

# The Bloomfield Times.

FRANK MORTIMER,  
Editor and Proprietor.

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## THE BLOOMFIELD TIMES

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FRANK MORTIMER.

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## THE MISSING BRIDEGROOM.

A TRUE STORY.

THE cars were an hour and a half behind time, and some doubts were finding expression about their getting through at all that night. The roads and by-ways were blocked with snow-drifts, and though the storm had ceased, and here and there a star shone through the thin cumuli, the strong wind filled the air with fine icy particles that blew in one's face most disagreeably.

"Unfortunately, this storm," said the station-master, drawing his cap down over his ears.

"Yes," was the brief answer.

"Reckon there won't be a wedding to-night, any way."

"The cars are coming, Mr. Alden," was the quiet remark of the young man addressed, not apparently noticing his companion's suggestive remark.

There was a little silence, broken only by the labored puffing of the engine, and the steady, monotonous ringing of the bell, as the train moved slowly up, the huge snow plow tossing the light snow in every direction.

By the light of a dingy lantern swinging in the wind under the narrow awning, the young man before-mentioned had scanned closely each passenger as he alighted. After the train moved off, and the men had disappeared inside, he went round to the end of the building, and unhitching a tall, powerful-limbed horse, sprang into the carriage and drove away.

"Guess there won't be a wedding at the colonel's to-night," said Alden, coming out of his little office in the corner of the room, and locking the door carefully after him.

"Why, what's up?" asked one of the men at the stove, and the storm—the matter under discussion—was instantly abandoned.

"Why, Morrill hasn't come. He was to have been here in the noon train, but he didn't come. Russ has been here waiting for over two hours, as glum as a tombstone."

"I don't believe this storm would have kept me at home if so pretty a girl as Letty Thornton was waiting to call me husband!" said one of them, laughing.

"Or any other girl pretty or ugly," was the quick rejoinder, followed by a general laugh, the speaker's weakness for the fair sex being somewhat notorious.

In the meantime Russell Thornton had rode home a long two miles, through the drifted country roads.

"If it weren't that everybody in this miserable little town knew of Letty's expected marriage it wouldn't be so annoying," he muttered petulantly, as he came in sight of home, and saw the great square house lighted from top to bottom. "The idea of Letty's name being in the mouth of every country boor—by Heaven! I believe I

should like to horse-whip Mr. Lancelot Morrill."

The door opened, and a little figure, looking itself like a snow-wreath, leaned out into the darkness, and called in the softest and clearest voice, with a little upward inflection:

"Lancelot?"

"He has not come—go in out of the snow, Letty," was the abrupt, almost sharp answer.

"Not come—O Russ!"

The young man sprang from the wagon and walked directly up to the startled, trembling little figure in the doorway. The pretty bloom had all faded out of the young face, leaving it as white as the robe she wore.

"What has happened, Russ? O, tell me at once! I have been nearly wild with suspense and alarm these two hours," she whispered, clinging to her brother's arm.

I presume there is some good reason for his detention, and doubtless to-morrow will bring it all right. I will go down and tell them that Morrill is detained by the storm, shall I?"

"Yes, O yes! And Russ, must I go down? I am so nervous!" And the little hands clutched each other convulsively.

"No, I'll make it all right with the company; thank Heaven they are only our friends. There, dear, keep up a brave heart," and he stooped and kissed the drooping lids with caressing tenderness, and went out.

The trains came through regularly the next morning, but no Lancelot Morrill made his appearance in Blainford. They waited till afternoon and then telegraphed to Dalton. The reply came back that Lancelot Morrill had left Dalton on the 10 A. M. train of the previous day, for Blainford.

Poor Letty Thornton lay in hysterics all that night, and Colonel Thornton swore fearful oaths against the man who had put this shame and slight upon his beautiful, petted daughter. Russell started immediately for Dalton, to gather all possible particulars relating to the strange affair. They were, however, of the most meagre and unsatisfactory character.

Mrs. Boone, Morrill's landlady, said that he had told her several days before that he was to be married on the twenty-fifth of January. He had mentioned it again, that morning, but had not said whether he should return there to board. His trunk and several suits of clothing were in his room just as he left them. He had also mentioned the fact of his intended marriage to his employer—he was clerk in a large clothing house—and he had advanced him two hundred dollars on his salary.

The latest and most direct testimony, however, was from the depot-master at Dalton. He had sold him a ticket the morning of the twenty-fifth of January for Blainford, and had seen him get on the train. And, strangely enough, no one seemed to have seen him afterwards. The conductor on the train was new on the route, and did not know Morrill, and had no particular recollection of the passengers who got on that morning at Dalton.

What could have become of him? In a car containing thirty persons, in broad daylight, he certainly could not have been murdered; and if any accident or illness had overtaken him, it must in like manner have been known. But no one had seen or heard of him after the car door closed upon him at Dalton. Detectives were put to work, rewards were offered, and every effort which human thought could suggest was made to get some trace of the missing man.

