

ALLEN GRAY;

—OR—
The Mystery of Turley's Point.

Being a Few Romantic Chapters From the Life of a Country Editor.

BY JOHN M. MURKIN,
AUTHOR OF "THE BURNING OF THE BARKER OF REDBORN,"
AND OTHER STORIES.

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CHAPTER I. THE FIRST ISSUE.

IN the midst of those venture-crowned hills on the banks of the Missouri, nesting among the dunes and forests, like a timid bird, was a little town, which, for sale of convenience, we will call Turley's Point. It is a river town, and yet the river is not its street; and many times the boats which still occasionally plow that muddy stream pass by without catching a glimpse of the dull, sleepy little hamlet. The town is in a valley, or rather lap of land, among high hills, with just a narrow, oblique opening between two ridges, revealing the broad bosom of the river to view, and is one of the quietest places in the whole world. A small brook gilds the village, with just murmur enough to lull one to repose; and from the streets the sound of the quail can be heard, as if it were a weekly newspaper, just as if they were a century before the foot of the white man trod their sacred haunts.

Turley's Point was in a state of helpless decay. Long before the days of railroads, it being a steamboat landing, seemed to evade some signs of prosperity, and grew and thrived, but a narrow railway began to unroll, and absorb river navigation. Bentonville, a rival town eight or ten miles below, having secured one of the modern highways of traffic, began at once to prosper at the expense and detriment of Turley's Point. Men having business interests at the latter place neglected various means to rescue the drooping energies of the Point, but their most heroic efforts could not generate even an embryonic boom. Slowly but surely it was going down, and unless something was done to revive its business interests it was only a question of time when the village would be entirely deserted.

"We must advertise, we must advertise," Tom Simmons, an ambitious politician and property owner, often declared. The question of advertising was given serious consideration by the leading citizens of this moribund village. After mature deliberation it was decided that Turley's Point must have a weekly newspaper, which was to be a rival of the Bentonville Gazette. Tom Simmons was appointed one of a committee of five to find a suitable person to manage such an institution, and in a few weeks reported that by making some donations to the enterprise, they could secure a young man willing to undertake the precarious business of establishing a paper at Turley's Point.

Early one summer morning one of those lonely steamers, which still occasionally wander up the Missouri, like the ghost of its former glory, sounded the whistle and rattled the bell when opposite the Point, and gracefully swung into the landing. The place about four and twenty years ago walked ashore. It was Mr. Allen Gray, the prospective editor of the new paper. It was not for lack of home talent that an editor had been imported to Turley's Point. Allen Gray had not without its literary aspirants. There was Toby Barnes, the poet, and Miss Leahy Hopkins, the poetess, essayist, novelist and general "literarian," and many others capable of managing a weekly newspaper; but as neither of those persons possessed the required capital, it was necessary to find some one who did.

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"This is your office," said the voluminous Mr. Simmons, as they passed in front of an old, dilapidated building, which had at one time been used as a general store. "There is plenty of room here for your press and every thing. This is the best we can do, and when your business grows, you know, we can build an office to suit it."

By this time the news had spread all over the village that the new editor had arrived, and the little town, for the first time in years, took on something like excitement. Toby Barnes hastened to the building which was to be the newspaper office, for an introduction, and as soon as it was possible for him to do so, secretly informed the new publisher that he was a poet, and would have one of his effusions fit the very first issue of the new paper. Allen had been long enough in the newspaper business to feel the thrill of having an editor, for an editor would at once be in contact with a local poet. Then Miss Leahy Hopkins, the ancient maiden, was next to seek an introduction, and asked the new publisher with the fact that she was a versatile writer. She wrote stories, "poems in rhyme or blank verse," "tragedies, comedies, essays, and, in fact, every thing from an epic to a humorous paragraph. Miss Hopkins devoted her leisure hours, when not engaged in literary work, to teaching the village school. She was tall and slender, her nose was in the Hebrew plan, her small eyes seemed to glow triumphantly through her glasses, and she astonished the new editor with her multifarious accomplishments.

to the concern; "that'll not do at all. Better not give it a name that 'ud indicate a political paper. This is to be an independent organ, for the upholders of Turley's Point must be very careful what name we give it."

"What'd you suggest, George?" asked Simmons.

"The Star of Turley's Point," would be more euphonious," put in the poet, "and those are suitable," said the new publisher.

"Call it Turley's Point Express then," suggested Strong.

Objections, however, were found to that. Then Mr. Simmons, whose ambition soared beyond the narrow confines of Turley's Point, suggested that some broader name be chosen.

"Don't have Turley's Point in it at all," he said. "Call it by some name that will go out all over the West, and bring in glory to Turley's Point."

