

[Written for *The Flag of our Union.*]

Hunted Down

by Mrs. R. B. Edson

CAREFULLY shutting the door after him, Aleck Gray stepped softly out from the back porch of a low, gambrel-roofed house—out into the chill, uncertain April fog—to avoid waking an invalid wife, who, after a restless night, had just fallen into a quiet sleep. It was yet quite early, for here and there a pale star blinked its great, sleepy eye through the low bank of white mist, that lay like a silver veil across the dusky morass. Long rays of amber and crimson brightened the somber peaks of the densely-foliaged pines, stretching away to the east like a line of grim sentinels. It was a sparsely-settled country neighborhood, with scarce half a dozen houses in sight, and these, seen through the rising mist, had a weird, uncanny look about them.

Aleck Gray walked with a brisk step, only stopping once to see if any smoke yet arose from the neighboring chimneys. But only the distant crowing of a cock, and the faint tinkle of a cow-bell, gave any sign of awakening life. He shivered with the damp and chill, aided, perhaps, by the oppressive silence, and involuntarily quickened his steps. He had a five mile walk before him, having engaged to meet a man at Fairhaven at six o'clock. There was something a little strange about this business. The day before, a gentleman and lady had driven up to his door, and asked for dinner for themselves and horse. With genuine country hospitality, they had been made welcome to the bountiful dinner which Aleck Gray's ruddy-cheeked "help" had just placed upon the table. The gentleman was tall, of a clear, colorless complexion, with dark, straight hair, and heavily bearded. The eyes were blue-black, with yellow rays in them, and the white, even teeth had a habit of setting themselves into the thin, scarlet lips, until you looked, half expecting to see the blood burst through the delicate skin. The lady, on the contrary, was slight, sunny-haired and sunny-eyed, with a soft, sea-shell pink continually coming and going in her face. She had a pretty, half-childish way of fluttering about one, and while her companion conversed with the host upon various matters, she had drawn an ottoman up before the lounge where Mrs. Gray reclined, and was tenderly smoothing, with one little dainty hand, the soft brown hair of the invalid; chatting carelessly and merrily of the country, which she now saw for the first time.

"It must be so charming," she said, "to know all one's neighbors," adding, laughingly: "Please tell me some of their names; I have a fancy for hearing new names, which reminds me," an amused look coming into her face, "that I do not yet know yours!"

"Do not?" in a surprised voice, and then laughing at herself for asking the question. "To be sure—I forgot that we were strangers," smiling back to the merry face bending over her, and feeling as if she had always known the girl, with her half-childish, half-womanly ways. "I fear my name will not sound very 'new' to you. It is a very common name, Ellen Gray; very simple, is it not?"

The girl cast a quick look at her companion, who did not seem to mind, otherwise than to shut his handsome teeth more sharply into his lips.

“Ellen Gray,” she said, slowly, with a lingering fondness breathing through each syllable, “how pretty it is; just the name I should have fancied belonged to you, only if you were my friend, I should call you Nellie—doesn’t *he* ever call you so?” glancing across to where Mr. Gray was sitting.

“Who, Aleck?” A sudden exultant flush swept over the downcast face, but it was almost immediately uplifted with eager interest, as Mrs. Gray continued, “O yes, Aleck often calls me so. Before I was married, I was scarcely ever called anything else; but after I saw ‘Nellie’ on a little headstone, in the lonely churchyard you see across the field yonder, it gained a sweet sacredness, and now I no longer care to claim it, leaving it wholly to my lost darling.”

“You have no children?”

“No, none on earth; I have three in heaven. But pardon me, you asked to know the names about here. I do not fancy you will find any very new or strange. There are Spragues, Lincolns, Deans, Turners, Bensons and Fryes. The last is not, however, a common name about here, there being but one family, and I may say but one person of the name, in town.”

“Frye, did you say? How queer!” laughing, and going over to the window to look out. “Where do all these people live—this Frye, for instance?”

“Mrs. Frye lives in the brown cottage at the bend in the road, where you can just see the railing of a bridge.”

“Hasn’t she any husband or lover?” laughing.

“She has no husband, he died before she came here. She has not lived here many years—not over five. In regard to lovers, I am not so certain. That she *might* have, I am very sure, but she is colder than an iceberg, and no one has sufficient courage to attempt thawing her out. Indeed, people generally know but little about her.”

The blue eyes flashed a merry look upon her companion.

“Gregory, just listen! Here is a charming bit of romance, in this out-of-the-way place. There is a Mrs. Frye here, who is a beautiful young widow, living all alone, and forswearing husbands and lovers—a perfect Diana! Isn’t it delightful?” clapping two little pink palms together in childish glee.

“I did not say she was beautiful, did I?” said Mrs. Grey, laughingly.

“I don’t know—didn’t you? I inferred it, of course. O dear!” with a comical look of dismay, “please don’t say she is ugly; that would ruin it all.”

“Well then, she is beautiful, very beautiful. Does that suit you?”

“O charming! What a dear, nice woman you are to tell me—I so delight in romance.” There was such a sharp, sarcastic touch in the childish tones, that Mrs. Gray lifted her eyes in sudden surprise; but the pretty pink and white face was smiling gayly, and the great, violet eyes were softly luminous with mingled mirth and tenderness.

Mr. Gray was a steady-going, practical farmer; but he had one hobby, viz: that nature had intended him for some wonderful, inventive genius; but circumstances being against the development of his talent, he had as yet only succeeded in filling the attic with some of the most curious and *original* pieces of machinery every invented—for they were *inventions*, there was no denying that; the only difficulty about them was, they wouldn’t work!

How this man discovered his weakness—whether by some previous information, or by his own admission, he could not himself have told. For he was a very peculiar man—this Vance, as he called himself—and had such a way of seeming to know what he was really talking round to find out, that simple, straightforward Aleck Gray, who had no secrets to conceal, and who had never but *one* in connection with his whole life, and that not of his own seeking, had, half unaware, unfolded the plan of a grand invention of grinding grain by hand-power, or “every man his own miller.” He had studied on it until he was positive that it was *the* want of the agricultural community. No more running away to mill, no more toll to pay, no more waiting half-a-day when he was in the greatest hurry, for his “turn;” no more bother with too much, or not enough water; in short, “it must go; it couldn’t help it,” he said, exultantly, encouraged by the ready faith of the stranger.

Aleck was rather shy of confiding his plans to his wife, for he remembered too well her recent ridicule of one of his pet projects, which he was equally sure would succeed, but which, somehow, didn’t! So he made no mention of the stranger’s proposal to advance him a sum of money to perfect his new “patent,” taking a share in it in payment. It did not seem at all strange to him that this man should take so much interest in it; instead, the great wonder with him was, that every one did not. And so he simply told his wife that he had to start very early for Fairhaven, to see a man in regard to the sale of stock; quieting his conscience by the mental declaration that he did not say what *kind* of stock.

The arrangement was, that he should be at the abovenamed place, at the depot, at six o’clock, and then and there receive the sum of one hundred dollars, giving in return a share-holder’s certificate to this Mr. Vance. It was, therefore, with a feeling of relief that he glanced about him, in the chill, uncertain dawn, and saw that his neighbors were none of them astir. He did not care to be questioned, for he had determined to surprise them all by his success.

