

Christmas at Sea

Sting

All day we fought the tides between the North
Head and the South,
All day we hauled the frozen sheets to scape the
storm's wet mouth,
All day as cold as charity, in bitter pain and
dread,
For very life and nature we tacked from head
to head.
We gave the South a wider berth, for there the
tide-race roared;
But every tack we made we brought the North
Head close aboard:
We saw the cliffs and houses and the breakers
running high,
And the coastguard in his garden, his glass
against his eye.
The frost was on the village roofs as white as
ocean foam;
The good red fires were burning bright in every
'long-shore home;
The windows sparkled clear and the chimneys
volleyed out;
And I vow we sniffed the victuals as the vessel
went about.
The bells upon the church were rung with a
mighty jovial cheer;
For it's just that I should tell you how
(of all days in the year)
This day of our adversity was blessed Christmas
morn,
And the house above the coastguard's was the
house where I was born.
And well I knew the talk they had, the talk that
was of me,
Of the shadow on the household and the son that
went to sea;
And, oh, the wicked fool I seemed, in every kind
of way,
To be here and hauling frozen ropes on blessed
Christmas Day.