

The Handsome Stranger

by Mrs. M. A. Denison

CHAPTER I.

“SO POLISHED!” “So handsome!” “So fascinating!” “Pray who is he?” “And his name—?” “Is Edwin Gray.”

“How sweet! Just like music!”

These and kindred exclamations formed the staple of conversation, at the moment, at a birthday party, as the subject of so much comment moved quietly away down the long, well-lighted, well-furnished apartment.

The waltzing was over; the rich, softly undulating waves of Strauss’s music had subsided upon the shore of comparative silence.

“Oh, Eva, he was quite taken with you!” said Amy Pendleton, in her quick, straightforward English. “He told me your hair was the color of beaten gold.”

“Did he? Well, he spoke of your eyes, and compared them to heaven’s own blue.”

“And he said Kate’s smile was the sweetest he had ever seen,” said Lu Baker. “I wonder what be praised about me?” she added, with a queer little grimace.

“Your hands, my dear. For whiteness and symmetry, they were like lilies.”

“Then we are, every one of us, charming in his eyes! Oh, how delightful!” said Eva Warren, the brightest and wittiest of the four young girls gathered at this birthday party. “Can’t we conglomerate our charms some way, and make one perfect whole, worthy of worship by this knight of the fathomless eyes?”

“By-the-way, he has wonderful eyes, hasn’t he?” said Amy Pendleton. “Do you know, I scarcely dare to look in them, for fear I shall have to take up with the old strain, slightly altered:

““Oh my heart, my heart is breaking,
For the love of Edwin Gray.””

“Don’t be silly, Amy,” exclaimed Eva.

“I was never wise,” was the retort; “and for that very reason, I shall be singled out by this paragon, see if I’m not. And then, I shall smile and smile on him, till Louis will frown and frown on me, and gnaw away at his mustache. It will be delightful to see him jealous once; he boasts that he never was, is, or can be jealous. But he has never yet had any occasion.”

“You won’t be so foolish, Amy; this stranger can be nothing to you.”

“Perhaps—I don’t know. Ah! he is coming this way.”

Strangely enough, the handsome and polished young man did stop at Amy’s side, and in a few moments had engaged her for the dance just forming.

Amy’s heart fluttered. She felt flattered to be the choice of the most distinguished-looking man in the room, and her spirits rose proportionately, for they were soon on the best of terms.

“You are fond of dancing?” he said.

“Oh, I like it better than everything else—see, my tablets are quite full; it was only by the merest chance that this one dance happened to be open.”

“Of which I was fortunate to avail myself,” he answered, with a bow.

“My dear, don’t be so communicative,” whispered Eva, as she crossed her in one of the figures—”Remember, your partner is a perfect stranger.”

“Don’t you fear me,” said Amy, a little sharply—”just as if I didn’t know how far to go,” she added, to herself. “Eva would be glad to have him for a partner.”

Another pause in the dance.

“I think I am acquainted with a gentleman of your name in Baltimore,” said Mr. Gray, his strangely magnetic eyes reading her face.

“Oh, are you? I wonder if it is Uncle Paul?” she exclaimed, delightedly.

“It certainly is Mr. Paul Pendleton,” he answered, smiling at her pretty enthusiasm.

“Yes, but there may be more than one Paul— my uncle is president of a bank.”

“The very one,” was the eager response.

“Then perhaps you know my cousin Lilian?”

“I am acquainted with her, but slightly,” he said.

“Isn’t she beautiful!”

“A very beautiful girl, indeed.”

“So lovely that, whenever I see her, I could fall down and worship her, if it wasn’t forbidden,” said Amy, flippantly. “I’m glad you know them. I am Uncle Paul’s favorite niece.”

“Does he still live where he did last Winter?”

“Oh, yes—on Madison Street, though you would hardly know the house, it has been so altered. It was quite handsome before, but aunty fancied she wanted a nest of bay windows for her birds and flowers; she thinks the conservatory is too damp for the birds, you see. Aunty is not well this Winter; Uncle Paul thinks of traveling to Europe for her health, and that he may get some rest himself. He is devoted to business.”

“And your cousin is not yet married, then?”

“Oh, no, indeed; it is very difficult for her to get married, though she has been engaged to Harry Deane for three years. Perhaps you know Harry, too.”

“Oh, yes; I remember him. Was he not slight?”

“He was, but he has grown much stouter: and don’t you think him ugly? That scar under his left eye deforms him so. Otherwise his features are good enough. But, then, he’s such a noble fellow. Uncle Paul is very fond of him; has made him cashier, and intrusts him with any amount of money. But that’s not my business.”