But despite the feeling of exultation at the near realization of his long-deferred hopes, he was conscious of a slight nervousness, and an uncomfortable, because an undefinable, sense of danger. Several times he had been startled; once by the sudden caw-caw of a young family of crows in the swamp at his left, and once by the swift running of a hare across the road. Passing over the little bridge opposite the brown cottage where Mrs. Frye resided, he paused a moment, and leaned over the railing, looking at his watch. Down the river, some twenty-five or thirty rods, there was a small saw-mill. Mr. Sprague, the proprietor, was just unlocking his “office,” as a little building adjoining the mill was facetiously called. He stopped a moment, peering through

the fog (which lay heavier over the river) at the figure on the bridge, and then disappeared inside. As he was always very punctual in his morning calls at his “office,” some suspicious persons were uncharitable enough to hint at the probable contents of a certain innocent-looking can, labelled “Kerosene,” in large black letters.

Aleck Gray smiled to himself, as he turned to go on, and looking back a moment after, he saw Sprague standing in the door, and wiping his mouth with his coat-sleeve—it was such a *damp* morning! But something else caught his eye as he turned; something light-colored, lying against the brown soil of the flower-border that ran round by the south door of Mrs. Frye’s cottage. He paused a moment, wondering what it could be, it had such an odd look about it; then remembering that he had a long walk before him, he hurried on.

Slowly the white belt of fog rose from the river, and the long strip of marsh, now entirely submerged by the late heavy rains, and rested like a halo over the distant hills. The sun came up, brightening the pale gold of the willows, and looking in through attic windows, woke the laggard boys and girls, even before the sharp call at the foot of the stairs summoned the Johns, and Joshuas, and Susans of the respective households.

Mrs. Gray did not rise early, and Ann Turner, her help, taking advantage of the absence of Mr. Gray, indulged in an extra nap. They were both startled by the sound of excited voices, followed almost immediately by a sharp rap. Ann dressed hurriedly, two or three raps considerably accelerating her movements. Mrs. Gray, however, too nervous to endure the suspense, and fearful some accident had happened to her husband, threw a wrapper over her shoulders, and lifting the sash, inquired what was the matter.

“Where is Mr. Gray?” was the evasive answer.

“O Mr. Sprague,” she called, faintly, “has anything happened to my husband?”

“Your husband? No ma’am. We just wanted to see him a moment—isn’t he at home?”

“Why no, he went away quite early, before I awoke. He has gone to town, something about selling some of the cattle, he said. Is anything the matter?” looking down the road, whither some half a score of people were running excitedly.

“Mrs. Frye’s killed—murdered close by her own door.” He did not see the white, rigid face, half hidden by the curtain, and went on. “You see, I can look right into Mrs. Frye’s yard from my mill, and I noticed something lying by the door, quite early, but forgot about it till Ned Turner came down to his work, a trifle after sunrise. Says Ned to me—standing in the door to hang up his coat, ‘What’s that, Sprague, over in Mrs. Frye’s yard?’ I see the man turn pale as he spoke, and Ned isn’t a spooney sort of fellow generally, and so I went and looked, and, my God! there lay a woman on her back, with her face slightly turned towards us, and her long, black hair blowing over her shoulders. I knew how it was at the first glance, but Ned and I went right up there, and found the poor lady, as I had supposed, dead.”

He looked up, but the white face had disappeared from among the curtains, and Ann's ruddy face, grown strangely pale, looked out to inquire if he didn't know anything? And Mrs. Gray bad about the heart, too. And turning from him in disgust, she took the slight form in her strong arms, and bore her back to the bed, where, by the speedy use of cordials and restoratives, she came slowly back to consciousness.

"O Ann," she sobbed, hysterically, "isn't it terrible?"

"There, ma'am, don't think anything about it. If Sprague hadn't been a fool, he would have known better than to tell you such stuff when you were ill."

"But I should have known it; somebody would have told me. O Ann! and she so young and beautiful!"

"Don't, Mrs. Gray, please don't; you'll bring on one of your bad spells, and Mr. Gray away."

"O, if Aleck were only here!" clutching nervously at the counterpane, and drawing it over her face. But Ann dosed her liberally with cordials, and held her hands, and soothed her as she would a frightened child, until she grew calm and quiet.

It was nigh ten o'clock when Aleck Gray got home. It was a pale, shocked face that looked into his wife's chamber, a face that—was it her disordered fancy?—looked strangely like the face of the beautiful woman lying dead in the little cottage by the river. She had never thought of it before—indeed, she did not think she had ever seen that peculiar expression on his face; but now, the same look was in her husband's eyes, that she had often noticed in the dark, sorrowful eyes of Agnes Frye.

The greatest excitement prevailed, and the press, far and wide, spread the shocking account. It created an intense interest. Some lonely old miser murdered for his gold, or some reckless and unfortunate man, washed ashore, with bruised face and rifled pockets, might send a temporary thrill of horror through the community. But a young and beautiful woman, living alone and unprotected, in a quiet country neighborhood, with no money to attract the cupidity of the evil-disposed, or enemies so bitter as to harm her—to find such an one dragged from the shelter of her home, and murdered by her own door, was dreadful. The entire community was shocked, and nothing else was talked of in the street, or by the fireside.

The most profound mystery enveloped the whole matter. There was no trace of violence in the house. The bed had not been slept in, but a pillow and a blanket on the sofa suggested that it had possibly been occupied. The door had been unlocked from the inside, and the key still remained in the lock. She had on the same dress that some one remembered seeing her wear past that afternoon. A light cashmere shawl was wrapped about her shoulders, and no part of her dress was torn or disordered. The wound was on the temple, evidently the result of a slung-shot. The body was kept several days, in the hope that the widely extended notices might reach some of her friends, but no one came, and stranger hands buried the ill-fated woman.

There were found among her effects several things which added to the mystery which had always surrounded her. She had given her name as Agnes Frye, but several articles of clothing were found marked "Angie Gray," and the backs of several letters, yellow and soiled with age, bore the same name. Among them were two, written in a clear, masculine hand, bearing the signature of "Geoffrey Loydd." They were dated some eight or nine years before, and were very lover-like in tone, and very urgent for early marriage. Then there were found, lain carefully away in an envelope, two cards, on which was tastefully printed, "Mr. & Mrs. Geoffrey V. Loydd," and in the left-hand corner the name, "Angie Gray." Of course then, "Agnes Frye" had been an assumed name, for the wedding cards, taken in connection with the letters, were very convincing proof that *they*, at least, would bear the true name. There was a pocket-book containing something over a hundred dollars, but a small morocco portemonnaie which was in her pocket was rifled of its contents, and lay open beside her. It was supposed to have contained the money—some twenty dollars—which Mr. Dolorme, the tailor in the village, had that day paid her for work, as none of the bills in the pocket-book were of that denomination. *They* were all fives, and on a different bank altogether.

