

THE LITTLE GIRL'S SONG.

A MOST PATHETIC POEM BY SYDNEY DOBELL.

Do not mind my crying, papa,
I am not crying for pain.
Do not mind my shaking, papa,
I am not shaking with fear;
Though the wild, wild wind is hideous to hear,
And I see the snow and the rain.
When will you come back again,
Papa, papa?

Somebody else that you love, papa,
Somebody else that you dearly love
Is weary, like me, because you're away.
Sometimes I see her lips tremble and move,
And I seem to know what they're going to say;
And every day, and all the long day,
I long to cry, "Oh! mamma, mamma,
When will papa come back again?"
But before I can say it I see the pain
Creeping up on her white, white cheek.
As the sweet, sad sunshine creeps up the white wall.
And then I am sorry, and fear to speak;
And slowly the pain goes out of her cheek,
As the sad, sweet sunshine goes from the wall.
Oh! I wish I were grown up, wise and tall,
That I might throw my arms round her neck
And say, "Dear mamma, oh, what is it all
That I see and see and do not see
In your white, white face all the livelong day?"
But she hides her grief from a child like me.
When will you come back again,
Papa, papa?

Where were you going, papa, papa?
All this long while you have been on the sea?
When she looks as if she saw far away,
Is she thinking of you, and what does she see?
Are the white sails blowing,
And the blue men rowing,
And you standing on the high deck
Where we saw you stand till the ship grew grey,
And we watch'd and watch'd till the ship was a speck,
And the dark came first to you, far away?
I wish I could see what she can see,
But she hides her grief from a child like me.
When will you come back again,
Papa, papa?

Don't you remember, papa, papa,
How we used to sit by the fire, all three,
And she told me tales while I sat on her knee,
And heard the winter winds roar down the street,
And knock like men at the window-pane;
And the louder they roar'd, oh, it seemed more sweet
To be warm and warm as we used to be,
Sitting at night by the fire all three,
When will you come back again,
Papa, papa?

Papa, I like to sit by the fire,
Why does she sit far away in the cold?
If I had but somebody wise and old,
That every day I might cry and say,
"Is she changed, do you think, or do I forget?
Was she always as white as she is to-day?
Did she never carry her head up higher?"
Papa, papa, if I could but know!
Do you think her voice was always so low?

Did I always see what I seem to see
When I wake up at night and her pillow is wet?
You used to say her hair it was gold—
It looks like silver to me.
But still she tells me the same tale that she told,
Shedding the same songs when I sit on her knee,
And the house goes on as it went long ago,
When we lived together, all three.
Sometimes my heart seems to sink, papa,
And I feel as if I could be happy no more,
Is she changed, do you think, papa?
Or did I dream she was brighter before?

She makes me remember my snow-drop, papa,
That I forgot in thinking of you,
The sweetest snow-drop that ever I knew!
But I put it out of the sun and the rain:
It was green and white when I put it away,
It had one sweet bell and green leaves four;
It was green and white when I found it that day,
It had one pale bell and green leaves four;
But I was not glad of it any more.
Was it changed, do you think, papa?
Or did I dream it was brighter before?

Do not mind my crying, papa,
I am not crying for pain.
Do not mind my shaking, papa,
I am not shaking with fear,
Though the wild, wild wind is hideous to hear,
And I see the snow and the rain.
When will you come back again,
Papa, papa?

LITTLE ANGEL.

I.

I cannot tell how I fell in love with Lucy Arden. I do not think I fell in love at all; I just grew into that condition, and I have never outgrown the ailment. She went to New York every morning in "my train"—that is, in the seven-forty—and when I was fortunate enough to catch the five-thirty up-train in the afternoon I was sure to see her—that is, I hunted through the cars until I found her, and then secured a seat for myself in such a locality as would allow stolen glances occasionally at her pleasant countenance. She lived in Balden, two stations above mine, and she invariably occupied the same place, which was a single seat in a corner. She invariably bestowed her attention upon the scenery, and in the three or four months in which I was her travelling companion I never knew her to speak to any one except the conductor. She always carried a neat music-case of red morocco. When I looked at her, which was frequently, I peeped over the edge of my newspaper or through my fingers, lest she should catch me gazing at her and take offence. She grew upon me so rapidly that I was very far gone when I missed her one day.