“You needn’t fear to tell me, Miss Pendleton. I am so very well acquainted with your uncle, that I feel interested in whatever you may say about him. Besides, I have some money that I think I shall put in his hands.”

“I don’t know much about banking,” laughed Amy, “but I know what my uncle thinks of Harry. Why, Harry goes to Chicago to-morrow with fifty thousand dollars—so I heard papa say. It is something connected with Government funds.”

A strange electric light seemed to shoot over the man’s face as he listened to this disclosure. For a second the nerves of his mouth twitched, then he seemed, by a violent effort, to control himself, and still to continue talking lightly to the young and giddy girl, his partner.

“Chicago? Ah, yes, I know many people in Chicago. I lived there once,” he went on and then detailed some of the circumstances of his life.

He was very fluent, and had the gift of making pictures with words. Amy still listened to him after the dance was over, bewitched by his merry humor; and when he left her, leaving also the house, all the interest in the evening’s pleasure was over for her.

“Well, and so your new flame has deserted you,” said Louis, who had been industriously dancing, but not the less keeping an eye on his *fiancée*.

“He has gone home,” said Amy, yawning slightly behind her fan. “He said he had some important business to attend to. What an elegant partner he is! And you don’t know how well he talked!”

“Yes! I’ve been trying to find out who he is. Nobody seems really to know—even our hostess herself. Either some one introduced him or he brought a letter.”

“And, Louis, he knows Uncle Paul, and so many of our friends in Baltimore.”

“Possible?” said Louis, dryly. “Singular, then, he should be such a stranger here. I honestly confess I did not like the fellow’s face.”

“Didn’t you think him handsome?”

“Yes, in a way. Rather fine eyes, and gives his whole attention to his lady friends, particularly if he has any object to gain. I rather fancy the fellow is a flirt.”

“For shame, Louis! I had no idea you could be so ungenerous.”

“Well, never mind; don’t let us quarrel about it; we may never see the man again,” said Louis, good-naturedly.

“For my part, I hope I shall,” was the response. “I liked him very much. Most men listen to their partners as if it was a strain upon their courtesy, but he just talked as if he liked to—as if he thought I was worth the trouble.”

“And so you are—there’s no doubt on that head. Come, you promised this dance to me.”

“Did I? Oh, yes;” and she rose languidly, and took her place in the set.

Meantime, Mr. Edwin Gray had hurried into the dressing-room, selected a hat and coat, left the house, and entered his own lodgings—a shabby-genteel room on the second floor of a second-rate house in Brooklyn. Arrived there, he lost no time in taking out writing implements, and inditing what seemed to be a message on three or four different slips of paper.

These he looked over thoughtfully, said, as he took up one of them, “I rather think this will do,” and placed it in his vest-pocket. It ran thus:

“L. DORSET, 57 Eutaw Street, Baltimore: Heavy case. Goes by early train to-morrow. Bound for Chicago. Brown eyes and hair—*scar under left eye*. Initials of name, H. D.; Bank, Pendleton. G. M.

DIAZ.”

As soon as he had placed the paper in his pocket, he went to a small, black leather trunk, and took therefrom a heavy beard and mustache of a dull, red color, with a wig to suit the same. Then he drew on a plain blue body-coat, on the inside of which, attached to the lapel, was a brass plate with a number engraved in the centre. Adding to this his hat, and drawing on a pair of linen gloves of a dark color, he left his boarding-house and went in the direction of the nearest telegraph-office.

There he gave the message, displaying carelessly the badge on his coat, paid for its transmission, and sauntered slowly out.

“That’s one of the force, Joe,” said the clerk who had charge of the missive.

“One of what force?” was the answer.

“Why, a detective. They’re after some scoundrel or other who is going to Chicago with his ill-gotten goods. They’ll catch him, too; sharp fellows, these detectives.”

“I know pretty much all the detectives here—it’s not one of our men,” said Joe.

“That may be true—there are plenty of them outside of Brooklyn. It’s my opinion he’s one of the Baltimore force. I tell you they have to be plucky chaps.”

“Not so plucky, perhaps, as cunning,” responded Joe; “and it’s curious what small things serve, sometimes, to excite their suspicion and lead to the trail. My brother Ben has got a little brass button in his possession that proved the guilt of one of the most heartless murderers that ever was hung.”

“Well, all is, I shouldn’t like to see one of these fellows on my track, if I had been up to anything wrong.”