Months passed away, but skill and money were in vain, and the search was at length abandoned, and Lancelot Morrill was added to the list of mysterious disappearances, which so puzzle and bewilder human sagacity.

It was admitted to be one of the strangest of all those strange occurrences. A young man in perfect mental and physical

health, with the pleasing prospect of an advantageous union with one of the loveliest of women, disappears on his marriage day, and drops, apparently, out of existence in a breath, in the most invisible manner possible to human imagination.

Twelve years after the incidents recorded above, a steamer, crossing Lake Erie one summer evening, brought among its passengers, a quiet, retiring little woman, dressed in heavy morning, who registered her name as Mrs. Dinsmore, Montreal. She was evidently a stranger in Detroit, and altogether unacquainted with the names and character of the public houses. She naturally shrank from making inquiry of strangers, and they were fast nearing the city and the faint summer twilight was creeping softly over the river and the lake they had just left, and casting a faint gloom over the roof and spires of the approaching town.

Something about her—her isolation and reserve, perhaps—attracted the attention of a gentleman standing near her. He had noticed her once or twice before, and once was vaguely conscious of a desire to look in her face without an intervening cloud of almost impenetrable crape. Her hand, which was bare, was white and small, with faint dimples across the back. It was a very unusual thing for Mr. Montford to notice anything appertaining to a lady. He had been East, regularly four times a year for the last six years, and this was the first woman to whom he had ever given a second thought. Whether some unexplainable intuition revealed to her his interest in her I cannot tell, but with a sudden swift step she crossed and came to his side.

"Are you a resident of Detroit, sir?" she asked, in a low, clear voice.

"Yes; can I be of service to you, madam?" he replied, courteously, another strong desire to look in her face coming over him.

"If you would recommend some nice, quiet hotel where I could stay a few weeks, you would do me a favor. Not too expensive," she added, "comfortable and pleasant."

"I think I can, madam, just the place you describe," he replied, with a feeling of unusual gratification.

He then proceeded to inform her concerning the house, its location, scale of prices, accommodations, etc.

"I speak thus warmly of the place because it has been my home for nearly nine years, and I owe it a good word," he said, smiling. "You had better, though, ask some of those gentlemen, perhaps. They are old residents—men with families—and it might be more satisfactory to you to have their opinion."

"Thank you; but I think I will rely upon your recommendation," she replied, and with a bow walked away.

Mr. Montford had been East to purchase goods. He was a merchant, doing business in Detroit, and there was nothing unusual about that; but as he drove up to his hotel he was vaguely conscious of a feeling of intense satisfaction with himself and all the world. He had bought at very favorable rates—possibly this was the cause of his elevation. He, himself, believed it to be, and yet he found his thoughts continually straying from business, and to the surprise of his fellow-boarders he did not go to his store as usual that evening, but loitered about the office and parlors until bed-time.

If any one had told him he was waiting in expectation of seeing the lady with whom he had spoken on board the steamer, he would have repelled the intimation indignantly, and honestly too, it is so easy to deceive one's self. He did, however, feel it his duty, as he had recommended the house, to look at the books to see if she had accepted his recommendation and arrived safe. It would be well enough too, to know the lady's name, in case he should happen to meet her during her stay. He read it over twice or three times to himself, "Agnes L. Dinsmore, Montreal, C. W." This he knew was the name, for he had

seen the initials, "A. L. D.," in the corner of a handkerchief she had in her hand when she spoke to him.

He was a bachelor, and likely to continue so, people prophesied, for, though courteous and gentlemanly, he was never gallant or attentive to women in the least possible degree. Of course, therefore, it caused some remark among the boarders when the next morning after his return, instead of breakfasting at the first table, as was his invariable custom, he waited until the second, and when the stranger made her appearance opened a conversation with her, and even accompanied her into the parlor, tarrying there several minutes. It was supposed that the lady was an old acquaintance of Montford's, at first, but some one who had been a passenger on the steamer, and had heard the conversation between them, revealed the circumstance to one of the boarders, and the fact was duly circulated and marvelled over, and as the days went by, and the intimacy increased, the interest in the subject was intense. Was it possible that this shy, quiet little creature, without any visible effort, had captured this grave, unimpressible man, for whom so many cunning snares had been set in vain?"

Mrs. Dinsmore was a widow of thirty, or thereabouts, it was judged. Her husband had owned property in Monroe, a lake town lying south of Detroit. She had preferred stopping in Detroit, as Mr. Gorman, a lawyer who had sometimes done business for her husband, lived in that city. She proposed putting the business in his hands, and waiting in Detroit until the sale was effected.

