

and later the old man received, privately, the Blessed Sacrament of Holy Communion. In that humble home the joys of a Christmastide were great; for their action had not been unseen by the Giver of Peace, who found no room in the inn, but who said, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto Me."—*By the Rev. Canon Low, M.A., in The Scottish Standard Bearer.*

SANTA CLAUS IN THE CABIN OF THE JOLLY.

"**Y**OU coming back by Christmas, grandpa?"

"Don't know, boy—don't know! Folks that work for a livin' can't 'spect to think of Christmas and all them things!" said Skipper Billy Anderson of the herring-boat, the Jolly, bustling about the wharf, and attending to the very last duties prior to sailing.

Stanley looked puzzled and disappointed. He bit his lip, and his large dark eyes were shaded still darker with a cloud of regret. His fingers clutching a slip of folded paper, kept working nervously.

"Wish—you—would—c-come to Christmas, grandpa!" he said, hesitatingly.

"Well, well, I don't know!" and Skipper Billy, as he spoke proceeded to coil a rope, roll a water-cask, lift a kit, and grab an oar, all at the same time.

The boy appreciated the fact that his grandfather was very busy, and timidly saying:—"P'r'aps you'll take this! Good-by!" he thrust the slip of paper into Skipper Billy's jacket pocket.

"Good-by!" growled the bustling Skipper Billy, fluttering over water-cask and rope, kit and oar.

Stanley went up the wharf slowly and sorrowfully.

When the Jolly had cast off her last rope, lifted her canvas, and sped for the open sea, then Skipper Billy went down into the cabin of the herring-boat to take what he called "a breath." It was a small coop where skipper and crew bunked at night and ate by day. It had a stove, and over its grate of glowing coals bent Tim Lawler, who was frying fish in a big frying-pan.

"Well," thought the Skipper, squatting down on a much whittled bench, "I b'lieve everything is attended to, and I can take a breath. Hold! What's this in my pocket?"

He pulled out Stanley's crumpled paper, and, opening it, began to read in a suppressed tone:

"May—God—keep you,—grandpa,—and

bring—you home—in time for Christmas. Oh! I left out one word afore grandpa. It is 'd-dear.' Oh, yes! It is 'dear grandpa.'"

"What say, Skipper?" asked Tim Lawler.

"Oh,—nothin', Tim, nothin'! That fish smells good."

"Wall, yes!" replied Tim, wrapped in a cloud of smoke that the funnel could not accommodate.

"You—you b'lieve in Santa Claus, Tim?"

"Wall, it,—it's a pleasant fancy. Of course, 'tain't real."

"Heathen, Tim, heathen! I don't know 'bout so much Christmasin."

Tim went on frying, the Skipper went on thinking.

That crushed slip of paper! Somehow it affected wonderfully Skipper Billy. He thought about his grandchild Stanley.

"Why, I giv the—the—child that name," he reflected. "Han'sum, and I picked it out like a posy! And Stanley's mother, my darter Jane,—she was a good gal. She loved Christmas,—Why, she has been dead ten years, yes, she loved Christmas. She did love to trim up the old church and make it look pearty. She—she sang too. Voice like a bobberlink! And she loved to give things away Christmas time. Dear gal!"

The tears gathered in his eyes.

"Sick, Skipper?" asked Tim, who saw his agitation.

"Let this smoke out!" growled the Skipper.

"Got in yer eyes? Too bad!"

"Humph!" grunted the Skipper, and went on thinking. Tim went on frying.

"Santa Claus a heathen?" reflected the Skipper. The heathen's me! Didn't give that boy decent attention. Dear me! I git real hard. 'God bless dear grandpa!' I ain't wuth blessin', so wrapped up in this 'ere fishin'! I don't keep half decent. I'm gittin' old too. Ought to be ashamed of myself! Don't care about Christmas! And my darter Jane too! Dear gal!"

The tears were flowing out of their hidden wells again.

Tim and his cloud of smoke had gone up through the open cabin door like an angel in his aureole heaven-ward, so that the Skipper of the Jolly could manifest his weakness without fear of observation. And as he continued his meditation, resolving to be home by Christmas, resolving to bring with him a good-sized bundle of gifts if he could pick them up in some seaport town, the Skipper of the Jolly continued to change more and more.

His eyes grew very kindly. His face flushed with generous excitement. A genial smile spread over his features, rimmed by his bushy gray hair and thick gray beard. He patted his fat knee fondly, as if he fancied he was caressing Stanley's round chubby head.