Early on the following morning Edwin Gray left Brooklyn, presenting yet another exterior. His eyebrows and hair had been touched with some coloring material, his costume was faultless, his manner reserved, almost haughty, his hands daintily gloved in kid. If on the previous night he had been the free and easy gallant, he was now the reserved, aristocratic traveler, bearing the fatigues and annoyances of his journey with well-concealed disgust, and condescending to be looked at and wondered over, while he was apparently oblivious to everything about him, even the boys who heaped the car-seat beside him with boxes and papers and periodicals, of which he took not the slightest notice.

With the exception of stopping once for refreshments, Edwin Gray did not leave his chair till the train drew in at the Baltimore depot. There he hailed a hack, and was driven at once to Barnum’s Hotel, where his fine appearance and reserved manner caused him to be treated like a lord.

CHAPTER II.

“MY dear, I think you are not just to Harry.”

“But, mamma, I really do feel like another person when he is gone. I can’t help it. It would be awful if, after we are married, I should long to be rid of him as I do now sometimes.”

“You should have thought of that, child, before you engaged yourself to him.”

“Well, he was so persistent, what could I do? Besides, having always known Harry, why, I felt more at my ease with him; and, then, you and papa seemed to expect it of me—and, really, I don’t fancy most of the men I see—the young men, I mean; so, perhaps—”

“You will never find another Harry, my dear; a more devoted fellow never lived.”

“Oh, I don’t complain of that. I’m not sure but he is too devoted,” said Lilian, with a comical little shrug. “I have only to beckon, and he will follow; I have only to wish, and he flies to execute. It is very foolish, I suppose, but sometimes I imagine the—”

“Well?” said Mrs. Pendleton, filling up the pause.

“The kind of man I think I could fall in love with—really and truly fall in love,” she added, laughing gayly. “It would be such a strange, delightful sensation!”

“Hush, my dear; I don’t like such talk. You don’t know what you are saying; you are fresh from your romances, that portray unknown and unheard of sensations; and, besides, it would be folly of the meanest kind, when your bridal clothes are already bespoke. If you find you do not love Harry Deane—”

“Oh! but, mamma, I do love him—that is, after a certain fashion. That is, I don’t seem to know how to get along without him, though there is such a relief at first in his going away. I don’t know how I do feel toward him exactly,” she added, laughing.

“Sometimes, when I get on the good side of his face—”

“What in the world do you mean, my dear?” interrupted her mother.

“Why, the side without the scar, to be sure.”

“Well, now, do you know I call that his beautiful side? He received that wound in consequence of risking his own life to save the life of another.”

“Oh, I know, mamma, if one can keep that always in mind. Of course, Harry is good and all that, and, of course, as surely, I shall marry him. And, as I was saying, on the good side of his face he is very fine-looking, so I shall be sure always to get on that side.” And laughing gayly, she left the room to dress for dinner.

“A very fine young fellow called upon me to-day—really and truly, I must say,” and Paul Pendleton carved the roast turkey with the air of a connoisseur.

He was a self-satisfied-looking, rather handsome, portly gentleman of middle age, a little bald, a little hard of hearing, a little vain of his business and official capacity, and using the words “really and truly, I must say,” on all occasions, whether he praised the dinner, Lilian’s toilet, or issued a *caveat*.

“Pray, who is he, papa?” asked Lilian, all attention.

“Stranger, my dear; brought a letter of introduction from Judge Geary; you know the judge, my love?”—to his wife. “I invited him to dinner tomorrow—did I do right? He is stopping at Barnum’s. Has been seeing your cousin Amy, my dear; seems to have been one of them—really and truly, I may say, in the bosom of the family, as it were—ahem!” and the gentleman helped himself to celery.

“I wonder Amy hasn’t written about him,” said beautiful Lilian; “though, to be sure, I haven’t heard from her for an age.”

“Perhaps he is her lover, my dear,” said her mother. “Amy is quite old enough, I should think.”

“Yes, yes, he may be,” said the banker. “He seems a fine, talented young fellow, and Amy is a monstrous pretty girl, really and truly, I must say. If it is so, she has captured one of the swells, or nobby sort. I mean no disparagement to the young man; really and truly, I must say, from the little I talked with him, I fancy he’s a long head for business; one of the sort who seem to know everything. Oh, by-the-way, I got a telegram from Harry.”

“Why papa!” said Lilian, “he can’t have got to Chicago.”

