask the Lord to come; why does he never come? Will he really come?" "Oh, yes," replied the teacher, "he will come." "Then," said the boy, "I will set a chair for him to-night, to be ready if he comes." Shortly after a knock was heard at the door, and a poor man let in, all dripping with wet and famishing with hunger. They tended him with care, and led him at length to the vacant seat placed by the child. This opened the boy's eyes to the whole truth, and he said, "Teacher, I see it now: the Lord Jesus was not able to come himself and He sent this poor man in His place. Isn't that it?" "Yes," replied the teacher, "that is it." As that little boy provided for Christ a vacant chair, so we to-day have begun to build Him a house,—for this shall be a true *Hotel Dieu*—a house of God—as really as the place wherein we meet for public worship,—and when the Lord cannot come to dwell in it with His visible glory, but sends these orphan children as His representatives, shall not we, who call ourselves by His name, receive them, and feed them, and clothe them, and house them, and educate them for His sake, looking for our reward in the day when He will say, "Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of one of these my children, ye did it unto me."—(Loud applause.)