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\* THE GRAY MASK. \*  
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By Mildred Caroline Goodridge.

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When Robert Crandall and his pretty wife adopted little Dot, an orphan child thrown on the world without a friend or relative, good old Dr. Bross, the minister, told them that a blessing would surely come to them.

Certainly pleasure and happiness did. When the prattling, lovable lit-



The Strangely Mated Twain Would Wander Over the Garden.

tle tot was five years of age she had become the light and joy of the childless couple. She was odd, but this originality lent a charm to her unusual personality. She would talk to a rose or a toad an hour at a time, interested and fearless, weaving some pleasant ideality about each object.

The Crandalls had a pleasant

home, but it had been left to Robert with a heavy mortgage on it. Work had been slack and they were forced to economize. They never grudged the little darling who had crept into their hearts so winningly what she cost them, but they hoped prospects would grow better, so they might calculate on giving her an education as she grew up.

A high stone wall separated the humble Crandall homestead from the grand Thorne mansion next door. Grand as was the spacious palace, however, with its beautiful garden space, it was a mere sepulcher in fact, the home of an afflicted and lonely recluse.

Reuben Thorne was the mystery of Brocton. He was known as "the man with the gray mask." He had come to the village about two years before the present time in a closed carriage and had immured himself in the place he had bought, as if glad to find a remote and safe hiding place.

Thorne lived entirely alone. Once a week a man came from the village to set the place in order. Otherwise Thorne performed the duties of cook and housekeeper individually. He never left the walled-in grounds until after dusk. Then he wore a gray silk mask that completely covered his face.

Those who met him, even when darkness partially obscured his strangeness of appearance, were startled. Nervous women watched him as they would a bogie. Children shrank from him. Then the story came out that his face was a mass of disfiguring scars. It was told that in another part of the country, handsome, young, rich, he had loved a beautiful girl. A dark beauty, whom he had never encouraged but who was mad after his love, in a fit of jealous rage precipitated a frightful tragedy. She stabbed his poor love to the heart, flung a bottle of corrosive liquid in his face, and then drowned herself.

There was pity in the minds of