“Oh, no; bless my heart, no; really and truly, I must say, ha! From one of the way-stations—reported that he and money were safe, so far. I sometimes wish I had expressed it; but I don’t know—Harry seemed quite confident—carried it in a carpet-bag as if it were an ordinary satchel; perhaps that was the best way.”

“Why papa, there’s not the least danger, is there?” asked Lilian, opening her blue eyes to their widest extent.

“There’s always danger, my love—really and truly, you must know, I say—always danger where one carries a large amount of money, especially when a good part of it is in specie; but Harry thought his way the best, and so I let him go. He has always been a long-headed fellow, and no one can possibly know anything about the matter. So really and truly, I can’t say that I feel under much apprehension, though it’s a great responsibility for him.”

“And that reminds me,” said Lilian, suddenly turning pale, “of my dream before ever Harry thought of going away. It was terrible.”

Both father and mother looked up, a little shocked by her expression.

“I must say, my dear, really and truly, ha, that I hope you are not superstitious,” said Mr. Pendleton.

Lilian shook her head; but still the air of depression she had so suddenly assumed remained. The dream was noteworthy. She had awakened in the morning, trembling and faint, and had felt a recurring shock to her nerves every time the vision came to her memory. Now, however, it had

grown fainter and fainter, until the conversation at the dinner-table, when it came back as vividly as at the first.

It appeared to her that her father had given a great dinner-party, to which he had invited some foreign prince, at that time visiting the city. Decorators changed the appearance of the house, till it resembled an enchanted palace. Everywhere resounded music; everywhere flashed light and beauty. In the midst of the reveling it seemed to her the strange prince expressed a wish for some peculiar kind of fruit, indigenous to the country, and which the banker said he had in his cellar, but feared to intrust a servant to go for it. Lilian, delighted with the prince, and glad to be of service to him, offered to go herself, and her father, putting a wax taper in her hand, sent her, with these words:

“My child, it will be a heavy cross; nevertheless, go.”

As she went down the cellar-stairs, that portion of the building seemed also to be lighted, but as she reached the bottom all the lights were gone out, and she, groping in half darkness, found herself searching for Harry. Her whole mind appeared to be engrossed with this object. “I must find him, I must find him!” she kept repeating over and over to herself, conscious that he was somewhere in the cellar.

Then all at once a chill wind blew over her, and she found herself in a street—a sort of alley, paved with heavy stones—and there, lying in a heap, a dreadful wound in his temple, lay Harry Deane, quite dead.

This dream had certainly made her more tender toward Harry for a few days, but the impression of horror had gradually worn off, and the vision was a thing of the past, until the banker spoke as he did.

“I wonder if it’s the prince he is going to bring here,” mused Lilian, as she sat in her own room; “and I wonder if there *is* anything in dreams, after all. If anything should happen to poor Harry, what should I do?”

Nevertheless she dressed herself with more than usual care and taste for the dinner on the following day, and received the stranger guest with a good deal of *empressement*. He on his part acted the grand cavalier to perfection, and with his bewildering eyes, which he knew well how to use, and his manner, at once deferential and refined, made considerable way in Miss Lilian’s good graces.

“Papa, you look worried,” said Lilian, intercepting him on his way out, some little time after dinner. “What are you going away for?”

“I’m a little anxious, my love—in fact, I’ve not received any message from Harry.”

“And is it time?”

“It was time some hours ago. He was to telegraph me twice before his arrival in Chicago. I have received but one dispatch; naturally I am disappointed.”

“You don’t think there’s any trouble, do you?”

“I never allow myself to speculate, my dear,” was the reply; “if there is trouble, I shall know it soon enough.”

Lilian went back into the parlor under some apprehension, but the persuasive tongue and gentle courtesy of her guest soon drove away all thought of trouble, and even the ghost of the repellent dream.

Mr. Edwin Gray was surely one of the most fascinating men of his class, apt at invention, quick of insight—seizing upon a look, a glance, with which to make capital. His manner toward Lilian flattered her; to her mother he was all attention, and quite won her heart by a skillful turn in which he compared her favorably with a person in society, whose distinguished air and powers of fascination gave her a powerful sway in the fashionable world.

CHAPTER III.

“MY dear, I don’t like it—I don’t like it at all; not a word from Harry—not a word from the bank. I telegraphed to several places, and then I came home. I was absolutely too nervous to stay and hear the result, so I came home—really and truly. I can’t say what I fear, but this suspense is terrible.”

“If you had only expressed it, Mr. Pendleton!”

