THE VACANT SEAT.

A CHRISTMAS STORY

It was on the morning of the day before Christmas. Most of the people who lived in the little hamlet of St. Anne's were looking forward with joyous anticipations to the morrow, but not all. In the cot of Arkwright, the pilot, there was sadness instead of joy, and the looking forward to the Christmas time was saddest still.

Sitting down to the table, on this morning before Christmas, were Mrs Arkwright and three children, the wife and children of the pilot. The wife was a woman of five and forty, yet little could one by, though care and sorrow had drawn deep furrows upon her [illegible] Philip, of 19, and the youngest a boy of 8. And at the table were two vacant seats, one at each side of the wife and mother, on the right of the head. And these were why they were vacant.

Six years ago there had been an echo in the home circle, the [illegible] boy, named Edward. At the age of 16 he had been able to take his father's place at the helm of incoming or outgoing vessels, and had been looked upon by the hardy pilots and fishermen of St. Anne's as a lad of more than usual promise. Strong and manful for his age, and handsome and good, he had been not only the pride and joy of his parents, but the pride of the hamlet. One day, six years ago, Edward went out in charge of a vessel bound for Prospect, taking with him only a light boy in which to return when he should have piloted his charge to vessel bound. A sudden and unlooked for storm arose, and Edward came not back. It was said, by those who understood such matters, that he must have left the vessel before the coming of the storm. Three days afterward the wreck of his dory was picked up outside the Black rocks, and there was no more waiting for the lad out.

Following a custom which their fathers had brought with them from another land, Edward's seat at the frugal board had been from that time left vacant. Morning, noon and night the hale which the brave youth had once occupied was set in its accustomed place, and perhaps they, in their simple faith, imagined that the spirit of the departed might some times keep them company, and witness their sorrow, and know, of a verity, how much and how truly they loved him.

That seat had been at the right of the head, and now now another seat was vacant. During the autumn had passed the husband and father had been called up in the sea, and he from which he had sought to fill the mother's place, years stood [illegible] the other Sunday [illegible] upon the humble [illegible] Mary, of 15, and the youngest a boy of 8. And at the table were two vacant seats, one at each side of the wife and mother, on the right of the head. And these were why they were vacant.

Six years ago there had been an echo in the home circle, the [illegible] boy, named Edward. At the age of 16 he had been able to take his father's place at the helm of incoming or outgoing vessels, and had been looked upon by the hardy pilots and fishermen of St. Anne's as a lad of more than usual promise. Strong and manful for his age, and handsome and good, he had been not only the pride and joy of his parents, but the pride of the hamlet. One day, six years ago, Edward went out in charge of a vessel bound for Prospect, taking with him only a light boy in which to return when he should have piloted his charge to vessel bound. A sudden and unlooked for storm arose, and Edward came not back. It was said, by those who understood such matters, that he must have left the vessel before the coming of the storm. Three days afterward the wreck of his dory was picked up outside the Black rocks, and there was no more waiting for the lad out.

Following a custom which their fathers had brought with them from another land, Edward's seat at the frugal board had been from that time left vacant. Morning, noon and night the hale which the brave youth had once occupied was set in its accustomed place, and perhaps they, in their simple faith, imagined that the spirit of the departed might some times keep them company, and witness their sorrow, and know, of a verity, how much and how truly they loved him.

That seat had been at the right of the head, and now now another seat was vacant. During the autumn had passed the husband and father,