



"TAMSINE :"
A TALE OF THE SEA.

By GEORGINA GOLLOCK.

A BOLD headland jutting out into the sea, a sheltered bay between us and it, a strongly built fishing pier in the foreground, amid a cluster of short, clumsy spars, a white-sailed vessel standing out to sea, and God's glorious sunshine flooding in a golden pathway across the rippling tide. Such was the little quiet fishing village on our southern coast.

You were there, perhaps, for a few brief weeks in Autumn, when the little town, just beyond the headland, fairly overflowed its limits, and drove some of its surplus visitors to seek humbler accommodation in the village homes. You thought that fishing village a pretty spot, but wofully dull and prosaic,—no promenade, no band, not even a strolling minstrel! Perhaps, as you leaned over the pier, and gazed into the limpid water, watching the long, graceful seaweeds rocked to and fro by the gentle waves, you thought that the life in the village was as calm and as plodding as the slow rhythmic movement of the "flowers of the sea," and wondered how any one could exist, all the year round, in such a stupid spot. Yet the dullness was not in the village, but in you. There was "life" enough, if you had but thought it worth your notice, and "plenty to see," if you had not been lacking in sight. Stay! I can prove my words. You could not fail to notice that tall, dark-haired girl, with strongly marked features, and lithe, active frame, who brought fresh fish to your lodgings each morning, and guided visitors to the famous caves. Listen awhile, and I will

tell you the story of Tamsine, and show you that the rough, hard training of what you call a dull life, can so mould and shape a woman, as to make her

both noble and brave.

Tamsine's mother was an inland girl, of fair Saxon race—a gentle, winning creature, with little vigour of mind or body—a strange contrast to her tall, dark, handsome husband, who was strong, almost to sternness. Tamsine was an only child, for, the Winter after her birth, the young mother pined and died, the chill exposure of seaside life ill suiting her fragile frame. The little one had to grow as best she could, without a mother's care; but she was a hardy, healthy child, and throve in spite of adverse surroundings. Combined with her father's robust constitution, Tamsine inherited her mother's quiet, gentle ways, and instinctively held aloof from the rougher village children. A pretty sight it was, as she grew to be a dark, winsome little maid, to see the stalwart father walking along the beach, one huge, labour-hardened hand grasped by the baby fingers, while the baby voice lisped, again and again, "I be father's little maid, I be."

"Father's little maid" she truly was. From early dawn to dusk, the little one was ever by his side, except when he launched into the deep, to ply his trade, and even then she would sit and watch the waves in calm expectancy, that "father would not be long from his little maid." The wives of the fisher-folk gave her many a kindly word, or a bit of dinner, now and then, but Tamsine seemed only to live when her father was near; at other times she waited. Her little heart was sealed, and only the touch of love could unlock the door. Of earthly love she had none, except her father's, and of the heavenly love she had never heard. Her father—"Big Ben" the sailors called him—was a steady, straightforward man, but he knew little, and thought less, of his Bible, and to him the Sabbath was a day to lounge and idle, if no tempting prospects of a good haul led him to take out his nets. He could not teach his child to pray, for he never prayed himself. There was a pretty church on the headland, where service was held once a week, but the minister only came over for an hour or two, and had little time to look after those who did not seek his ministrations. Once, indeed, Tamsine had followed some other children to church, but the heat and quiet—used as she was to the fresh salt breezes—soon lulled her to sleep, and her fright at awakening in a lonely, empty building was so great, that never again did she venture within the doors.

Poor little woman! was there no one in all God's universe to care for her soul? Have you ever thought of that, in your seaside trips, as you glanced admiringly at the picturesque fisher children on the beach,—ever remembered that they, too, have souls, and that for them you—yes, you—will have to give account?

The Master wanted this little one to love Him, so He sent His message with power. He will not let one of His chosen be lost; it is we who lose the stars for our crown, the word "Well done" from the blessed lips.

The strand at the town, beyond the beach, was too noisy for our work among the children; we found we needed quieter quarters for our service; so one day we all walked across to the fishing village—a happy band of workers and children—and gathered our little crowd round us on the beach. Tamsine did not come; she seldom went with the other children; but she sat on the end of the pier, and gazed with great brown eyes across the sunlit waves. One of our workers saw her, and sent up a prayer of faith, that that little soul might be won for Jesus that very day. The eight-year-old child brightened quickly at the first kind word, and before long, she and her friend were hand in hand together. As I looked up from the midst of our group on the sands, I could see the intenceness of the eager little face, as the story of the Cross fell for the first time on her ears. Not a doubt or hesitation had the child that Jesus loved her, and wanted her to love Him; He had died because He loved her, and He was even then close beside her, seeking her heart—that was the message, simply given, and as simply received. The child had found Someone to love, besides her father.

Day by day she came to us on the sands, shyness forgotten, all fear left behind. Her father passed, one day, as she questioned us, and said, "Don't believe half they tell you, Tamsine."

The child looked up, all her faith in her face, and replied, "Oh, father, hush! He'll hear you."

Not a word did he say to shake her faith, after that.

The bright summer days changed to autumn, and chilly evenings drove her new friends away; but they left with the girl what had transformed her life. No longer was she a dreamy, solitary child, vague and purposeless; she had found a motive power—the presence of the Saviour in her heart. We arranged that she should be taught to read and write, that winter; and as season after season passed, bringing us our happy holiday work, we saw Tamsine growing in health and beauty, both of soul and body, a fresh, true-hearted, winsome girl.

Plenty of work—what you would call drudgery—filled every moment, from dawn to dusk. The cottage, rude and small though it was, needed care and time; the patch of garden running up the cliff behind the house, needed tending at all seasons; there were nets to mend, and fish to sell, and endless odd jobs to be done on the sea-shore, besides the fulfilment of her promise to spend a certain time, each day, in reading and writing, that she might improve. There was no breach between Tamsine and the father she loved so well. As years passed on, they seemed to cling more closely together; only sometimes the girl would look at him with earnest, yearning eyes, that told of her longing that the truest joy might be his.

Tamsine's life was one round of work, dull, monotonous, but *not* purposeless. The God who moulds your life and mine was moulding hers, and He knew that one day He would need the girl whom He was now training by this slow and patient process.

One year, at last, the discipline of monotony was succeeded by the discipline of want. The Winter was hard and stormy, fishing was scarcely possible at all and the fisher folk knew the pangs of hunger more than once. "Big Ben" suffered above the others, for his net was badly torn, and rendered almost useless, in a sudden storm, and had to lie by for repair. Tamsine faced her troubles bravely.

"Never mind, father," said she. "We shall have a grand Summer, please God, and I shall earn doubly among the visitors on the beach."

She was wont to add quite a nice sum to her father's earnings, through the summer months, for she was well known on the beach; her dark, striking face ensured notice, and her modest, quiet ways gained respect. But the stormy Winter was followed by a sultry Summer, during which low fever haunted the village homes. Not a lodging was let, and visitors were chary of even entering the caverns near the infected spot.