You understand that I was so completely in the toils before I knew it that I shrank with increasing jealousy from attracting anybody's attention to the girl. I asked no questions about her. I saw "L.A." in gilt letters on her music-case, and that was all I knew about her. And I got to calling her Little Angel when I conversed with myself about her amid the cares of my business life or in the quiet of

my own room. Of course I imagined a dozen names that must fit her initials, but this seemed most appropriate.

On the third day of her non-appearance I took her accustomed seat in the corner, after satisfying myself that she was not on the train. When the conductor took my ticket to punch out the date he startled me by his remarks as he passed on. "So," he said, carelessly, "you have taken Miss Arden's seat, I see, Mr. Granger! Well, she is not likely to claim it. Tickets!" And he was gone.

All through the long day I thought of her, and wondered what might be involved in his words, "Not likely to claim it." Was she ill or dying? "Miss Arden"—Laura, Letitia or Lydia? no matter which. I should go mad if I did not satisfy my curiosity, now thoroughly aroused, and I made up my mind to find out all that could be found out by diligent investigation that very evening.

It was not much in the way of information. It was an awful weight of calamity in its possibilities.

Miss Arden was a music teacher; she gave lessons in New York. She had lived in Balden some months, boarding with an old widow, Mrs. Hunter, and had left the village a day or two ago, taking her trunk, which was checked to New York. Nobody knew her except Mrs. Hunter, and she knew very little. Miss Arden made no acquaintances, and she had just passed off the scene and would be entirely forgotten within a month.

You will please remember that I, Philip Granger, was thirty years old. None of your stupid boyish fancies about me! I was chief book-keeper in the enormous house of Pinch & Plugget, drawing a large salary and putting away a comfortable sum of money each year. I had ten bonds of the city of Cincinnati for \$1,000 each in the book-keeper's drawer in the big safe, and I had earned and saved every dollar myself. I did not spend any salary now-a-days. My revenue was \$730 from my coupons, and I had something over each year besides my salary. I did not indulge in rum or cigars; I had no relations that were dependent upon me, and every year made me richer. I cannot say I was a miser, but could never see where the fun began in squandering money. I did not deny myself anything I really desired, but I did not desire anything extravagant or wasteful. I may say my habits were exemplary and pretty firmly fixed. And when I had thought of matrimony at odd times, I had always postponed the consideration of the subject until I should have thirty bonds instead of ten.

Nevertheless, while I lay awake that night I decided that I would freely give my ten bonds to the man who would bring Little Angel back to her corner-seat.

I was very unhappy about the matter as the summer drew on, the girl was constantly in my mind, and I could not drive her out. Nay, I never thought of driving her out. I looked forward during the day to the quiet hours of the night, when I might think of her unmolested in the solitude of my room. I concocted various schemes, and abandoned them one after another, and at last the Fourth of July arrived.

On that glorious anniversary I bought a ticket for Balden, and took the first up-train. I had a great curiosity to see what the village was like. I knew several men who came down from Balden every day, but I never asked any of them about Little Angel. When I stepped from the train at the station I found three or four of these Baldenites equipped with fishing-tackle and taking the train as I quitted it for a day's sport still farther up the country, where there was a lake having a reputation for pickerel. These gentlemen no doubt concluded that I had come to Balden to enjoy a ramble in the woods, and I am certain that no one suspected of the desperate mental condition under which I was suffering. I was going to get some definite intelligence of the girl if it could be obtained by mortal prowess.

There was one long street. There were flags upon the poles, and there were very few people to be seen. Some pretty houses and well-kept grounds, but the window-blinds were all closed, and the village was taking a siesta. A drug store on a corner was open, and a boy was drinking soda-water at the counter. I wanted soda-water too.

"Can you tell me where Mrs. Hunter resides?" I asked as I slipped ten cents' worth of that delicate fluid.

"Yes, sir," responded the clerk; "it is the house with the broad porch. Willie, you are going that way, show the gentleman Mrs. Hunter's house."

I paid the dime and followed the boy out, trying to quiet the unusual thumping of my heart. I must make some sort of a story now. What should I say to Mrs. Hunter?

"This house," said Willie, trotting away and talking over his shoulder. "Bell don't ring; knock."

No backing out. So I opened the gate, went up the steps and knocked as boldly as I could. The door opened. Yes, Mrs. Hunter was in; would I please walk into the parlour?

II.