But the most important thing found was a "Diary." It was evidently commenced while the writer was at school, and much of it was a simple record of school-girl experiences. It was unimportant, save as it revealed something of the loneliness and orphanage of her life. There were numberless references to the "dear mother in heaven," with hints of somebody's desertion, and vague speculations whether *he* were not also dead. Then the school-days were ended, and she took up the burden of toil in a New England farmhouse, where it seems she had been adopted when a mere child. Then followed little, unimportant records of May-days, and house-cleanings, with the great event of sheep-shearing, and the inevitable "cold storm" that succeeded it. And then the weary days of planting, in which the "dropped corn" and "pricked in" pumpkin seeds, with "Charley and Joe," which, unfortunately, were all the names the record contained of the family. But by-and-by there came the record of picnics and berrying parties, and then the golden August day, when the skies were bluer, the air sweeter, and the whole earth lovelier than ever before, she thought, *he* came. Henceforth the monotonous round of country living was omitted, and only those days when *he* came were thought worthy of record. There were all the varying shades of feeling—the shy wonder if he gave *all* the girls the same tender glance, and the same lingering pressure of the hand. The studying of his taste in the color of her ribbons, and all the little, innocent efforts to render herself beautiful in his eyes. The fear that her simple country ways might shock or annoy him, or the innocent wonder if he really did "like her a little," as his attentions evidently became pointed. Then, for awhile, there were few, if any, entries; and then the great and absorbing happiness of love flashed and glowed over the pages, and the shy, blushing girl became a passionate, devoted, self-forgetful woman. All through the autumn, her great joy sang like a sweet song through the leaves. Loving little excuses were made to the "dear old journal;" for the deft fingers were stitching bands and ruffles; and more than one web of cloth had bleached into snowy whiteness on the sunny slope of the "south meadow." Father and mother, as she called her kind foster-parents, were determined that their little girl should not go out from among them empty-handed, and the inevitable "feather-bed" had been selected from among half-a-dozen, each one of which seemed more delightful and downy than the other. Numerous intimations were given of "Geoffrey's impatience," and at last the announcement that she had consented to Christmas instead of New Year, for her wedding-day. The next entry was important, and I give it entire:

“Dear Jour:—Something strange has happened to-day. It seems so improbable that I can only think of it as an exciting dream, from which I shall presently awake. This morning, as Geoffrey and I were at breakfast in our new home, some one rapped at the door, and as it was very cold, Geoffrey bade him come in. I was quite frightened at the manner in which the stranger regarded me; he was pale as marble, as, coming to my side, he gazed at me long and earnestly, then gasped, rather than spoke, ‘Child, for heaven’s sake speak to me—I am your father!’ I don’t know what I should have done if it had not been for Geoffrey, I was so excited. I hardly know how it was, but *he* seemed to understand and to explain everything. I said, ‘You don’t seem a bit surprised, Geoffrey; one would think you knew all about it.’

“I never saw a frown on Geoffrey’s face before, and it frightened me, he looked so strangely; and I made haste to ask ‘how I had offended him?’ which seemed to increase his annoyance, for he spoke quite sharply when he bade me ‘attend to my father, and not watch him.’ I had hard work to keep back the tears, and at the first opportunity, I stole away, and had a good cry. And this upon the very eve of my long-absent father’s return. Is it an omen, I wonder?

“And my father really lives, and I have had the joy of beholding him. I love him very much already. It is a strange story he tells us; I will tell it as briefly as possible. He had been a somewhat wild and improvident youth, to which he added the indiscretion of an early marriage, thus burdening himself with a family before he had any means for their support. They had two children, a son and a daughter, and his wife was in ill health nearly all the time, and expenses accumulated so much faster than income, that he at last grew discouraged, and knowing that his wife would never consent to his going, he took a silent farewell of his family, after first leaving them his last dollar, and shipped for the then newly-discovered gold-regions of California, working his passage, and trusting to fortune—which had been chary enough of her favors heretofore—to help him. The passage was long, and communication was not so rapid as it is now, and nearly a year had elapsed before he heard from home. Then a letter which he had written, containing a check—his first earnings—was returned to him, accompanied by a few lines from the postmaster, saying that his wife had been dead six months, and his boy, who was sent to the alms-house, had run away, and no one knew where he was. The little girl had been adopted into a respectable family, and the writer thought it might be as well if she knew nothing of the letter; adding, however, that if he chose, he could of course communicate with the people having charge of the child. Under the circumstances, he had thought it best not to write; and, cut loose from all the restraints of home and home interests, in the wild, uncivilized state of society at the mines, he grew restless and dissolute, and for the next five years lost and won, accumulated and squandered alternately, with little thought or care whether he had one dollar or one thousand. But better thoughts came to him at length, and he made a resolution to amass a fortune, and return to his native place, and seek out his children, and end his days with them. He made a sudden and radical change in his habits and morals. The gaming-table and drinking-saloon no longer got a lion’s share of his gold, and he was accumulating rapidly, when he was laid ill of a fever, and before he was well, it had all disappeared—those terrible blood-leeches of the mines, nurses and physicians, sucking him dry. Ore was not so plentiful; the old leads were giving out, and it was slower work this time; but he was not discouraged, always keeping this end in view, and at last he has accomplished his desires, and returned once more to his native State.

“He is very anxious to find his boy, and I, who had almost forgotten him in these long years, am getting as anxious and excited about it as he. I don’t know but I am foolish and notional, but it don’t seem as if Geoffrey liked it because I am. He says it is not at all likely he is living; he would have been heard of before this. Another thing troubles me, father does not like Geoffrey. He has a way of watching him covertly, as if he were trying to remember, or assure himself of something. I think Geoffrey notices it, too, for he has grown moody and irritable, and I sometimes fancy he does not care as much for me as he used. Father is away a great part of the time searching for Arthur. I almost begin to believe, with Geoffrey, that he is not living.

“O my God! I am nearly wild with grief and affright. Last night Geoffrey came home dreadfully excited. He would tell me nothing for a long time, but at last he said he feared that father had been foully dealt with. A man answering his description had been found with his head blown to pieces, in ‘five-mile forest,’ and as he would come through on that road, there were fears that it might prove him. I fear that I have misjudged Geoffrey, he is, if possible, more excited than I am. All night long he walked the house, starting nervously at the slightest sound.

“It is as we feared, it was he. His overcoat, which we recognized, and a rifled pocket-book with his name written in it, have been sent in this morning. We are expecting him to be brought out tonight. It is said that he will be past recognition. Poor father! after all his long years of labor and waiting, to meet with such a fate! I don’t think I had once thought of the wealth that his death would give me, until Geoffrey suggested possibly that he had made a will, and it would be well to employ a lawyer to examine his papers, which we have accordingly done, and find that he had a will executed previous to his leaving California. It was very plain and simple, dividing all his real and personal property between his two children, Arthur and Angie Gray. It is a great deal more than I thought, over five hundred thousand dollars. But there is a curious codicil which has been added to the will since he has been here. It forbids the division or appropriation of one dollar of this property, until both legatees are present, or the well-authenticated proof of the death of either is brought. Geoffrey is terribly angry about it; he has scarcely spoken to me since it was found. He swore terribly, saying, ‘the old fool had spoiled everything,’ adding, ‘there is two years’ of hard work lost.’ What can he mean? I am sure I do not know of any ‘work’ that he has ever done; he told me that he had an income from landed property. It cannot be that he is glad of father’s death, thinking it would enrich him.

“Dear Jour:—I hardly dare break it, even to you, but I shall be distracted, if I cannot tell some one. A terrible fear has taken possession of me. I have struggled against it, and fought it back, but it only returns with tenfold strength. I cannot tell when the thought first dawned upon me, that in some way Geoffrey was privy to *his* assassination. It seems to have been growing up in me ever since that first terrible night when he was so excited. A score of little things have since strengthened me in the conviction. I think Geoffrey has some suspicion of my feelings. He behaves strangely, and by something he let drop the other day, I think he must have known my father, and known, also, that I was an heiress before he saw me. O Heaven! what would I not give for the old, happy faith, which believed what he so often told me, that he ‘loved me the better for my friendlessness and poverty, for now I could depend on him for all.’ Could he have

known it all beforehand, and sought and won me only to obtain the property? Sometimes I think so. I am desperate and wretched enough sometimes to think anything.

