

Little Dorry, the Sea-Waif.

(Richard Dobson, in 'Michigan Advocate.')

Quite a number of years ago we made a visit to the now famous watering place on the Lancashire coast in old England, called Blackpool, and with several friends engaged a sailboat for a day's sail along the picturesque Lancashire coast. Our sailboat proved to be a stout, well-built fishing sloop, with an experienced sailor in charge. A good stiff breeze tipped Old Ocean with white caps, and our trim little sloop went scudding before the wind at a lively rate, and the entire party of men and women enjoyed the invigorating sensations peculiar to a sailing vessel on a sea voyage under a stiff breeze.

After running down the coast for many miles, one of the party said that he saw something that looked like a capsized boat off that point of land known as 'Black Rock point.' There was in our party a Methodist local preacher known simply as 'Tommy Atkins.' Tommy Atkins belonged to the New Connexion Methodists, and was known far and wide in the West Riding of Yorkshire as a real genuine Methodist preacher, full of power and of the Holy Ghost. He had keen eyes, and he said that he saw the object, and he believed that it was a capsized boat beating on the rocks.

Soon the skipper's attention was called to the object and he sustained the other keen-eyed landmen, and at once directed the course of the vessel toward the distant object. In a short time we rounded Black Rock point, and came close to the spot where a small sailboat was pounding upon the rocks bottom upward. There was a picturesque little cove just around the point of rocks inland into which the skipper ran his boat, and we all stepped to the shore. Strange as it may seem, the preacher was the first to perceive a queer-looking object upon the beach a little distance from where he had landed, and in a direct line from the foundered sailboat.

Duff, the youngest in our party, was the first to get up to the object, which now excited our curiosity, and what was our astonishment to find wrapped about by an old sail, which had no doubt served through many a stress of weather on some noble ship, and now was doing gallant duty in protecting from the elements the yet warm body of a little girl of wonderful beauty and sweetness, who seemed to be sleeping the last sleep of death, so still and quiet were the features and form of the beautiful little sea-waif.

The bronzed old captain came waddling and puffing entirely out of breath with his tramping in the soft wet sand of the sea-shore to get to the scene. But he was worth more than all the rest of us, when he got there, in efforts of resuscitation. His seafaring knowledge stood him in hand, for with the united efforts of the rest of us we were soon delighted to behold the most beautiful blue eyes open upon us in wonderment and surprise. Her long golden hair lay limp and dripping with salt sea water upon her now heaving bosom.

The first words that this little seawaif uttered were, 'Where is my mamma and papa?' It brought tears to every one to hear her. When we asked her what her name was, she said, 'Dorry, little Dorry.'

Tommy Atkins, the preacher, then said he would adopt the little sea-waif. 'Aye, and I will wait till she grows up to be a lady, and then I will marry her,' said Duff. 'Little Dorry shall some day be my bride, God being willing.'

No trace could be found of the bodies of the unfortunate parents of sweet little Dorry, who in their last paternal efforts to save their offspring, had succeeded in wrapping around her the old canvas which with the aid of wind and sea had thrown her high on the beach. The old captain urged us to betake ourselves to the boat at once, or it would be night ere we should arrive in Blackpool if we delayed any longer.

Our eager concern for little Dorry detracted much from our enjoying the return trip. When we arrived at Blackpool, we hastened to our lodging and the ladies of the party did their very best to make comfortable the beautiful sea-waif which the sea had cast into our hands. With consent of the authorities of Blackpool the good and noble Tommy Atkins took little Dorry home with him, Duff all the way home repeating his first promise that he would wait for little Dorry to grow up to be a fine lady, and then he would marry her and no other.