An old lady with a pleasant face and a soft voice invited me to sit by the window, where I might have the benefit of the breeze. Then she placidly waited for my opening address.

"My name is Granger, madam," I began. "I beg to apologize for my intrusion, but I cannot obtain the information I desire from any

one but you. My inquiries relate to Miss Arden, and I hoped you might be able to give me her present address." This was a very fair opening, and far better than I expected. My courage rose as I proceeded.

"I cannot tell you where Miss Arden is now," answered the widow. "She went to New York from here, but I think she was going out West immediately. I hope there is nothing—that is, no bad news from her friends?"

"Oh, no," I replied promptly—"nothing amiss, madam. I failed to learn the names of her New York acquaintances, and indeed, I was told that you could probably tell me more than any of them. She was some months with you," I continued rapidly, "and you have doubtless heard her refer to her friends or kindred in ordinary conversation."

"Never," said Mrs. Hunter. "She did not seem inclined to talk of her relations, and I did not feel warranted to make inquiries. May I ask if you are related to her?"

"No, madam," said I, getting slightly confused.

"As I do not know her address," continued the lady placidly, "I do not see how I can serve you; and, as you are not related to Miss Arden, I do not know how far I might answer your questions with propriety."

"I perceive you distrust me, madam," I said, rising and taking my hat, "and I am unfortunately unable to present my credentials at present—"

"You are mistaken, sir," interrupted the widow; "I am only cautious lest some chance word from me might do mischief. You may be a lawyer, for instance—"

"Heaven forbid, madam!" I answered fervently.

"Or you might represent some one whose interests were antagonistic to hers."

"Heaven forbid, madam!" I answered again. "No one lives who cherishes a more earnest desire to befriend Miss Arden than I."

"Pray be seated, Mr. Granger," said Mrs. Hunter quietly, "and let me know what you wish to learn from me."

"I only wished to learn where I can find her."

"For what purpose, may I ask?"

Here was a corner. What could I say? Suppose I told the truth! That would never do. Half a dozen men who travelled in my train lived in Balden, and probably they knew Mrs. Hunter. It would be a nice mess for me if these rude fellows should chaff me about my Little Angel. No, I could not make a clean breast of it just yet.

"I regret that I cannot answer that question, Mrs. Hunter," I answered, maintaining my composure with some difficulty.

"Suppose you leave your address with me," said the lady, after a minute's reflection, "and if I can discover Miss Arden's residence I can write to her saying you called and asked her permission—"

"Pardon me, madam," I said interrupting her; "I am sure you are Miss Arden's friend, and I am sure such a course would be fatal to my—my purposes and hopes. If you will kindly refer me to any gentleman in New York or elsewhere who knows this young lady I can easily satisfy him that these purposes and hopes do not involve harm or annoyance to Miss Arden."

"You prefer then," said Mrs. Hunter, "that I should not tell Miss Arden about this visit?"

"It would do no good, madam," I answered: "Miss Arden never heard my name."

"This is very mysterious," said the widow, with a perplexed expression. "This orphan girl—"

"Orphan!" I exclaimed eagerly.

"Yes. Did you not know that? This is still more unaccountable. Really, Mr. Granger, you must see that I can give you no information."

"I throw myself upon your mercy, madam," I said desperately, drawing my chair near her.

"I will tell you the exact truth. I have been going to New York every day for three months, and Miss Arden has travelled by the same train. I have never spoken to her, I never heard the sound of her voice, but when I missed her three or four days ago, and then learned from the conductor that she had gone, I discovered that my heart had gone with her. I have not slept three consecutive hours since she disappeared. I know next to nothing about Miss Arden, but I know she is the only woman on earth that I can ever love. She may be the promised wife of another man; she may never consent to look with favour upon me. All this must sound like insanity, but I cannot help it; I cannot be diverted from it. I am thirty years old, and this is my first experience. You can judge if it is a transient fancy. I asked for her address, intending to gain access to her by some means, and intending to marry her if I could. That is the whole story, and every word is true."

"You do not even know—"

"I know she is pure and good and lovely; I would risk my life upon that much. I did not know her name a week ago, and now I know she is the queen of my life. Now, madam, I beg you to grant me two favours: first, consider this candid avowal confidential; second, investigate me. Mr. Clasty lives here and he is frequently in New York. I am book-keeper for Pinch & Plugget. If Mr. Clasty can bring you a satisfactory report of me, I will venture to call on you again, if you will give me permission."

