

## HIS CHRISTMAS TIDE.

The storm came down like a fiend athirst,  
Straight out of the North, and mad with snow,  
With a Christmas-eve on the Fundy Bay,  
Not many winters ago.

Ha! the Storm King laughed, and his breath was  
chill,  
As chill as death when the blood moves slow;  
With his fingers of steel he smote on the air,  
And his heel plunged deep in the foam below.

In his cursed strength thus the "monster" wrought,  
Till the Heaven was dead in the maddened hurl,  
The brat and the twist of its pitiless shroud,  
Was dead, wild-wrapped in the snow-wreath's whirl.

While below was the rush of the straining seas,  
As they heaved and plunged 'neath the stinging  
scourge,  
And their strife waxed white in the hiss and seethe  
Against the dead Heaven, a prayerless dirge.

And cold it grew as the night shut down,  
The spume was swept from the sea like chaff,  
In the darkness the foam-heads gathered and  
gleamed,—  
The breath of lost spirits the greedy seas quaff.

The winds went wild with the scud and the sleet,  
How they cram'd their breasts with the bitter  
freight!  
Out into the night they swirled and snarled,  
And the home of the sea-bird desolate.

"May the Galilee Saviour have keeping of those  
Who to-night sail the Bay," the fisher-folk said,  
While the children half-hushed at the snow-demon's  
rage,  
With a prayer for old Santa Claus clung closer in bed.

And little they guessed what the cruel waves held,  
'Twixt their foam-dripping jaws, all helpless and  
drear,  
How the "Queen of the Sea" snow-sheeted, alone,  
Fought hard for her life and her crew grown dear.

Caught fast on the Bay in the night and the storm,  
Why the clutch of the blas was a grip of steel,  
As it sang in the shroud and stiffened sail  
And yelled as it saw the blind stagger and reel.

And the seething seas in their frenzied lust  
Bore hard upon her their wet black weight,  
As they caught and flung her and caught again,  
And flung her wild in their cringing hate.

"'Tis Christmas-tide and our feast is spread,"  
Leered the white-cowled fiends in their savage glee,—  
"Perchance we'll have guests to share our board,  
And we'll drink to their pride,—'The Queen of the  
Sea.'"

Ah, well could they laugh, those reeking seas,  
For little recked they of the loss and the pain,  
As they buried her deep in their bosoms cold,  
Or swept her deck with the icy rain

That clung where it fell, and heavier grew,  
And folded the "Queen" in a queenly white,—  
A phantom ship that the storm hath wrought,  
Or a tale that is told ere the morning light.

"Could we keep deep water under our keel,"  
The words came stiff from the skipper's lip  
As he stood with his back to the scuttling snow  
And steady the wheel 'neath his iron grip,

"We'd laugh at the storm though 'tis cold to laugh,  
And hail the morn as did Mary of old."  
The eddying squall shut thicker down  
Where the lantern's gleam struggled out in the cold.

"But in a hole like this the chance goes hard,  
For down to leeward the breakers wait,"  
And he swept from his cheek the sea's white breath  
With a half-muttered prayer for the "dear ones,"  
sake.

O, on came the storm, and wilder grew,  
Through the snow-swept night the "Queen" back  
bore,  
Her bridal trappings now gathered, now torn,  
The bridegroom keeps watch 'long the hungry shore.

"'Twill not be long ere these two wed,  
The Queen whom we know, and Death whom we  
guess,"—  
The snow-wraiths shrieked as they circled round  
And wreathed in their fingers the stricken bride's  
dress.

Ah, the truth came cold to the steerman's breast,  
Though a braver man never scanned a deck,  
With a shudder he thought of the strangling surge,  
The black-mouthed rocks, the merciless wreck.

But his teeth closed hard to the sickening pain,  
To the whistling sleet that stole the breath,—  
A grim-featured Charon he looked, as he stood,  
'Twas only a man face to face with death.

Then his voice rang out above the storm,—  
"Look alive there, mates, while yet ye may,