

Our Young Folk.

The Glad Tidings of Bethlehem.

BY HETTA LORD HAYES WARD, IN "INDEPENDENT."

THE night was still, the hillside cold,
Men slept; the year was waxing old.

The woolly sheep lay still and white,
The purple sky with stars shone bright.

The shepherds lay upon the ground,
About their heads their mantles wound.

All fast asleep beside their sheep,
It was a blessed night for sleep:

For hosts of angels watched and kept
Their vigils while the shepherds slept.

At midnight came a wondrous light,
The shepherds started in affright,

Rose up with haste, tho' sore afraid:
"Fear not," the holy angel said,

"Behold I bring you tidings good,"
(Down knelt the shepherds where they stood.)

"Great joy this day to all I bring,
For unto you is born a King;

"In David's city, Bethlehem,
Is born, this night, of David's stem

"A Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord,
As was foretold in Holy Word.

"And this to you a sign shall be:
The heavenly babe you there shall see

"In homely swaddling clothes arrayed,
And rudely in a manger laid."

Then suddenly a multitude,
A heavenly host about them stood,

And praising God with joy they cry,
"All glory be to God Most High!"

"Good-will to men, and peace on earth,"
'Twas thus they sang our Saviour's birth.

"Good-will to all good willing men!"
Till Christ, our Lord, shall come again.

We, too, with all the heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

—Newark, N.J.

Santa Claus in the Cabin of the Jolly.

"YOU 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, hustling 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—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'raps 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.

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, "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.

"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 Christasin."

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. 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.

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.

"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 gitting old, too. Ought to be ashamed of myself! Don't care about Christmas!"

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

"Yes, I must give all I can," he murmured. "Hunt up some poor folks, too!"

He became the picture of a most genial, fatherly, princely benefactor. Why, looking at him, one might have asked:

"Has magic come into the cabin of the herring-boat, and changed its rugged-faced skipper into a Santa Claus?"

It was the night before Christmas. It was snowing hard. The deck of the Jolly was white with flakes. The skipper was at the helm anxiously wondering where home might be. A lantern in the rigging tried to look cheerful, but it was a grim effort.

Suddenly Skipper Billy turned to Tim Lawler, who, cook by day, was mariner by night.

"Tim!"

"What, Skipper Billy?"

"I see a suthin'!"

"Whar?"

"A sort of light place over thar!"

"Why, skipper, that is a suthin'! Steer for it!"

The light place grew bigger, brighter.

The water was not so rough.

"Why, Tim, we are gettin' into some kind of port. And if that black thing to wind'ard don't look like 'Marm Cheesley's Rock' a-comin' 'tween us and the light!"

"She does, Bill!" shouted Tim, joyfully.

"Hoorah! We're gittin' into port!"

And in a few minutes a boy came running down a wharf, exclaiming:

"Oh, grandpa! That you? So glad! You see my fire I built?"

"Yes, that fetched us in. Yes, thank God, Stanley's Santa Claus has got home in season!"

It was a famous Christmas.

Among those at church, sitting near a bower of fir-trees, looking like a Santa Claus just arrived, sat the round-faced, ruddy-cheeked, grey-haired skipper, with his grandson, Stanley, his heart full of thanks to God.—Rev. E. A. Rand.