

Tamsine earned not a tenth of her usual summer income, and for a time things were indeed dark with her. Her father, kept from his wonted work by the loss of his net, grew moody and more and more silent than before; day by day he sat and brooded by the fire, till the fever laid its hand upon him, and brought him to death's door.

Night after night, week after week, Tamsine watched beside him, fearless for herself, and saving every penny that should have bought her food, to get little dainties for the sick man. When he dozed in fitful fever-sleep, on went the busy fingers

at the toil-some netting, for every shilling, nay, every penny, was of value now, in the little home. All the village rang with tales of Tamsine's devotion, and many were the offers of help which she received.

"If mother were here, she and I would nurse him," she said with quivering lips; "but she's gone, so I must fill her place and mine. Father can't bear me out of his sight."

One night the girl's strength was almost gone. A long, weary day had been preceded by a sleepless night, and as the evening closed in, the girl felt as if her burden were indeed too heavy for her to bear. Her father moaned restlessly, now and again, in his sleep, so she set the little window open wide, that what air there was might fan his aching brow. Sadly the girl gazed on the handsome face, so worn and wasted now, and an intense longing rose in her heart that peace—the peace of God—might come to his heart.

She fell on her knees by the bedside, and with the pale moonlight streaming on her upturned face, prayed aloud, as she had often prayed in secret before,—

"O God! Thou knowest what I want for him. Give him the joy of Thy salvation. Oh spare him to me, if it is Thy will; but I ask the other first. For Jesus' sake, Amen."

Feeble, simple words! Which of us would dare offer petitions to an earthly king in such lowly form? Yet these words of the fisher maid went straight to the footstool of the "King Immortal," and were heard and doubly answered.

Outside that window, in the silvery summer night, stood David Pryce, a fine young fellow, owner of the *Seabird*, the smartest and best fishing smack in the bay. He was no stranger to Tamsine, and of late their friendship had shown signs of ripening into something

deeper still. The village gossips nodded their heads, and said it was a grand match for a penniless girl like her, but not so thought David Pryce. "If ever I win her," said he, "I'll be the proudest man in the place; but I'm feared she's too good to think of such as me."

Tamsine would not let David help her in her time of trouble. She shrank from the thought of letting him know her need and utter poverty; but night by night, the last thing before he went to bed, he would walk slowly past her dwelling, to make sure that that, at least, was safe.

He had heard her prayer, and as he stepped past softly, he said to himself, "I wonder, would she pray for me like that? I need a word of prayer, if ever a man did."

"The darkest hour is that before the dawn." Slowly Tamsine's father grew better, and as cooler autumn weather came, the first bracing frosts saw him strolling feebly along the pier, leaning on his daughter's arm,

the shadow of his former self, but still a healthy man, with no tinge of disease.

Then came an offer from David Pryce, which changed the aspect of things. He could not sail the *Seabird* alone, he wanted a partner, and it would be a real kindness if an old, trained hand, like "Bi; Ben," would join him, and take a third of the profits. Thankfully the offer was accepted, and Tamsine's grateful glance repaid David for it all. Some weeks after, he had another offer to make, this time to Tamsine, not her father, and again the answer was one that pleased him well.

The storm-cloud had turned to sunshine. Tamsine was no less busy than before, but she rose earlier and worked harder, that she might have time to stand on the shore, while the fresh breeze ruffled her hair, watching for the *Seabird* round the point, or to speed to the beach, after a night haul, to see the silvery fish piled in great hampers, ready for to-morrow's sale.

An old pleasure boat, seldom used, lay on the beach, and Tamsine would oftentimes pull out to the headland, and sit on a rock-hewn seat at the point, doing some homely work, that she might watch the distant white speck on the blue ocean, that bore the two she loved so well across the deep. As the pretty *Seabird* passed the point on her homeward way, Tamsine would pull to her side, and getting on board, would tow the pleasure boat home behind the smack.

Winter had come round again,—a different Winter from the last. It seemed as if Tamsine's troubles were over, yet the full purpose of all those years of training had not yet appeared. A calm Winter it was at first, "good for fisher folk,"



Watching for the "Seabird," or to see the silvery fish, piled in hampers, after a night haul."