“Ah, *if!* If the moon were made of green cheese, my dear, it would probably be melted into Welsh rarebits of a hot night. Of all useless repetitions, deliver me from the word *if*. I did send the money by Harry—now all I have to do is to abide by the consequences, whatever they may be; it’s very strange, though. Where’s Lilian?”

“In the parlor, my dear, with Mr. Gray.”

“Indeed! Why should she be there with Gray? Oh, I forgot; he came to dinner—a very fine, agreeable fellow, too.”

“A splendid young man, my dear—one of the most polished and gentlemanly fellows it was ever my lot to meet. A perfect encyclopedia — and knows so many of our friends in Brooklyn. Only think! he says I make him think of Mrs. Optimus de Laney, I look so much like her.”

“Fiddlesticks!” ejaculated the worthy banker. “You look as much like her as I do; but women will be vain to the end of time, and men will flatter them, I suppose.”

“My dear,” said Mrs. Pendleton, in mild amazement, “you are cross.”

“Very well; if you think so, perhaps I am. Pray let me enjoy my little cross, since it burdens nobody else. Hark! there are the telegrams. It is, really and truly, upon my word, very vexatious; but then I ought to have received one from Chicago two hours ago.”

There were three dispatches.

From the bank:

“We have not seen your messenger.”

From a friend:

“Waited at depot till half hour after train came in. Nobody answering description there.”

From another friend:

“Staid at home awaiting your young man, but nobody came. What does it mean?”

“Surely,” groaned the banker, “what does it mean?”

At that moment sounded a clear, sweet tenor from the parlor. It seemed to irritate the banker.

“How can she listen to that fellow when, for all we know, poor Harry may be weltering in his blood?” he said, almost angrily.

“Oh, my dear, what a horrible picture!” cried Mrs. Pendleton, having immediate recourse to her smelling-salts.

“Or else he has absconded—which would be a great deal worse.”

“Harry? That good, true young man—never!” said Mrs. Pendleton, with energy. “He loved our Lilian too well.”

“Our Lilian seems to take great comfort in the company of somebody else,” responded Mr. Pendleton. “But this matter is a serious one. I must attend to it—set the police at work—go on myself, if necessary.”

“But it may be all for nothing; at this very moment Harry may be communicating with you.”

“But, don’t you see, according to dispatches, he never arrived at Chicago.”

“Oh, I didn’t think of that,” said his wife, beginning for the first time to be seriously alarmed.

“No; easy matter enough to keep right on, or double on his track, and get off so as to fly the country; and yet I couldn’t believe him capable of such treachery.”

Meanwhile Lilian, all unconscious of the terrible imputation cast upon her betrothed, sat talking gayly to her new-found friend, unconscious of the speeding hours.

He was so handsome, so well-informed, talked equally well about the last waltz or the last sermon; above all things, played and sang with the accuracy of a master—and Lilian was passionately fond of music—that the girl felt under a spell while his eyes were upon her, and confessed his power, while her conscience reproved her.

She longed to know in what relation he stood to her cousin, and questioned him with an assumption of innocent curiosity which was quite transparent.

“Have you known my cousin long, Mr. Gray?” she asked.

“Not long, if we reckon by days and weeks, Miss Pendleton,” was his suave reply; “but if by impressions and similarity of tastes, then our acquaintance has been well ripened.”

“Acquaintance!” thought Miss Lilian. “Oh, what beautiful eyes he has! If only Harry could sing and play! He certainly would not say *acquaintance* merely, if he were engaged to her.”

“Ahem!” said the banker, appearing at the door, hat in hand.

“Papa, are you going out?” asked Lilian.

“Yes; I—I have some bad news, my dear.”

“Bad news, papa?” and Lilian started from her seat, taming pale. “Oh, what can it be?”

“Harry—he was not on the train when it reached Chicago.”

Edwin Gray sat partly in the shadow as the words fell on his ear. He grasped more tightly the sheet of music he held in his hands, his jaw fell for a second, over all his face passed a quick terror—then a sudden illumination.

“Oh, papa! you don’t think anything has happened to Harry, do you?”

“How can I tell? He started for Chicago—he didn’t get there; that’s all—really and truly, I say—that’s all, as far as I know.”

“Can I be of any service, sir?” asked Edwin Gray, also rising. “I do not know what your trouble is, but if I can do any errand by bearing messages, please command me.”

“You are very good,” was the banker’s reply; “no, thank you; I shall be better if I attend to business myself. If, however, you are walking down-town—”

“Certainly, sir; I was just thinking of going. I will bear you company with pleasure.” And, with a profound and graceful bow, the young man took his leave.