This seemed sensible, and a hundred inapplicable titles were at once suggested, but almost instantly discarded. At last the new editor was appealed to as the proper person to name the paper, it being his own.

"If you want a general name, one euphonious, and at the same time dignified and awe-inspiring, call it the 'Western Republic.'" The name seemed to suit every one. Toby Barnes thought it sufficiently poetic; Miss Hopkins, who was present, declared it romantic. It was sufficiently broad for the expanding ambition of Mr. Simmons, and practical enough to suit the capitalists.

Strong, who had been the champion of the display wood type on hand the heading. With the aid of the foreman, Doc Hatchett, and printers' devil, Toby Smith, he proceeded to put the office in shape. The villagers crowded in the room and about the windows to gaze at the cases, fonts of type, hand press and "jobber," wondering what was going to be done with all them things.

Next day every thing was in shape ready for business. The editor had clipped some appropriate articles from the four exchanges which were therefore the publishers to send him in advance, and the foreman was putting them in type. Toby, the apprentice, was standing on a box in order to be high enough to reach the case, with a stick in his hand, trying to acquire the art of putting type into it. He was putting the letters up-side down, but the printer, seeing this, in fact doing all sorts of odd things which only a beginner at printing can. Allen Gray was writing his salutatory, a task not so easy as some may imagine. The manner in which a new editor introduces himself to the publisher is very important. If the publisher is a fancy success is assured, but if he fails to do this, he might have to struggle for weeks to overcome the bad impression his introduction to the public made.

The opening address is always read with a great deal of care. In it the editor makes his pledges to his readers, and the average reader seems more anxious to know what these pledges are than to see that they are kept.

"Let that matter rest. Don't mention the old house, don't go near it. We want the thing to die out if it kin. It's a curse to Turley's Point, and least said is soonest mended. Without attempting any further explanation, then, let us, vent on, leaving the new editor more interested than ever. He sat a few moments wondering what that remarkable mystery could be, and then, bethinking himself that his salutatory was not finished, seized his pencil and resumed his work.

Again the door of his dining office was darkened. It was Toby Barnes who came with a roll of MS. under his arm and the smile of a successful poet on his face.

"I've got a few little pieces here that I want to read," he said, dropping down upon a seat by the editor's side.

"Leave them to be read at my leisure," said the editor.

"No, no, you can't understand it half so well as I'll read it myself. Now just listen here." He unrolled some manuscript, of which he was evidently very proud, and putting one foot on the table, tilted his chair backward and began:

"THE WAIL OF THE SWAMP SPIRIT."
"The dark deep green all wood,
Where even shadows fall,
Where the giant oaks have stood,
Stately, grand and tall,
From the trees green swamps arise,
A ghastly form of light vapor,
With cheeks of death and hollow eyes—"
"How much more of that have you?" interrupted Allen.

"There are fifty-six pages in all." "You had better bring it out in book form." "I thought I would first run it in the 'Western Republic.'" "But our paper is not copyrighted, and some unscrupulous publisher might steal this from you."

His remark was so clear that the poet became alarmed, and, closely rolling his manuscript as if he feared the precious treasure might be taken from him, hurried home to lock it up. Smiling at his successful ruse, Allen finished his salutatory, and, gathering up what news he could about the dull little village and surrounding country, handed in sufficient original copy to fill the local columns.

There were some advertisements to go in the paper, several clippings, and the form was made up. Miss Hopkins sent her regrets that, owing to a spell of neuritis, she would not be able to prepare any thing for the first issue, but she would be ready to do so for the second. Allen was well pleased to mentally thank that spell of neuritis. After the form had been made up and planned down, it had to be unrolled to insert the startling intelligence that Mrs. Smith had gone to visit her married daughter, Mrs. Jessie Stone, at Pippinville, and the form was locked up, planned down, put on the press, and the first issue of the 'Western Republic' run off and sent to the world.

CHAPTER II.—A MYSTERIOUS DISCOVERY.
Allen Gray had done all that under the circumstances could be done to make the first issue of the 'Western Republic' bright, spicy and new. He was now to realize the results of his work, and he would be the owner of his paper. Toby, the carrier, went out to deliver the paper to the people in the immediate vicinity of the office. He was as faithful in the performance of his duty as the average carrier on his first trip; but he had not returned half an hour before Mr. Scott, another capitalist in the town, who had given five dollars to have the paper established, and in addition subscribed for one copy, but at the office his face darkened as a thunder-cloud. In a voice of repressed anger he cried:

"Why didn't you send me a paper? Your confounded boy went right by my store and never said turley. If this is the way I'm to be treated, I never want to see you here. Allen, a little confound the angry merchant, tried to mollify him, and hoped it would never occur again.

