

January 5<sup>th</sup>

### Memory verse

Therefore **if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.** 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Information about this text can be found in the lesson for 3<sup>rd</sup> January.

Two brave men feature in today's lesson both of whom were responsible for the safety at sea of many men.

### A heroic story to read and some map work<sup>1</sup>



Have you heard of Sir William Hillary, who died on January 5<sup>th</sup> 1847? He was a rich Englishman who had travelled in many parts of the world and was very fond of the sea. In 1808 he went to live with his wife in the Isle of Man.

They took a house in Douglas, overlooking the Irish Sea in Douglas Bay. Every winter he would watch ships being battered by storms in the bay and he often spent the night trying to save people from the wrecks. For every life saved, many were lost, and Hillary decided that something must be done to make life-saving more effective.

First they must have better lifeboats. The boats they were using were not strong enough and could easily be overturned in high seas.

Then he realised that even when Douglas Bay was made safer, there would still be miles and miles of coast-line in the British Isles without any provision for life-saving. The only way to meet the challenge of the storms was the setting up of a chain of lifeboat stations all round the coast, each with a specially built life-saving craft.

This was a big job and would take a lot of money. So Hillary had printed a booklet, *Appeal to the British Nation*, in which he set out the facts and asked people to help start an institution devoted to saving lives and property from shipwreck.

A meeting was held attended by the Archbishop of Canterbury and many important people. They formed a society that later became known as "The Royal National Lifeboat Institution" and decided that medals should be given to lifeboatmen for courageous deeds.

The money came pouring in and twelve lifeboat stations were opened in the Institution's first year. Then people began to forget about the work and subscriptions dropped lower and lower. There was no money left for new lifeboats and lifeboat stations.

A few privately owned lifeboats still operated round the coasts, and one day in 1849 one of these turned over in a bad storm. Twenty of her crew of twenty-four were drowned.

This tragedy shocked the nation and reminded them of the Institution. From that day the work of lifeboatmen has been well-supported by the public and 142,700 lives had been saved by 2021.

Back in the Isle of Man, Sir William organised a special lifeboat association and four lifeboat stations were set up in the first six years.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Owen, Evan, *What Happened Today?* Book 1 available on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com/> Image: RNLI, CC BY 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons.

Often, when the seas were running high and a ship was on the rocks, he went out himself in the Douglas lifeboat, and won three gold medals for his brave rescue work. In one rescue attempt he was badly injured but he carried on for two more years before making his last voyage in a lifeboat at the age of sixty-three.

The RNLI that Hillary founded still does great work today.<sup>2</sup> Look out for the lifeboat station whenever you are at the seaside.



### Learn some poetry – and store your mind

Today marks the death of Sir Earnest Shackleton (1874-1922). There is more to come about this intrepid explorer on 16<sup>th</sup> January and 12<sup>th</sup> June so for today we will just look at one perhaps unusual aspect of his character – or was it so unusual? Below is an extract from *My Table Cloths: A Few Reminiscences* by Mrs. Alec-Tweedie, f.r.g.s.<sup>3</sup> (Can you find out what f.r.g.s. stands for?). You can see Shackleton's wife in the picture below.

Do poetry and exploration often go together, or is Ernest Shackleton an exception? Anyway, his love of verse is immense, and he can quote thousands of lines. Speaking on the subject once his wife said, “The love of poetry is so strong in my husband that it gives him a certain idealism which, combined with indomitable force, makes him long to wrestle with nature in her hardest moods.” He has written some verses himself and, being blessed with a wonderful memory can while away hours on the ship's bridge by repeating poetry to himself. The story goes that for several mornings in the cold and early hours of dawn he had been regaling a superior officer with different stanzas. On the fourth morning he began again, asking: “Do you know Edgar Allan Poe's 'Thou art all that to me, love—a green isle, etc.’” when the officer burst out with: “My word! Shackleton, haven't you dried up yet?”

In Ireland Shackleton led an out-of-door life, and one of his exploits as a child was the cause of much alarm to a servant maid. Hearing that if one dug through the world one would come out in Australia, he proceeded to make a tunnel, which he seems to have driven some distance, not so much downwards as a little way under the surface. It chanced that he chose a spot near a cabbage patch, and the servant, who had gone to fetch some cabbages, to her horror found herself sinking into the ground, while from close by emerged an irate child half-covered with earth, scolding the frightened maid for destroying his tunnel....

When Shackleton was a boy of about sixteen he had a vivid dream, in which all the... early explorers seemed to pass before him, and he wrote a poem on the incident. He had read endless books on travel and was steeped in the spirit of adventure—his journey with Captain Scott gave him a magnificent chance. Shackleton was first heard of as the discoverer of the South Magnetic Pole, and he also ascended Mount Erebus, the most smothering volcano in the world, rumbling with heat and flame amid a land of ice and eternal snow. Lady Shackleton is not a sculptor like Lady Scott, but she is a perfectly delightful woman, a splendid wife and indefatigable mother.



<sup>2</sup> More on life boats in the lessons for 30<sup>th</sup> January and 20<sup>th</sup> May.

<sup>3</sup> Edited extract. Published New York 1916. We have looked at her amazing tablecloths in the lesson for 1<sup>st</sup> January (yet to come).



Storing your mind with good things is a wise thing to do. If you do it now you will be able to draw on those stores later in life. Shackleton is a very good example in this respect. If you have a poetry anthology, get it out now and find something to learn. See if you can keep up this good work and learn a poem every month this year. Check your stores from time to time too! Just as a good housewife will go over her stocks of provisions to make sure nothing has gone off, you need to make sure you can still remember the

things you have learned and brush up on anything that has gone rusty. January is a good month for organising a plan of action for memorisation. See the lesson for March 2<sup>nd</sup> for information about a long poem that every school child in Hungary has to learn!

Maybe you could arrange a monthly poetry session in the family when everyone repeats something they have learned.

Even more important than memorising general poetry is the memorisation of Scripture.<sup>4</sup> Memorising longer passages of Scripture, such as whole chapters, is actually easier than memorising single isolated verses. The logic of the passage helps you move forward, providing a link for your mind to grasp. In days gone by people would memorise whole books of the Bible. Martin Luther, for instance is believed to have memorised *the whole Bible*<sup>5</sup> and he was not unique. If you would like to use flashcards to help you memorise more effectively, have a look at the lesson for 22<sup>nd</sup> August.

There is a whole poetry book in the Bible, the book of Psalms. Many Psalms are idea for memorisation and it used to be common practice for children in school to be set the task of learning at least Psalm 23. If you don't know where to start your memorisation programme that would be a good place.

Never be afraid that your mind will eventually fill up and so you will not be able to learn any more or overflow so that you will start to forget the things you first learned! Your brain is certainly not like a store cupboard in that respect: it will never be full. Your brain is more like a muscle which gets stronger and stronger with training and use. The more you commit to memory the more you will be able to remember.

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4 There is a good memorisation scheme for children available here:

[https://www.tbsbibles.org/members/group\\_content\\_view.asp?group=228095&id=865881](https://www.tbsbibles.org/members/group_content_view.asp?group=228095&id=865881)

5 See the lesson for July 16<sup>th</sup>.