“I am going away somewhere; I can endure this sort of life no longer. I should blush to write the treatment I have received from that man’s hands. I am firmly convinced that he knew all before he married me, and that money was his sole object. I am also quite positive that he either committed, or caused to be committed, the terrible crime of murder, to get possession of the money, and failing in this, his anger and disappointment make him forget to dissemble. I do not confront him with my suspicions, however—*I dare not!* If he has committed one crime, will he hesitate at one more, especially as another face already pleases him more than mine? I tried not to believe this last, it is a hard thing for a woman to do; but I have seen too much to doubt. I saw them together last night; he bending fondly over her, with that fascinating, bewildering smile, which I so well remember; and she is so pretty, and looks innocent. But she must know—ah, well! I have had a sweet dream, but the awakening is terrible.”

The diary ended abruptly. No hint or intimation of her after-life—the four years she had been in this place—was found. No letter, no scrap of any written word could be found. Some doubted its being her history contained in the diary, but a receipt she had once given was produced, proving it the same hand.

Perhaps this tragical affair affected no one more strangely than Aleck Gray. He grew silent and abstracted, started nervously if any one spoke to him, and seemed pondering upon some weighty matter. People noticed the change, and Sprague said one day to Ned Turner, as they were piling boards together:

“Do you mind, Ned, how queer Gray is getting?”

“Well, yes; a man can’t help noticing, can he?”

“Look here, Ned,” lowering his voice, “I don’t like to put this and that together, but how long has he seemed so, do you think?”

“Since *that* happened,” pointing over his shoulder with his thumb.

“I never mentioned it before to any living man, but *I* saw a man standing on the bridge before it was fairly light that morning. You see I went into the shop there, and left him standing there; when I turned back, which was almost instantly, he was walking swiftly away. Ned, I am confident that that man was Aleck Gray. Gray confesses that he went into town early; but why steal out before his wife was awake? And then, when I asked him if he had been selling off his cattle, he seemed surprised.

“‘Cattle?’ said he, ‘I haven’t got any to sell. What made you think of such a thing?’

“‘Your wife *said* you had gone into town to sell some cattle,’ I replied, stoutly. You ought to have seen how that man coloured and stammered out:

“Well, really, I didn’t know she mentioned it; I *did* think of selling some *stock*; I believe I didn’t say cattle.’

“Now what stock has he got, unless he calls some of his crazy machines ‘stock.’ Gray’s a fair-seeming fellow, but he was a strange boy; nobody ever knew where he came from, but he somehow got round old Benson, and then married his daughter, and finally finished up by inheriting the farm when the old folks died. Nell felt mighty proud of her handsome beau, and would hardly notice the other boys.”

Ned Turner smiled to himself as he thought who the “other boys” were. Although a mere lad, he very distinctly remembered how very hard Elbridge Sprague had tried to win the favor of pretty Nellie Benson, which he would not have succeeded in doing, if Aleck Gray’s brown eyes had never turned her head and captivated her heart.

“Rather a grave charge to make against a neighbor, Sprague,” said Turner, a troubled look clouding his face. “I wouldn’t be the first man to broach such a suspicion against a man who had lived an honest life beside me sixteen years.”

“Charge?” said Sprague, flushing up; “who made any ‘charge’ I should like to know. I don’t accuse anybody; but I suppose a man has a right to his own opinions, hasn’t he?”

“If he doesn’t use them to other people’s injury—yes. But you know how it is in a case of this kind. Once let a fellow be suspected, and public opinion is down on him at once. People are too excited to reason, and the simplest trifles are converted into unmistakable proofs of guilt.”

Sprague did not reply, but when in the course of the forenoon a rough, jovial sort of a fellow, that had been hanging around the neighborhood for a couple of weeks, ostensibly in search of employment, came and beckoned him out, and the two held a long and earnest conversation together, a sudden light dawned on Ned Turner. He wondered now that he had not thought of it before; he had so often heard of detectives assuming such disguises for the furtherance of their plans. The conversation was carried on in too low a tone for him to hear, but by the covert glances toward the brown cottage, and across to the great red chimneys of the old gambrel-roofed farm-house, Ned Turner guessed the whole story. He did not doubt that Sprague had imparted his suspicions to this man, and though he thought it a foolish and baseless charge, he nevertheless resolved to go over to Gray’s that night, and tell Ann—his sister—about it. He could fancy how her gray eyes would flash at the intelligence, for her attachment to the Grays was only equaled by her detestation of Sprague, who, being still a bachelor, had paid her some very marked attentions, but in such a way that she could not peremptorily decline them, as she longed for the opportunity to do.

In accordance with this resolve, as soon as he had eaten his supper, he proceeded in the direction of Aleck Gray’s, but as he came in sight of the front door, his heart stood still with apprehension; for, walking down the yard came the tall, erect figure of Gray, with Bates, the stranger who had been lounging about the neighborhood, on one side, and the well-known county sheriff on the other.

It had come to this, then; and both sorrowful and angry, he turned and went down to “the store,” that great repository and dispensary of news in a country town. Here the excitement was intense; some condemning, and some defending, and all talking at once, in loud and angry voices. It was some time before Ned Turner could get anything like a correct report of the case, but the following facts were finally elicited.

Gray had been away from home that morning, ostensibly for the sale of cattle, but afterward, in apparent confusion, denying that he had any such intention. He had gone very early, stealing out before his wife was awake. He had been seen near the house while yet it was quite dark, and when observed, had walked swiftly away in the direction of Fairhaven, *but no one in the village remembered to have seen him there*. He had appeared very strange and unlike himself ever since. His wife had said that “Aleck made her nervous with his odd ways, and walking the house nights.” But the strangest and most remarkable point was, that two days before, Gray had been to Lawyer Mead, and entered a claim for the Gray property, claiming to be the missing heir, the “Arthur” mentioned in the diary of the murdered woman. He declared his name to be really Arthur, and that he changed it for the first one that entered his mind after he ran away from the workhouse. He said he remembered his parents very distinctly, as well as “little Angie,” but declared positively that he had never the most remote suspicion that the mysterious young woman who passed as Mrs. Frye, was his sister, until the reading of the diary revealed it. He did not remember ever to have seen her except at church, and then she wore a heavy veil. His wife had said, however, on the very morning of the assassination, that he looked strangely like the murdered woman. Upon Mead’s questioning him as to the reason of his keeping silence so long, he said that at first he had been so shocked and horrified as to render him incapable of thought and action. It all seemed so improbable and unreal, he had lived among these people so long, and had been so happy, that he well-nigh forgot he was an alien. It reversed everything, and plunged him in a maze of uncertainty and bewilderment. He had pondered over it night and day ever since, and old, forgotten memories had awakened, until he was so firmly convinced that he was the lost Arthur, for whom his father searched so unsuccessfully, that he wished Mead’s advice as to the most proper steps necessary to discover this Geoffrey Loydd, and demand his father’s legacy. Mead agreed to undertake the case, difficult and improbable as it seemed, and Gray paid him over fifty dollars as retaining fee. But to his horror and surprise upon looking over the money after he had gone, he found among them four five dollar bills, answering every way the description given by Delorme, the tailor, of those he had paid Mrs. Frye the day before her death. He communicated with Detective Bates at once, giving the bills in his charge for further identification. Upon close examination, “Delorme” was found printed in minute capitals in the corners of two of them, and Delorme himself swore to having executed it. Upon the strength of these very suspicious circumstances, Bates felt warranted in causing his arrest.