Fortunately Mr. Montford was a particular friend of Gorman's, and at once volunteered to bring him to the lady. Mr. Montford also thought Mrs. Dinsmore had better see her property, before she deputed even so reliable a man as his friend to sell it, and as he—very opportunely—had business in Monroe, and was going to drive down in his own carriage, if she liked she could go down with him, and take a look at her possessions, all of which was very kind and friendly in Mr. Montford, and was so regarded by the lady, who already felt as if he were an old friend, and forgot her reserve and talked with him frankly of her affairs, saying little, however, of her previous life, save that she was without any nearer relative than an uncle, with whom she had been living since her husband's death, in Montreal. He was equally reticent regarding the past, but spoke freely of the present and future, of his hopes and plans—more freely than he often spoke of them to his closest friends.

During the next two weeks Mr. Montford's business at Monroe increased astonishingly. It was, moreover, quite a remarkable coincidence that it was always particularly pressing at those times when it was necessary for Mrs. Dinsmore to go down.

At length the business which had brought Mrs. Dinsmore to Detroit was settled, and the money received, and Mr. Gorman discharged from further duty in the matter.—There was no reason why the pretty little widow—for she was pretty—should tarry longer; but being her own mistress, there was no reason why she should not, provided she chose. She did choose, and another two weeks passed, and then she decided to go back to Montreal. Not because Montreal looked particularly attractive to her; on the contrary, she very much preferred Detroit, but after sitting down and cross-examining herself pretty closely, she decided, with a sudden blush, that it was best for her to go home immediately.

The next morning she mentioned, quite casually, of course, that she should leave on the following day. Mr. Montford, who was in the room in conversation with another gentleman, left him abruptly, and went out. He did not return at the dinner hour, but about four o'clock he drove up in his carriage, and went at once to the ladies' parlor. It was quite deserted, and ringing the bell, he requested the servant to ask

Mrs. Dinsmore to come down. The servant soon returned from his errand with the word that the lady was out.

Mrs. Dinsmore was walking slowly through the busy, hurrying crowd, as perfectly alone as if she were in the most impenetrable forest. Men and women crowded past her in their haste, but she did not look up. Her eyes were sad, and her lips tremulous, and a faint sigh now and then fluttered over them. Suddenly a carriage which she knew, drew up at the sidewalk a few rods in advance of her, and a gentleman sprang out. The blood surged to her face, but the friendly crape shielded her from observation.

"I was looking for you," he said, in a low tone, touching her arm, "will you ride?"

She gave him her hand and stepped into the carriage in silence. Very soon she became aware that they were driving away from the city. The noise, and smoke, and bustle fell away like a veil, and a soft calm brooded like a dove over the earth. The cool country road was sweet with wild roses, and pretty cottages and comfortable farm-houses were half hidden in the rank meadow grasses. Agnes Dinsmore drew a long fluttering breath and put her hand to her face, but not before her companion saw that her eyes were filled with tears. Mr. Montford was entirely unused to women in tears, and besides he was a very sympathetic man, and so put his arm about her in a friendly way to comfort her. She shrank away a little, and a hysterical sob broke from her lips.

"I am so foolish, Mr. Montford," she cried, blushing. "But something about this country stillness brought back a memory of the past—the long-buried past. It's very beautiful and sweet here."

"Yes, very beautiful," he replied, looking straight in her face, instead of at the pleasant summer landscape.

"I wonder where I shall be to-morrow at this time," she said, leaning out, to hide the confusion in her face.

"I wish I dared prophesy!"

"Are you among the prophets, Mr. Montford?" she asked, lightly; "if you are I should be happy to listen to some of your predictions."

"Not yet. I brought you out here to tell you a story of the past, Mrs. Dinsmore. I want you to listen to it, and tell me when I am done what you think should be the fate of this man—the one whose story I am about to relate, will you?" he asked with grave eagerness.

"I will try, but my judgment may be very faulty, and—"

"I shall be satisfied with it," he interrupted.

"I am ready then," she replied.

"Once upon a time," as the fairy stories say, a young man became very deeply in love with a beautiful girl. The girl was very wealthy and of high social standing.—The young man was also of good standing, and believed to be rich, also, by the friends of the girl. He had not thought of deceiving them at first, but by some misunderstanding his identity was confounded with his cousin, who had borne the same name, but who had been several years dead. This cousin had been worth a large property, and somehow this girl and her friends had the impression that he was the same man. It did not take him long to discover that a poor young man would stand little chance of marrying into that family. He was a scoundrel, I think, for not declaring his true circumstances at once, don't you?"

"He did wrong, I suppose, but if he loved the girl very much—"

"He did—or at least he believed he did," he interrupted, leaning forward so as to look straight in her face, "but you have not heard the worst that he did. He won the girl's affections, and believing him to be the rich, instead of the poor cousin, her friends consented to their marriage.—There would come a time when the truth must be made known, but she would be his