

## ANAEL'S CHRISTMAS GIFT.

*A Fair and Worthy Reaper.*

John Payne was a curious character who lived in the northern part of Indiana for several years. He was a shiftless fellow with no ambition for advancement in his financial or intellectual condition, but was content in working small patches of ground about his place sufficiently to obtain a mere living. His place had a forlorn appearance, as if it were unoccupied rather than being the abode of an able-bodied man. His neighbors had split surplus logs into rails, making strong fences around their farms, and had whitewashed the walls of their log cabins giving them a bright appearance. With energetic perseverance they had cleared large tracts of land, utilizing the ground that the thick briar patches and forests had before covered, for raising extensive crops. The country was nearly one entire mass of forests and thickets before the white settlers pushed into its midst and began to clear away their selected farms for making a permanent settlement. Usually they settled in groups for protection and companionship to each other.

It was in the 40's that John Payne came west and selected a small farm near one of these groups. He was a widower, and had a boy of ten and a girl of five. The neighbors were always glad to see an addition to their "flock," as they often termed it, and aided John to construct his log cabin, and to get him settled in his new home. Although they found him to be a poor addition afterwards, yet he never bothered his neighbors, nor gave them any cause for complaint. He stayed at home most of the time, except when he went to the village, about eight miles east, to trade, and learn the news. Payne's stock consisted of two bony horses and a cow of doubtful age. He had but few farming implements, of the most rude kind.

In spite of his unsociability he was kind to his children, and a total abstainer from the

use of intoxicating liquors. His son, Harold, was a strong boy for his age, and did much about the place. The daughter, Anael, was too young to do anything when they first came west, but had a sweet disposition which filled the home with sunshine, and drove away the lonesomeness of this back-woods abode. The first five years soon passed away, and Anael had assumed the household cares, while Harold did most of the work on the farm, for his father was adverse to labor, and only did so at first to keep from starving. Now that his children were growing old enough to relieve his shoulders from laborious duties, he took to hunting and idleness with increased eagerness.

The woods were full of wild flowers, and Anael often spent an afternoon in gathering a beautiful bouquet of violets, buttercups, daisies, ferns, and dozens of others varieties of enhancing beauty.

In the early 50's the California gold fever was still raging, and penetrated to this back-woods neighborhood. Another unhewn man, about of like character to Payne, dwelt some four miles away, and they resolved to join a party going west in search of the hidden wealth. He put all his belongings in one wagon, over which a rude cover was fashioned. The farm was traded for two good teams, and some money to carry on the expenses of the trip, and living expenses until more was acquired from the mountains. A string of eight wagons journeyed westward, comprising fifteen able-bodied men and boys, and a little over half that many women. A strict guard was kept but no intruders bothered them.

After a six month's journey they arrived at their new destination during the last of November. Once in the famous gold valleys they began to look for a claim. They found great difficulty in obtaining a location in any