"I'm his first trip. Mr. Scott, I assure you he will learn better soon. The boy over-looked you."

"Humph! over-looked me, did he? I supposed I'm not to be troubled with a ragged, bare-footed, stub-toed printer's devil, am I?" Allen learned the folly of telling men they had been forgotten. One does not wish to seem so unimportant as to be forgotten, and to forget one is at best a lame excuse. Allen assured the merchant it should never occur again, gave him two copies and promised him a personal mention in his next issue. The new editor, who in the midst of an article when Mr. Cross, the produce and grocery man, came in with a paper in his hand and fury in his eyes.

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for with surprise. His bearing indicated that he belonged to a different sphere than that of the editor of the paper.

"I want to subscribe for your paper," he said, in a deep, mysterious voice. "What is the subscription price for a year?" "The subscription price is fifty cents," the editor replied, in no way affected by the foreign-looking man's money on the table. "What is the name and address?" "Allen asked, opening his subscription book.

"Send it to X. Y. Z., post-office box 141," answered the tall stranger, and then, without another word, stalked away from the office.

"Who is that man, Toby?" the astounded editor asked, watching the receding form through the window.

"I don't know—nobody knows," Toby answered. "He's the mysterious man who lives in the big house on the hill."

CHAPTER III.—SOME DIABOLICAL VIEWS—POLITICAL AMBITIONS.
Allen sprang to his feet and hastened to the door. The twilight shades were deepening into darkness, yet he could distinguish the outline of the tall man hurrying up the hill-side road. There was something so fascinating in the mystery surrounding the stranger that Allen felt a strong inclination to follow and learn more of him.

"Toby, were you ever in that stone house on the hill?" he asked.

"No, sir," Toby answered.

"What do you know about it?" "Nothing much," was the evasive response.

"Does he often come to the village?" "No." "Well, if you know any thing about those people who live there, cast an uneasy look about his shoulders, and said: 'Tant much I know, and tant much I want to know.' 'Tell me just what you do know, and all that you've heard of.' 'I've been to the house two or three times,' said Toby, in an awe-inspiring whisper. 'But that's a great high wall all round it, so one can't see inside. Tommy Miles once peeped through the back-yard wall, and says he saw the prettiest girl he ever set eyes on in his life. People say they kill folks up at that big house.' 'When was the house built?' asked Allen, hoping to get the boy back from speculation to answer facts.

"I don't know," Toby answered. "I was long ago I was born." "Do you know who built it?" "No. I've heard my say it was built by some rich people who lived there long ago, and then left."

"How long have these people lived here, Toby?" "It's only been a few months since they come back the last time. They won't be nothing to do with 'em, and we've not been told who they come from."

"Where did they come from?" "No 'n' knows. The house had been there a long time, except a kind of people ated there was a kind of folk of it. The man was cross an' wouldn't talk nuthin' but French, an' the old woman was deaf an' dumb. The boys used to try to get in the orchard, but the old folks came out with a gun an' swore in furren language at 'em, an' 'sliced 'em so bad they wouldn't go nigh it. Then their been some awful sights seen there 'nights," concluded Toby, shuddering.

"What were they?" "Well, Tommy Miles said he hoped he might drop dead if 'twasn't so. He was comin' home through the woods one night, an' thought he'd risk comin' by the rock house. When he got nigh it, he heard a awful scream just like some one was bein' killed, an' every window in the house was a great blaze o' light. He said he'd swear he saw a woman standin' at a window with wings just ready to fly when some un pulled her back. Then old Dobbs went by there one night an' saw the blinds an' curtains all alike like, an' people flyin' round the ceiling."

"Who is this man Dobbs?" "He's an old fellow who lives out in the country on a farm." "Does he drink?" "Like a fish." "I guess he had been drinking that day, which accounts for his seeing the wonder-ful sights at the old house."

"Allen thought of all subjects on earth: head but would be least calculated to inspire one with poetic thought.

"I shall I read it," she said. She was a lady and could not refuse to listen, and she read:

"You (cautiously, leathery, unspun) but, 'Send round the room a id in my hat, Or haste to escape as the door."

"I am pressed for time, Mr. Barnes," pleaded the editor. "Leave it and let me read it at my leisure."

"Oh, no, it will not take long," replied Toby, with a commanding smile.

WAGE-EARNING WOMEN.

From a Report by the Commissioner of Labor.

A quarter of a century ago most avenues of employment were closed to women. The occupation available to them were generally unremunerative and often distasteful. Since that time, however, conditions have bettered wonderfully in this respect, and it appears from the annual report of Carroll D. Wright, Commissioner of the Department of Labor, that women are now extensively employed in 342 occupations.