"Well," said Mrs. Hunter, "you have quite

taken my breath away. You are right; Lucy Arden is all you say. Leave your card, if you please, and I will see what I can do. I will keep your secret, anyhow. What a man! To think of going mad after a poor music-teacher at your age! Ha! ha! ha! There! don't get so red; I shall not tell. Good-morning."

III.

On my return to Norville—which is the name of my town—I felt far more comfortable, though I could not give any satisfactory reason for my contentment. It was a great relief to have somebody else acquainted with my passion. And Mrs. Hunter looked so kindly upon me while I told my story, and shook hands so cordially at parting, that I felt sure of her good wishes at least. I was not afraid of Mr. Clasty's investigations; Pinch & Plugget would give me a good character. Indeed, I felt tolerably secure of Mr. Clasty himself, as we were well acquainted, and as he sold me a house and its grounds at Norville some six months ago at a good price. I rented this pretty residence to a family recommended by Mr. Clasty, reserving two rooms for myself, and, like all other property-holders, I got about one per cent. interest on my outlay over taxes and insurance. It was pleasant to own a house upon which I could easily spend \$300 or \$400 annually in repairs and improvements.

The house was empty when I got there; everybody had gone to the Fourth of July. There was a Sunday-school picnic a mile out of town, and the town moved out to the picnic.

I got an arm-chair out on the porch, and was settling myself down to a thirty-page article in the *North American Review*, when a telegraph-boy opened the gate, walked up the steps and gave me a despatch. It was as follows:

"New York, July 4, 1873.

"MR. PHILIP GRANGER, Norville:

"Meet me at eight to-morrow morning at Erie depot, Chambers street, prepared for a week's absence.

"WILLIAM PINCH."

This was a decided change of programme. I had made a dozen plans, all relating to my search for Little Angel, and all centreing in New York. But there was no escape from this "week's absence." I knew Mr. Pinch's habits, and had taken many sudden trips, generally armed with a sharp stick for delinquent debtors. After a second reading of the message, I concluded to go to New York by the four o'clock train, get dinner up town and visit Mr. Pinch at his residence.

I found him in a state of excitement, and soon learned the cause of his disquietude. "Jones & Co. broke," he began.

"Jones of Rochester?" said I.

"The same. Confound him! First bills, and all domestics!"

"They owe us twenty thousand dollars," I observed.

"Nineteen thousand nine hundred and eighty-four," gasped Mr. Pinch, "and the odd eighty-four would cover all the profit. It is abominable! Never saw the colour of his money. Something radically wrong there, Granger. You must go off to-morrow and see about it!"

"Why not to-night, sir?" said I.

"Ha! certainly; I had not thought of that. You'll be first on the ground. Got any money about you?"

"Twenty or thirty dollars—plenty. I can draw on you if I need more. Please write down my instructions, and I will get off by the night express."

"No instructions needed," replied Mr. Pinch; "it is all in a nutshell. Get the money—all of it—or security; make no compromise. Better lose all than a part."

"You know, sir," I suggested, "that they can go into bankruptcy; and if they do—"

"You must prevent that, somehow. Keep your wits about you, and save the debt. Bankruptcy! That would be ruin to everybody concerned. My dear boy, you must certainly prevent that. Do the best you can. I shall not hamper you with instructions; only get the money or security. You can be liberal as you please as to time, but get security. Here, I must give you authority"; and he wrote rapidly on a sheet of note-paper as follows:

"New York, July 5, 1873.

"To whom it may concern:

"Mr. Philip Granger is authorized to settle our claim against Messrs. Jones & Co., of Rochester, N.Y.

"PINCH & PLUGGET."

"There!" he said, folding the note, "that is simple. You may meet some legal shark who is after the assignment. I give you *carte blanche*, you see; only no compromise. Get the money—any way you like that is honest and legal. If you bring me nineteen thousand nine hundred and eighty dollars, I'll charge the other four dollars to you, by jingo! Now you know my sentiments. First bill, and not two months old! Just think of that!"

"That reminds me of another little difficulty, Mr. Pinch," I observed quietly; "our bill is not quite due."

"I know that as well as you," he answered testily. "Now, understand the case. They are not exactly broke. Here! you had better read their note; I thought I would show this. They have marked it 'Private,' you see."

I took the note and read it carefully twice. It was from the junior partner, Mr. William