Lilian repaired at once to her mother's room.

"Tell me the worst at once," she said, with pale lips; "what does papa think?"

"He is very anxious, my dear."

"No, no—tell me all; what has he said to you about Harry? Tell me the exact words, for I know by his manner he suspects something."

"Well, dear, he wonders very much why Harry was not on the train."

"Oh, mamma—he—don't—imagine " Lilian faltered.

"We hope it is all right, my dear, both of us, but you see, there was so much money; the temptation—"

"Mamma, don't—Harry wouldn't ever be tempted; I tell you, he would rather die than do a dishonest action," she said, passionately.

"So it seems to me, my dear."

"Oh, I know it. If Harry was nothing to me, I would say the same thing. He is the soul of honor."

"Then, my dear—"

"Then what, that your face changes so? Oh, mamma—you can't imagine—he has been robbed and—mur—" her voice sank; she could not bring herself to say the horrible word; but sank down, half fainting, on the nearest chair.

Several days passed, and still there came no news. The banker, in the meantime, had hastened on to Chicago, keeping the matter out of the papers as far as he could. Now and then Mr. Edwin Gray called, and enlivened the afflicted family with his superb presence. It was not best for him to linger here, and of this fact he was fully aware. But Lilian's charms had proved too much for him; for the first time in his adventurous life he was imprudent; for the first time he was not guilty of dissimulation.

"Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad," is an axiom that was proved in his case. Lilian's eyes detained him. She, poor girl, caught at the merest straw for help. His presence seemed to strengthen her, to enable her to wait through the terrible suspense, though she was very thankful to receive a telegram from her uncle in Brooklyn, that he had heard news from her father, and was coming on; but she must mention the subject to no one, as he was the bearer of important intelligence.

That night, as Lilian sat in the parlor, listening to the dulcet notes of Edwin Gray, her uncle arrived, bringing with him a strange gentleman. Lilian met them in the hall.

“Is Edwin Gray here?” asked the newcomer, in a low voice, after affectionately greeting his niece.

“Yes. You can’t think how kind he has been since—”

“Officer, do your duty,” said Mr. Pendleton, nodding to his companion, and before the astonished girl had time to wonder at the words, there was a rush, a stifled cry, the explosion of a pistol, and the whole terrified household assembled with the wildest cries and exclamations.

Taking a step forward, the bewildered girl saw a tableau that she never forgot. Gray, standing in the middle of the floor, securely handcuffed, with drooping head and a savage scowl; the detective in the act of picking up a pistol, still smoking, whose ball had missed its aim.

“Oh! what does it all mean?” cried Lilian, turning to her uncle, who was supporting the half fainting form of her mother.

“It means that this man is arrested for complicity in the murder of Harry Deane!”

“Harry killed! Harry dead!” exclaimed Lilian, and unconsciousness came mercifully to her aid.

It seemed that the train on which Harry Deane had taken passage was due in the night. Securely fastening his treasure about him, the young man had kept manfully awake till within a very few hours of the end of his journey, when, yielding to a strange drowsiness, he gave way to sleep. There were very few in the car, many of the passengers having left at the other station.

Suddenly he was roused by some one pulling him by the shoulder.

“Are you due at Chicago?” asked a low voice, “because we are there. I thought you intended to stop here. You will excuse my boldness.”

“Oh, thank you—thank you!” said poor Harry, but imperfectly awake. “How awkward if I had gone on!” and he left the car at the last moment, surprised to find himself under the starlight, the train rushing on, and a stranger at his side, the same man who had once or twice awakened his suspicion by, as he thought, dogging him all through the twenty-four hours.

“This is not Chicago,” he said, “and you are a scoundrel!”

They were the last words he ever spoke. There was a deadly struggle on the deserted platform, a dull, heavy fall, and the villain, seizing the treasure, made his way through the darkness, intending to fly with his ill-gotten booty. But the innocent victim was soon avenged. A man was found at the foot of a steep declivity, from which he had fallen, in a dying condition, the bag by his side. There he made confession and restitution, and thus exposed his accomplice, Edwin Gray, *alias* John Diaz, *alias* a dozen other well-sounding names, and for his many crimes—my story is not all fiction—he will yet suffer the penalty of the law. The money was all recovered.

Amy Pendleton has learned a lesson she will not soon forget.

Through her foolish confidence in a handsome stranger, an innocent man lost his life, and her cousin a husband every way worthy of her love.

Mrs. M. A. Denison. *Frank Leslie's Pleasant Hours*, 1870