

Old Man Dobson's Daughter.

I.

"Hey, tha. Bub! hev ye seen anything of me little girl?" hoarsely shouted an old man to a young mulatto standing under the dripping eaves of the little station house.

The boy turned from the grimy widow, through which he had been gazing into the smoky waiting room. An old man was climbing out over the wheel of a lumber wagon backed up against the platform. "No sah, don reckon I has. Aint seen nuffin but a mighty splendiferous young ledy, what am a waitin' in dar," and he made a little backward movement with his thumb in the direction of the waiting room.

"Wall, I'll jest look in. It'd seem mighty queer if she didn't come; fur I sent word her ma wuz a sailin', and told her I'd be sure to come fur her t'night," he muttered, half to himself and half to the boy, as he jerked along toward the door, one hand on his stiff knee and the other on his hip.

As his furrowed face, with its half-moon of ragged whiskers encircling the projecting chin, appeared in the door of the waiting room a penetrating voice exclaimed, "Well pa," with a broad sound of A, "I had just concluded to order a carriage and find a hotel if there is such a thing in this forsaken place. My! but I'm tired. I hope you've got a fast horse for I don't want to be over a year getting home. Well, don't you know me?" she continued. "I'd have known you in China with that old coat. But it isn't much wonder you didn't know me for I hope I don't look anything like I did when I went away."

"Surely this ain't Deborie," the old man stammered, gazing with incredulous eyes at the elegant figure in the stylish blue macintosh. A little cap hung to one side of the girl's thick hair and she swung a tightly rolled umbrella in her gloved hand, causing two or three bells attached to a silk cord on the handle to make a clinking noise as she walked.

No, surely this was not the little girl he

had parted from on this same spot five years before.

Even her pride in the new green cashmere dress with red plush trimmings—of the home knitted stockings which made her legs look like plump red posts between the short dress and squeaky shoes—of the checkered shawl with its gaudy fringe—of the new hat and brown cotton gloves—even these did not keep her from sobbing pitifully as she kissed him goodby and said "Yes sir" to his many injunctions.

And he had expected to see her again just the same, with even the strip of red flannel saturated with kerosene, which had been wrapped around her neck for her sore throat. Of course he had told himself hundreds of times that his little "Deborie" was a young lady know with long dresses and "fellers" yet he had always thought of her as a little girl in the green, red trimmed dress.

He felt himself a stranger to this beautiful self-confident girl, felt as if he had been cheated out of something which belonged to him.

"Did you intend to take my trunk? If you did, here's my check," and as she handed it to him she just touched her lips to his cheek.

"I can't hardly recognize you, Deborie," he said in a dazed way, accenting the second syllable of recognize, "but I reckon it must be my little girl."

"O! pa, don't say recognize. I should think you'd know better from hearing others pronounce it. It's *recognize*."

"To be sure, to be sure Deborie," he replied in the same dazed way. "Jist stay here a bit and I'll git your trunk."

She stood in the door and watched the station agent and her father as they tugged and lifted the heavy trunk into the wagon, then as the old man came towards her she said, "My goodness pa, can't you walk like this?" raising her full round chest. "You make me think some of your bones will crack or that you may come unjointed any minute hobbling along like that."