One of the most remarkable showings in Mr. Wright's report is that in all the great cities the working-women are practically girls. Their average age in all the cities comprehended in the report is 22 years and seven months. The highest average, 25 years and one month, was found in Savannah, and the lowest, 21 years and five months, at St. Paul. The bulk of the 17,247 women interviewed by the compilers of the statistics were between the ages of 18 and 20. The average age was raised by the presence of a considerable number of women past middle age.

These figures prove, if they mean any thing, that the great majority of women who work for wages marry early in life, and in this fact many employers find a justification for paying lower wages to their female than to their male employees. The latter begin with an intention to make that position a stepping stone to matrimony. The former in many cases regard it as a mere makeshift.

Another interesting fact is that 14,120 of the 17,247 women interviewed are native born. The parents of great majority of these, however, were foreign born. Of the whole number only 745 women are married, while there are 1,638 widows. Those in perfect health number 14,551, which argues well for the general sanitary condition of American workshouses. Good homes are possessed by 12,021 of the women, but many of the remainder exist under the most miserable and discouraging conditions.

The average yearly earnings of women in the leading industries are given as follows:

Artificial flowers, \$77.50; awning and tent, \$76.80; book-binding, \$77.31; boots and shoes, \$81.93; candy, \$121.29; carpets, \$78.74; case boxes, \$35.36; cigar factory, \$69.60; cigar factory, \$266.12; clock factory, \$29.56; clothing factory, \$34.26; cotton mills, \$28.32; dress making, \$77.67; dry goods stores, \$69.84; jewelry factory, \$25.74; laundry, \$114.75; mattress factory, \$81.83; men's furnishings, \$69.84; millinery, \$14.90; paper-box factory, \$2.67; printing, \$30.60; tobacco factory, \$27.67; printing, \$30.60; tobacco factory, \$35.40; smoking-tobacco factory, \$28.72.

A careful study of these figures is very instructive. They might have been made more valuable, however, had not Mr. Wright's agents confined their investigations to the women employed in purely manual labor. These form but a small portion of the working women of the country. Thousands of others are engaged in teaching, in telegraphy, in stenography, as clerks and in the professions. It is a pity that Mr. Carroll did not make a more comprehensive and thorough report.—Albany (N. Y.) Journal.

SECOND-HAND PLATE.

A New York Refiner Repeats Some of the 'Meeting Post's' Sad Stories.

"Yes, indeed! we have many queer visitors. All sorts of people come here to sell second-hand jewelry and plate, and they nearly all want money badly. The most interesting, however, to my mind, are the little bent old ladies who have seen better days and survived their families and friends only to be among the poor and needy. Such an old woman was in this afternoon to sell three or four battered spoons, the sole remnants of plentiful days. They're often a romantic association connected with the possession of jewelry or plate not entertained for other property. My visitor begged me to break up the spoons in her presence. She feared that they might fall to the use of other persons. 'They were given me for a wedding present fifty years ago by my husband,' she said, 'and I don't want them knocked about by strangers.' I broke them up and put them in the melting pot, and she toddled off satisfied."

"Just before I closed up last night a frail old woman came in to sell her wedding ring. 'I wouldn't pawn it,' she said, 'because I might never be able to redeem it, and then some one else would buy it and wear it. I couldn't bear to think of that, so I want you to melt it down.' Only a few days ago I bought an ancient silver service from a rich but eccentric epistler who lives in a big house up town all alone with her servant. She said that according to the natural order of things she couldn't expect to live much longer, and she didn't propose to have her silver used by any rich upstart. I smashed up the pieces, and had it melt them before her very eyes."

"Last Christmas Eve I bought the plate of an old French family who came here many years ago for political reasons. They managed to earn a comfortable living, until sickness and misfortune overtook them, and they had to part with the plate used by their ancestors to pay doctor and undertaker. People like this wouldn't dream of selling such articles in second-hand stores. Tender memories are focused there. Their only resource is the melting pot."—Jeweler's Weekly.

Hotel Proprietor—"What have you said or done to that lady that she showed pass you in that angry way? Her eyes darted fire at you." Clerk—"She expected a letter in this morning's mail, and I told her it hadn't come."—Palladium Record.

In a scientific report upon health resorts it is said: "It can not be pressed too earnestly upon the authorities of all health resorts that no natural advantages of situation or climate or any guaranty against the possibility of natural remorselessly exacting or any infringement of her laws; and that they, in common with every large aggregation of humanity, must offer the elementary essentials of healthy existence—pure air and pure water—before their special advantages can be realized and their just value."