Poor Nellie Gray was nearly distracted, and begged pitifully to be allowed to go to her husband. Not until the day he had consulted Mead had he revealed the long-kept secret of his birth to his wife, together with the certainty of his being unmistakably the missing heir mentioned in the diary. She, however, had little faith in his being able to prove his identity clearly enough to satisfy the law; more especially with such a crafty and unscrupulous contestant as this Loydd. Besides, no one knew where to find him, or where they had lived before she left him. But Gray remembered the name of his birth-place, a small town in New Hampshire, and he trusted to finding the other from the circumstance of the murder in the “five-mile woods.”

Delicate and ill as Nellie Gray was, she persisted in going ten miles, to the nearest city, to consult with an eminent lawyer, and engage his services in her husband's behalf. Mr. Winthrop had not only the reputation of being very successful, but he had also the rare faculty of gaining the love and confidence of his clients, to a remarkable degree. There was such a genuine friendliness of manner, and ready sympathy, which quietly entered into one's feelings and desires, that one instinctively felt as if they had found a friend, where they had only expected an adviser. To this man Nellie Gray told all her hopes and fears, as to some old, tried friend, and his tender sympathy and absorbed interest won her confidence at once, and she went home feeling stronger and more hopeful for the interview. It is doubtful, though, if she would have lived through those few first terrible days, had not the strong, courageous nature of Ann Turner kept her up.

It was at this crisis that the peculiar genius of this girl developed itself. No one had ever given her credit for any very remarkable qualities; she was considered a rather shrewd sort of a girl, of a brave and independent spirit, and, if the truth was told, rather high-tempered also. There was a very unmistakable flash to the gray eyes, and a look of stern determination about the mouth, that bespoke a proud spirit and resolute will. It made her terribly angry to hear people debating the probable guilt or innocence of Aleck Gray, "as if it were *possible* for him to be guilty!" she said, with scornful indignation.

But as the days ran on, people inclined more and more to the opinion that he was really the perpetrator of the crime. And even Mr. Winthrop felt anything but sanguine of the result of the fast-approaching trial. The story he told of an appointment with the stranger, with the paying of so large a sum as one hundred dollars on so chimerical a concern as his "hand-mill" was considered a very weak and improbable story. The money, he averred, which he paid over to Mead, was a part of that one hundred dollars which he received from the stranger. But he admitted that he did not see this man—this Vance—on that morning; but that a man, apparently a stranger, met him on the outskirts of the town, and inquiring if his name was Aleck Gray, upon his answering in the affirmative, gave a sealed envelope into his hand, and immediately turned and walked away. He looked after the man, who passed down a wide street and quickly disappeared. Upon opening the envelope, he found it to contain one hundred dollars in bills, with a slip of paper on which was written in pencil, "Called suddenly away. A servant will hand you this. When I want my certificate, *I will come after it.*" It was without date or signature, and had been carelessly thrust back into the envelope, and, unfortunately, lost.

The owner of the "brown cottage" was one day surprised by a call from Ann Turner. She came to request permission to explore the building, and also to examine the trunks and wardrobe of the late occupant. It was a singular request to come from a young lady; but he had no particular objection, and told her so, adding, "if she hesitated about going in alone, his wife would perhaps accompany her."

"Thank you. I do *not* hesitate about going in alone. I prefer to do so." And taking the key, she walked quietly up to the door, unlocked it and went in, then re-locking it, she put the key in her bosom, and commenced her search.

Sprague, from his post in the mill, saw her enter.

“I’ve half a mind to go over,” he said, to Ned.

“I wouldn’t advise you to,” said Ned, laughing, a shade of uneasiness coming into his face, nevertheless. The truth was, he didn’t really understand Ann, lately. Mrs. Gray had left the old house, and come to stay at his mother’s. But Ann—there was no telling where *she* was. One day at home, and the next, no one knew where.

It was nearly night when he saw her come out; but instead of going towards home, she walked rapidly in another direction. She had not returned when he went home to supper, nor did she come that night. The next day, as he was about setting out to look for her, she walked quietly in.

“It is well you have come,” he said.

“But I am going again.”

“Where, Ann?”

“Well, I don’t propose eloping with your friend Sprague,” she said, laughing lightly, but with a suppressed undertone of excitement in her manner.

“Ann, I wish you wouldn’t—”

But the rising color in her cheek, and the sudden darkening of her eyes, made him pause. Perhaps he looked grieved, for she came over to him, and laid her hand on his arm.

“Do you doubt my capability of taking care of myself, Edward?” she said, quietly.

“Faith! no. I should like to see any one that did!” he exclaimed, impulsively.

“Then trust me.” And touching her lips lightly to his forehead, she went up to her room, only to reappear a half-hour afterwards, dressed for a journey, with a large portmanteau in her hand.

“Ann, my child, where are you going?” said her mother, anxiously.

“I do not know myself, yet, mother. Take good care of Nellie till I come back,” going up to the lounge, and laying her flushed face caressingly against the white one pressed against the red damask cushion, and whispering, under her breath, “Keep heart, dear.”

There was a queer look on Mr. Winthrop’s face, when they told him of Ann’s strange behavior, when he rode over to see Mrs. Gray, the next day. But he said nothing, only that “Miss Turner *was* rather a strange girl.” But as he climbed into his saddle, he declared emphatically that it was “a shame that she was a woman, she would make such a splendid lawyer.”

It was the tenth night of a popular drama, in one of the most aristocratic theatres in New York. The magnificent building was crowded with beauty and fashion, and some of the private boxes were gorgeous in elegant and costly-dressed women. In one of the most conspicuous ones sat two gentlemen and a lady. The lady was charming, in a cloud of misty lace over a corsage of azure satin. There were pearls on her arms and at her throat, and the magnificent coils of sunny hair were also braided and looped with pearls. She had a pretty, childish manner that was very fresh and charming; at least, if one could judge by the number of glasses levelled at her from different parts of the house. The gentlemen were chatting indifferently between the acts, and one of them, one noticed, had a peculiar habit of shutting his white, even teeth into his under lip.

A little way—not more than two or three boxes off—were two men, one very old, judging by the long snowy beard and hair. The other was quite young, with clear, ruddy cheeks, dark moustache, and thick, curling black hair. He was a fine-looking young fellow, with an eye like a hawk. The pretty lady in satin and pearls evidently took his fancy; and although he seemed interested in the play, he evidently lost not the slightest motion of the occupants of that box. When the play was over, he slipped quietly out, after saying a few words in a low tone to the white-haired old man.

By-and-by the aristocratic and elegantly-dressed audience came pouring out; and one after another of the splendid equipages in waiting took its dainty load and rolled swiftly away. An elegant span of purple-black horses stood champing and gnawing their bits, impatient of delay. Presently a petite little figure, wrapped in a mantle of royal purple velvet, over fold upon fold of white misty lace, came out to the step, leaning upon the arm of a tall, dark-eyed and dark-haired man. They paused a moment, talking with the gentleman who had accompanied them; and as he made his adieus, bowing low over the tiny gloved hand of the lady, the dark-haired man turned his face partly aside, setting his handsome teeth sharply into his lips. Then the lady was handed in, he following her, the driver mounted to his seat, and the horses, rearing and snorting, sprang swiftly away; but not before a young man, standing carelessly by, had caught at the carriage and swung himself up lightly behind.

