

LOVE'S ANGUISH AT TWELVE.

Little Girl Sought Death Because Her Sweetheart Had Been Cruel.

Clarence Called Her a Sneak and Did Not Answer Her Threatening Note.

"I'm Not Coming to School Any More; I'm Going to Kill Myself," She Told Her Schoolmates.

SANG WHILE SHE PREPARED TO DIE.

No Bravado Behind Little Anna Mansfield's Attempt to End Her Young Life at Her Home in Rutherford, N. J.—Scant Hope for Recovery.

Dear Clary: I will kill myself if you do not speak to me. My mamma would not let me buy you the pencil, and I asked you to pardon me, but you wouldn't. I am so lonely, and I will do it sure if you keep on being cruel to me. Then you will be sorry. Your miserable ANNA.

Anna Mansfield's very heart strings were woven into this letter, which she slipped into Clarence Volkmann's hand one evening last week. And since she received no reply, not so much as a single look of friendship, she drank some carbolic acid and then tried a bullet through her head.

It is a boy and girl romance—a New Jersey idyl, with a melodramatic denouement. For Anna Mansfield is only twelve years old, and her sweetheart, but thirteen. Anna has an even chance of living, the doctor says, but no more. And her obdurate Clarence now smiles on another little girl.

There was no bravado behind the child's attempt to kill herself. She made a bold effort to engage sympathy. She made elaborate preparations for death. She waited till she was alone. She drank all the poison she could lay her hands on. Flushing that it would not kill her, she fired a bullet point blank at the side of her head. It missed the schoolgirl's troubled brain by a hair's breadth, but it may yet cost her her life.

And all for the love of a snub-nosed, mischievous, selfish New Jersey schoolboy, who had jilted her because she could not give him the present he had demanded of her!

Anna is an Only Child.

It happened at Rutherford, a few minutes' ride from Fawcett Ferry. Anna is the only surviving child of John Mansfield, a clerk in the office of R. G. Dun & Co., of New York, and a sergeant in Company I, of the Second Regiment. They live in a pretty cottage on Silver street, not half a mile from the railway station. There was another child, a boy, but he died two years ago. It is said that while he lived Anna was troubled because her father and mother seemed to love him better than they loved her. It is certain from what her school friends say that she was not happy at home. But she was happy at school, because Clarence Volkmann was there.

Anna's unhappiness at home may have been the result of her precocious imagination. She is a strange child, with strange notions. She is a strange child, with strange emotions and strange fancies. Her father declares that she was cheerful and used to sing while she was washing the dishes. There is reason to believe that she preferred reading romances to washing dishes. What schoolgirl would not? She cherished a mental picture gallery of Gladiuses and Gypsies and Babys who triumphed over the plottings of polished villains and resigned themselves to true love in dual halls—all in the last chapter. Even in the agony following her attempt to kill herself she did not forget the vernacular of such literature.

"Ah," she said to her mother, "you said you would like to see me dead. Now, I suppose you'll be glad."

This was in the presence of Dr. Hollister, who had been called in to try to save her life. The doctor does not place much reliance on what Anna Mansfield says. He thinks that her imagination and her emotions are distorted. She has developed too quickly. At the age of twelve she looks almost like a woman. Mrs. Mansfield declares that she never expressed such a wish as Anna had attributed to her. Both she and her husband speak affectionately of the child, and say that they have always been kind and indulgent to her.

"She never got more than a box on the ear," said her father yesterday. Anna made much of those boxes on the ear. She used to tell him that she loved nothing else in the world. Clarence Volkmann was avaricious. He was always wanting things. That is how that the children at the Rutherford Grammar School tell the story. A week or so ago, Clarence asked Anna if she would make him a present of a silver pencil case, such as another of the boys had. Anna said "yes." She would have said "yes" to anything Clarence had asked her. Days passed, and the pencil case was not forthcoming. Clarence opened the subject again, this time with a threat.

"Clary" called her a Sneak.

"I cannot," said Anna, "I asked mamma for the money, and she would not give it to me. I am sorry I cannot keep my promise, Clary. Won't you forgive me?" "No," growled Clarence, "I don't care for your love. You're a sneak not to keep a promise. I don't speak to sneaks."

And, in order to emphasize his displeasure and demonstrate his manly independence, the boy began to pay attention to another.

Then came the letter, scrawled with a pencil on an exercise sheet. "I will kill myself if you do not speak to me," was its burden. And on Wednesday night, wounded beyond endurance, Anna tried to fulfil her second promise.

When school was over on Wednesday afternoon Anna packed her books together

and put them carefully in her desk. The other girls in her class—it is the lowest grade—were taking their books home. Anna joined them as they clustered around their teacher, Miss Walden, to bid her good-night. She moved away, but lingered. When the others dispersed she ran back to her teacher.

"Good by," she said, timidly, holding out her hand.

"Good night, Anna," said Miss Walden, a little surprised at this second adieu.

Anna met some of her school fellows in the street. "I'm not coming to school any more," she said, with a little laugh. "I'm going to kill myself."

"Gwan, You dazent?" said a boy, who had overheard her.

But Anna smiled again and walked home alone. She knew that there would be nobody to interfere with her plan, for her mother had gone to Jersey City on a shopping expedition, and her father was not due to reach home for hours. But she was in no hurry. She wanted to wait till dark before killing herself. After staying in the house about half an hour, she went across the street and played a game of tag with Mrs. Campbell's little boy. When dusk began to gather they had joined hands, and were singing.

London Bridge is falling down, My fair lady, London Bridge is falling down.

"It's getting dark; I must go home," said Anna, breaking away and running across the street. She entered the house by the back door, and went into the kitchen. On the shelf in the pantry there was a bottle containing a little carbolic acid. Anna did not know that it was a very weak solution. Taking the bottle in her hand, she went upstairs to her own little room. There were some toys there in a trunk.

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Sang While Preparing for Death.

Anna continued to sing as she pulled about her dolls and some paper-covered

books. My monkey broke up the picnic scene in

the handkerchief and showing her friend the wound near her cheekbone.

Elizabeth screamed, and in a few minutes all the neighborhood knew what Anna Mansfield had done. They rushed over her and cried over her, and put her to bed, and sent for Dr. Hollister. After a while Anna's father and mother came home and found Silver street in an uproar over what had happened. Everybody was astonished, but no one so much so as Dr. Hollister. He could hardly understand how, with such an aim, Anna had failed to kill herself. The bullet had passed through bones, tissues and cavities just below the occipital bone, the fragile plate on which the cerebellum or lower part of the brain rests. What damage it had wrought could not be told; for the time being the child was quite conscious, and in no great pain.

As for the carbolic acid, the solution was so weak that it hardly affected her.

No one is allowed to talk to Anna about what she did, or why she did it. But her schoolmates talk about it a great deal. A group of about two hundred of them gathered round the house after school hours yesterday, and eagerly canvassed the love story of Anna Mansfield and Clarence Volkmann. But Clarence Volkmann ran home directly school was out and said that Anna was a "big foot."

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