Time is ever on the wing. Years passed swiftly away. The incident on the picturesque Lancashire coast had become to us a far-off vision. One beautiful Sabbath evening we were slowly plodding alone the one crooked, straggling street of the village where resided Tommy Atkins. Years had passed since we had seen him, or the beautiful sea-waif that he had adopted under such strange circumstances. The sun was gilding the western heavens with his golden radiance. The hilltops were refulgent with the glory and glamor of our English sunset. There was a peace and a quietness which pervaded the atmosphere of the quaint old village, which was suddenly broken in upon by sweet melody from a chime of bells in the distant steeple of the old parish church.

As the old landmarks appeared, a vivid recollection of sweet little Dorry and her benefactor rose up. We thought of Dorry as she then was, and not as she would now appear after so many years. We thought that Dorry must still be small and quite young and pretty. Of course our old friend Tommy Atkins would only be a little older, but not changed much. Ah, there is the old cottage with its latticed windows. The red-tiled roof as of old. The mullioned doors and windows; the green hawthorn edge around the cottage dooryard.

But what can be going on in their cottage this quiet Sabbath evening? I see young people making their way into the cottage through the old-fashioned doorway. What can be going on there? 'Tis the time of day when the old preacher would most likely be miles away preaching the gospel at the evening service. Perhaps Dorry, little Dorry, is with him presiding at the organ where he is preaching. Shall we go in? Will we be recognized? As these thoughts came trooping through our mind, the door opened, and there stood our old friend of the long ago. There was mutual recognition. The quaint old figure, straight as an arrow, twinkling blue eyes, black hair now streaked with gray; withal a cheery, merry coun-

tenance and a hand ever ready to shake.

As we met and clasped hands I said, 'How is Dorry, little Dorry?' There was a shadow that flitted across his countenance and a tear stood in his eye as he drew me in. Ah! what a sight it was that met my astonished gaze. There, bolstered up in bed, lay Dorry; not little Dorry of the years ago, as I last saw her, but Dorry grown up to woman's estate, but wasted with that dread disease consumption. Around her were seated her Sunday-school class, which had come to pay the last token of respect and love to her blessed memory and life. It had been her wish that they should come that Sunday evening before the sun should set; for she had told them that she should never meet them again in class. There were the same beautiful golden tresses, the same sky-blue eyes, the same classic face, attenuated, wan and pale, yet withal beautiful and divine in its mold. And could this be the sprightly, vivacious little Dorry of so long ago?

When Tommy Atkins told her that here was a friend from America, who was with him when she was found, a sea-waif, apparently dead, on that picturesque Lancashire coast, and that I had come to see her, the tears welled up into her blue eyes, and then she said:

'Friend, I am now about to go on another journey, but 'tis not on stormy seas and dangerous rocky shores, but to a beautiful land where I shall meet my long lost mamma and papa; and there will be no wrecking, nor drowning, nor dying;' and her eyes sparkled with the divine light that radiated from her angelic face.

The last rays of the departing sun came slanting in through the latticed window, and lit up that beautiful countenance with a glory and a refulgence that was just heavenly and divine. Soon she asked to be bolstered up more in bed and then she said, 'I feel like singing, I am so happy.' There was all around that bed silent smiles of approval, while tears filled every eye; and then she began to sing a beautiful song, of which we now remember but one verse. 'Tis as follows:

'If this be death, I soon shall be
From every sin and sorrow free;
I shall the King of glory see;
All is well, all is well.'

It seemed like an angel's song from a far-off land. The sweet silvery voice grew fainter and fainter, until the last words of the song seemed to fade away like whispering echoes from the distant hilltops. The tongue grew silent, and in another moment she was gone. 'Twas a sad and pathetic tale indeed, as we soon learned.

Duff, whom we remember as saying that little Dorry should some day be his bride, had been true to his statement. He had grown to love and adore the 'little sea-waif.' As she grew up toward woman's estate, the hope grew stronger within him that she should be his bride. With this purpose in view, years before, he had left England for America with the intention of making his fortune, and then coming back for his bride, sweet Dorry, the sea-waif. Some time before Dorry died, word came that Duff had joined the American union army, and at the battle of Missionary Ridge had been found among the slain. So little Dorry the sea-waif, soon