The days ran swiftly by, and but two more remained before the trial of Aleck Gray. Ann Turner had not yet returned, though they had twice received a note from her. The excitement had been steadily increasing, and few now doubted the guilt of the prisoner. Mr. Winthrop said little, and some thought that he himself considered the case hopeless. At length the morning of the trial came. Nellie Gray, unable to bear the suspense of waiting at home, had come up to the courtroom, and, sitting in an easy-chair beside the “prisoner’s box,” stole one little white hand over the railing, and laid it on her husband’s shoulder. The look of wishful pleading in the violet eyes was enough to melt the hardest heart. Silent and immovable as a stone, she sat through the opening plea in behalf of the commonwealth. A look of grieved surprise came over her face, as, with nimble tongue, the prosecuting attorney portrayed in vivid colors the terrible guilt of the prisoner. Once, only, she moved, and then only to lay her hand with soft, caressing touch, on the bowed head of her husband. Then followed the testimony—the same that they all knew, no new facts had been elicited, the attorney said; but he begged that they would give those already received due weight. The evidence was circumstantial, but, *he* thought, very convincing, and he hoped the jury would consider before they let loose in the community a man who had evidently

committed so shocking a deed. He hoped the sympathies of the jury—stimulated as they doubtless were at a sight evidently gotten up for effect—and here he glanced meaningly upon the white, drooping little figure by the prisoner's box—would not blind them to the overwhelming force of the evidence.

People looked anxiously at Winthrop, who sat with a pale, composed face, which told nothing. But when the gentleman closed, he arose quietly, saying he was now ready to introduce *his* witnesses; whereupon an old man, with long white hair and beard, came quietly out of a side slip, and with bowed form and unsteady gait, approached the stand. A chair was placed for him, and then, looking towards the door, Mr. Winthrop called the name of "Miss Ann Turner."

This turn in affairs was so unlooked-for, as not the slightest intimation had been given of the introduction of rebutting testimony, save that already given, of the general good character of the accused, that all turned in surprise, as Ann Turner, with flashing eyes and regal step, pushed past them. A flush was on her cheek, and the gray eyes were black as night. She was a little thinner than when we last saw her, and the long coils of black hair had disappeared, and over the forehead, and falling down to the tip of the snowy collar, were short, clustering curls.

A gentleman and lady sitting near the door gave each a startled, bewildered look towards her, as she stepped upon the stand. Her quick eye ran down the long line of faces until it encountered those two, and a curious smile flickered over her face—proud, exultant, defiant. The lady put up one little dainty hand, and pushed carelessly back the rippling waves of soft, sunny hair; but from under the veiled lids she shot one swift look towards her companion. He shut his teeth into his lips till a slight stain of crimson suffused their whiteness, while the heavily-fringed blue-black eyes emitted pale rays of yellow fire. He involuntarily half arose in his seat, whereupon a quiet-looking man in a slouched beaver, sitting directly in front of them, cast a quick look of intelligence towards another and similar looking man, a little nearer the door. He immediately sank back again, however, for the clear voice of Ann Turner thrilled through the hall, holding the vast crowd in rapt silence.

She began by relating the circumstance of the strangers calling themselves Vance visiting the farm-house the day before the murder; describing their personal appearance so accurately and vividly that a wild thrill of horror and suspicion surged through that part of the audience nearest the door. She then recounted the conversation of the woman, her apparently careless questionings, and the eager though carefully-veiled interest in the deceased. She spoke of the sudden interest assumed by this Vance in a certain chimerical invention of Gray's, and the strange offer of advancing money upon so evident a failure. At her work about the house, she had heard and wondered, and from wondering, grew suspicious. At last, when circumstances conspired so terribly against him, she had determined to make an effort to save him. Without apprising any one of her purpose, she had gained permission to visit the brown cottage. Once inside, after securing herself against intrusion, she had proceeded to re-search the trunks, drawers and wardrobe of the murdered woman. To the letters which had been found was appended the signature of Geoffrey V. Loydd. Might not the V stand for Vance? she had argued. But her main hope had been to find some picture or likeness of some description, of this woman's husband. She went carefully through each article, but could find nothing. Daunted, but not disheartened, she began anew. One thing after another was unfolded, shaken, and replaced. At last, she came

again to a little box of jewelry; she laid it down half reluctantly—she had twice looked it over—then reached and took it up again. There was a locket, but though evidently once containing pictures, it was now empty. Among the various rings and brooches was one with a simple fold of brown hair threaded slightly with silver. It had evidently been a favorite ornament, for it was the only one people ever remembered to have seen her wear, and it fastened her collar *that* morning. The fact invested it with interest, and she turned it over in her hand, noticing for the first time that the broad band of gold at the edge was very unlike the back. Examining it closely, a scarcely discernable line was seen about midway the band. She looked, hoping to find some spring; but being unsuccessful, she pressed the outer edge at a venture, when it fell noiselessly back, revealing a face which set her heart to throbbing wildly. It was *the very face she was looking for!* Carefully securing the brooch, she had gone at once to Lawyer Mead, and asked to see the letters which had been left, together with the diary, in his charge. She then compared the writing with the pencil note received by Gray with the money, and which she had accidentally found, and found them, as she had expected, identical. She then went immediately to Mr. Winthrop, and told him her suspicions and discoveries. By his permission, though not altogether by his advice, her subsequent movements had been governed.

The two men in slouched beavers looked significantly towards the pretty, sunny-haired woman (from whose peachy cheek the soft rose had faded) and her dark-haired companion, and then at each other. The man sat as passionless as a statue, save for the small spot of vivid crimson that burned on his usually colorless cheek.

At a motion from Mr. Winthrop, Ann Turner again proceeded with her testimony.

She had returned home, and, by means of a note from Mr. Winthrop, had succeeded in obtaining from Mr. Mead one of the letters in his care. With this, and the concealed picture, she had started upon the seemingly hopeless task of finding its original. She first visited the public house at Fairhaven, and ascertained from the clerk that such a man and woman were there and stopped a day or two, but he was uncertain whether it was before, or after, the murder. Having obtained from Mr. Gray a description of the man who gave him the money, she set herself to discover him. To do this more effectually, she made use of *certain disguises* which she carried from home with her for that purpose. She first took a critical survey of the servants and waiters belonging to the house, but found none among them answering the description. But while she was waiting and watching, a very unexpected and providential circumstance occurred. Among the new arrivals one night, came a man whom, though she had never seen, she knew at once, and that, too, despite the generally-received opinion of his death. She had contrived to drop a name before this man, and his evident emotion convinced her that she was right. She then inquired his name, which he readily gave, and, excited and overjoyed, she at once proceeded to unfold to him her business. She had found, indeed, a zealous operator, and only waited to find the man who had brought the money, before setting off for New York, likely to find Loydd. She had about decided to go on without waiting longer, when fortune once more favored her. There was a slight disturbance in the bar-room, and looking out, she saw a man put forcibly out at the front door. One look at his face, and she felt sure of her man. Passing into the hall, she inquired of a servant whom she met, the trouble.

“O, it’s only Dick Borden on one of his sprees,” was the reply. “He used to be porter here, and now, whenever he gets a little high, he fancies he has a perfect right here.”

Hastily slipping out, she had overtaken the man, who was considerably sobered. She kept him in sight till he reached home, and making a note of the locality, waited impatiently till the next morning. She had no difficulty in finding him then, and he readily remembered taking an envelope for a man who was stopping there a day or two. The man had charged him to make no conversation with Gray, and not, upon any account, let him follow him, or find out who he was, or who sent him. The gentleman had given him a dollar, and treated him to a drink of tiptop brandy. She inquired if the gentleman staid at the hotel *that* night. He said “No.” He came into the stable about two o’clock, and roused him up to give his horse some oats, and while he was eating, he wrote something on a paper, and presently gave him an envelope, with instructions to go out on the Plain road and when such and such a looking man came along, which he would at about such a time, to give it to him, after first ascertaining if his name was Gray. And after giving him the dollar and the drink of brandy, he had got into his carriage and driven rapidly away. She had shown him the picture, which he instantly recognized, and then and now stood ready to swear to all she had here stated concerning him. She had then, in company with her new ally, gone at once to New York, as her friend informed her that he had himself been to New Hampshire, and found that Loydd had already entered a claim for the property belonging to his deceased wife, claiming to be the sole heir to the whole amount; and as no one disputed his claim, he was in a fair way to receive it all, as he had already done several thousands deposited in the bank in M., by his wife’s father, soon after his return from California. After arriving in New York, they had both assumed disguises, and commenced their search for Loydd. They paraded streets, investigated public houses, haunted railroad stations and places of entertainment, until, at almost the eleventh hour, success had rewarded their efforts.

At this moment, there was a stir near the door, and the cry arose that a woman had fainted. It was a very white face, over which the unbound hair fell in soft, sunny waves; but Ann Turner, looking as they carried her out, thought it but another piece of that woman’s consummate acting.

At a look from Mr. Winthrop, the two men in slouched beavers came out and stood in the aisle, thus barring the egress of the gentleman who had arisen to follow his wife. He sat down again, a cold perspiration starting out on his forehead. Mr. Winthrop now asked that a warrant be immediately issued for the arrest of Geoffrey V. Loydd, who was already in the house, having been brought on subpoena from New York.

There was intense excitement among the audience. The women screamed, and some of them fainted; but unmoved by the general uproar, those two plainly-dressed men, whom the crowd just began to discover were officers, quietly and firmly led the newly-arrested man forward. As he came up, Nellie Gray, for the first time, caught sight of his face. Rising to her feet, she exclaimed, in sudden excitement:

“O Aleck! saved! saved!” And tottering to the railing, raised her arms towards her husband, but her frail strength gave way, and she was caught in the strong arms of Ann Turner, and pressed convulsively to her true, brave heart.

“Not *Aleck* Gray, good friends,” said the venerable, white-haired man, who had sat near the stand while Miss Turner had given her evidence, “but Arthur Gray, the true son and heir of John Gray.” Then turning suddenly round, he exclaimed, “O Arthur! my boy! my boy! At last, thank God! at last.”

The bowed form became suddenly erect, the long white hair and flowing beard were torn off, and a fine, handsome man of scarce fifty, with soft brown hair threaded lightly with silver, and sunny brown eyes so like young Gray’s that one would not have doubted the relationship, had not the whole face and bearing of the man substantiated it.

At sight of him, a look of affright and horror had suddenly crept into the wonderful blue-black eyes of Geoffrey Loydd.

“Gray! Gray!” shouted the excited crowd. “Free him! free him!” And the great mass of people swayed to and fro, and hats were swung, and handkerchiefs waved, and women cried, and men cheered, and amid the general confusion, the sharp report of a pistol rang through the hall.

Ann Turner, who sat supporting the little form of Nellie Gray, swayed suddenly to one side, putting up her hands, with a quick motion, to her shoulder. For a moment the wildest confusion prevailed, and all efforts of the judge to restore order were powerless. Mr. Winthrop said quietly, but in a voice whose strange depth sounded through the room, and rose above every other sound:

“Officers, arrest that woman!” which was, to a greater portion of them, the first intimation of the source from which the shot had come.

Quietness being in a measure restored, aids were deputed to assist the officers, whose gallantry did not prevent them from slipping the handcuffs on the little white wrists of O, *such* an innocent-looking fairy of a woman!

A deep crimson stain marked the light dress of Ann Turner; but after the first shock, the brave girl persisted in saying, “It wasn’t anything.” But the speedy arrival of a surgeon demonstrated the fact that a pistol ball had passed under the shoulder blade, and the case was a very critical one indeed. A litter was made, and she was immediately borne to the house of Mr. Winthrop, which was fortunately near, and which he firmly insisted on. His mother, who was his housekeeper—for he was a bachelor—made everything as comfortable as possible for the suffering girl, sending at once for her mother, who, poor woman, was too thoroughly alarmed to be of much service.

Comparative order being once more restored, the trial proceeded. The sudden appearance of John Gray completely unnerved Loydd. He lost his self-possession, and with his face buried in his hands, sat in gloomy silence. Only once he lifted his white, terror-stricken face, as Mr. Gray mounted the witness-stand, to explain by what right he, who by common consent had been dead over four years, stood before them in life and health. His story was a strange one, and as follows:

On the night of the supposed murder, he had started with the intention of reaching the village of M. by ten o’clock. He had nine miles to walk, and it was nearly eight o’clock when he left the

railway station. He had written to his daughter that he should be home that night, and fearing she would be anxious, he resolved to get through, although warned of the lonely and somewhat perilous character of the way. "Five mile forest" did not bear a very good name, and there was the usual amount of stories of "unfortunate peddlers" told of it. He had little faith in the generality of stories of that description, and set out, a little after dark, on his walk. The night was cloudy and dark, but he was well acquainted with the way, and found no difficulty in keeping the road.

About half an hour after striking into the woods, he fancied that he heard steps behind him. He paused and listened. He was not mistaken; he could hear distinctly the steady clump, clump, of a pair of heavy boots. Feeling a trifle nervous, he started again; but the heavy boots rapidly gained on him, and in less than ten minutes overtook him. He bade his fellow-traveller a courteous good-evening, and received in reply a stunning blow on the left temple, which sent him reeling to the ground. He was vaguely conscious of being drawn rapidly through the weeds and thick underbrush that lined the road. His overcoat was unceremoniously stripped from his back, his pockets rifled, and with a parting kick, the robber left him to his fate; and he could hear the steady clump, clump of his boots growing fainter and fainter in the distance, when suddenly a rifle shot rang out, sharp and clear, thoroughly arousing his half-paralyzed faculties, and causing him to spring quickly to his feet. Drawing off his boots, he ran as swiftly and noiselessly as possible in the direction of the report. The sudden gleam from a dark lantern fell across the road but a few rods ahead of him. He lay down on his face, with his head slightly raised, and by keeping in the thick underbrush, managed to work himself along somewhat nearer. To his astonishment, he discovered that the robber had himself been robbed, and bending over him was a tall man well muffled about the face.

"Curses on the luck!" he heard him mutter. "I'm not sure it's him, after all." Then plunging his hand in his pocket, he drew out a pocket-book, and holding it to the light, he opened it and examined it.

"All right," he exclaimed, in a tone of exultation. "That shot made such ugly work with his face, I didn't half know him."

The voice sounded strangely familiar, and a gleam of the lamp falling for an instant across his face, as he turned down the light, he saw, and *knew the man*.

The terrible shock came over him with such overwhelming force that for some moments he was utterly incapable of thought or motion. He saw him as in a dream, take out the money, and throw the rifled pocket-book on the ground, and, with a quick glance about him, go to a little clump of thick brush, and taking from thence a horse, mount him and ride away.

He lay for some time, trying to decide what course to pursue. He was evidently the man's intended victim, and to this—to him—most fortunate robbery, he was indebted for his life. He had never much faith in Geoffrey Loydd, from the first time he met him in a gambling-house in San Francisco; but had not thought him quite capable of this. He was well satisfied, when he came home and found him his daughter's husband, that he had discovered in some way that he

had amassed quite a fortune, and for that reason had sought her out and married her. He saw how opposed he was to the search he was making for Arthur, and could easily guess the reason.

“But my girl loved him,” he went on, “and I shrank from throwing a shadow over her happiness, poor child! It was little enough I had ever added to it. At length I determined to let them think me dead, for a while, at least. Rising, I retraced my steps, and waited at the station for the midnight train which stopped at that place. I had still money about me—I had not lived in the mines so long without learning wisdom—more than thrice the amount stolen, and determined to be dead to them; for I confess my coming had been little like what I had pictured it through the long, toilsome years.

“I went to Europe—went in a sailing vessel, working my passage. After I arrived in Liverpool, I jobbed round, speculated a little, went across to Ireland, and from there I sailed for France. Afterwards I went as far north as Norway, and by easy stages back again.

“Three months ago I landed at New Orleans, came up the Mississippi, and by the way of the lakes, home. I bought those things,” pointing to the white whiskers and wig, [“]at Buffalo, and came to M. disguised in them. I there learned, for the first time, of the tragic death of my poor Angie, and knew at once *whose* hand had done the cruel deed. I also heard that one Aleck Gray was accused of the murder. The old hope revived in my heart that it might possibly be my lost boy, and I at once hastened here, when by chance I met Miss Turner, through whose heroism, and courage, and perseverance, Geoffrey Loydd, the double murderer, is at last fairly ‘hunted down.’”

Amid cheers and shouts, Aleck, or rather Arthur Gray, was released from custody—fully and honorably acquitted. His pretty Nellie, her snowy cheeks flushed with excitement, leaned proudly on his arm, laughing and weeping by turns, while the happy father beamed proudly on them both.—Completely cowed and overcome, Geoffrey Loydd confessed his guilt, admitting that his object in throwing suspicion on Arthur was to get him out of the way, and thus become sole heir to the property; for which he had married Angie, having been previously engaged, however, to his present companion, who first suggested his marrying this girl, and getting the property; after which they were to devise some means to get rid of the “encumbrances.”

He was sentenced to suffer the extreme penalty of the law; and his companion, being apparently accessory to the crimes, was committed to prison for life; but one morning the warden found her with one small white hand under her smooth, childish face, over which her sunny hair fell in tangled masses; the blue eyes were stony and cold, and a little bottle labelled “morphia” was on a stool at her side.

For a long time Ann Turner hovered between life and death. The ball had been extracted, but she had bled profusely, and the wound was an ugly one. The surgeons gave little hope of her recovery, and indeed, the marble face that lay so many days motionless among Mrs. Winthrop’s snowy pillows, gave little cause for hope. But after awhile, the strength came reluctantly back to the nerveless limbs, and the slow color flushed faintly through the transparent skin. Everything that the most faithful care and tender nursing could do, everything that money could accomplish for her comfort, was gratefully and lavishly done. The Grays were continually devising ways and

means to attest their great gratitude, and if unlimited petting could spoil Ann Turner, she was in a fair way to be spoiled.

As she convalesced, Mr. Winthrop got very much in the habit of reading to her, and got also in the habit of watching the clear gray eyes kindle and darken, and the soft rose deepen in her cheek. She was very charming in her pretty, pale pink wrapper, which Nellie had brought up a good many days before she was able to have it on. Every trace of coarseness had faded out of her face, and the old independence and willfulness had in a measure gone with it.

Mr. Winthrop was called away on business, to be gone a week. It was a terrible long week, and he got so hungry for the sight of a pale, noble face, with faint sea-shell tints in the thin cheeks, and darkening flashes in the clear, cool eyes, that it seemed as if the days were each a week long. At last, the last one came, and with a light heart he set his face homeward. It was evening before he arrived, and long before he was in sight of the house, he leaned out of the carriage, looking for the softly-shaded light that he knew was burning in the southeast chamber. But alas! no soft, flickering beam shone through the closed blind. There was a light in the kitchen, where he knew his careful mother was keeping supper for him, and a bright, cheery glow fell across the yard from the sitting-room windows; the rest of the house was in shadow. Perhaps she was able to come down, he thought, and was going to surprise him. Only his mother's pleased face looked up at his entrance.

"Where is she, mother?" holding her hand in both of his.

"Annie? O, I couldn't keep her any longer; the Grays came up yesterday, and had got the doctor's consent to her removal; and Nellie thought she had better be moved before you came home."

"Why?" abruptly, facing round.

"I didn't have need to inquire, Arnold."

"Didn't *she* want to stay, mother?"

"I think she thought it was best, too."

"Mother, I *shall* see Annie before I sleep. Confound conventionalities!" he added, savagely.

"I thought you would, Arnold," said his mother, smilingly.

He came up to her, and taking her face between his hands, kissed her on each cheek.

"You will love her, mother, for my sake?"

"Yes, Arnold; and her own, too."

Nellie Gray sat combing out the soft brown braids, stopping every few minutes to look at the pale sleeper, on the charmingest of little cot-beds, that had been brought down into the great, cool, airy west room, "because it was so much easier than the sofa," she said.

Annie—as they all called her now—had lain talking, and in the pauses, had fallen into a light sleep. The pink robe was loosened at the throat, and the beautiful, snowy neck and bosom rose and fell with her light breathing. Presently the gray eyes flashed wide open.

"Did you hear anything, Nellie?" she said, eagerly.

"No; you have been dreaming, dear."

"I guess I have. I thought *he* had come."

"He? Whom do you mean?"

"Mr. Winthrop," a sudden blush surging up over the snowy neck and bosom, and blossoming brightly in the cheeks.

"And so he has, dear child," said a deep, tender voice, from the shadow of the great fireplace; and Arnold Winthrop came eagerly forward to the little cot-bed, and bending over it, kissed the beautiful crimson cheeks, which she, in sudden shame, was trying to hide.

"Really, Mr. Winthrop," began Nellie, with considerable dignity for such a little thing.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Gray, but," taking her lightly by the shoulder, "allow me to say I shall 'contest the case.' I am not at all pleased with your manner of conducting things, and I shall not submit quietly. Your act of *habeas corpus* is terribly illegal, and the sooner you beg my pardon, and ask me to excuse you, the better for us both," smiling, and looking significantly toward the half-open door, toward which he had turned her. She was a sensible little woman, and took the hint!

I should be delighted to tell you all the charming particulars of the lawyer's wooing, only I don't know myself! for Nellie was too honorable to listen, and though she did *happen* to glance back, she only got a confused glimpse of pink cashmere and black broadcloth in the most delightful proximity.

But everybody knew the result, when a month later Ann Turner was mysteriously transformed into Mrs. Arnold Winthrop. Some people were "surprised," and some young ladies turned up their pretty noses at the idea of a man of Mr. Winthrop's standing marrying a girl who had been "out to service." But Arnold Winthrop and his noble wife were too happy to care for anybody's comments; and as the Grays, who were now very wealthy people, were very intimate with her, she soon became very much the fashion, and was quoted upon all occasions.

One day there was a quiet execution, and the law of the land—whether right or wrong—was vindicated. The papers said Geoffrey Loydd died a repentant man; but alas! it could not re-

animate the still form “under the daisies,” or bring back to the yearning hearts of John and Arthur Gray their “little Angie.”

The Flag of our Union, February 9, 1867