

# The Bloomfield Times.

FRANK MORTIMER,  
Editor and Proprietor.

AN INDEPENDENT FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

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One Dollar per Year.

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## The Bloomfield Times

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BY

FRANK MORTIMER.

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## CORRIE SHERWOOD'S HERO.

An Excellent Story.

"AH, SHERWOOD," the man said, with a short laugh, "everybody understands the move, as cleverly as it has been done. Of course you are expected to deny it; but any one with half an eye can see where the next partnership is to come in."

"By Heaven! Mordant, I'll not listen to such senseless talk," cried a quick, passionate voice, which poor Lindsey knew all too well.

"Ah! is that it?" in a surprised tone. "I thought you understood the turn matters were taking, and took the young fellow into the firm to take the curse off—pardon me for saying it."

"Perhaps you will enlighten me a little in regard to this matter," Mr. Sherwood said, in his haughtiest tone. "It is not possible any one has dared associate my daughter's name with this—this Lindsey!"

"I am sorry I mentioned it, really," Mordant said, apologetically. "It has been thought possible and even probable that Lindsey would some day marry Miss Sherwood. You surely are not blind to the fact that they are very intimate—for friends."

"I would sooner see my daughter lying dead, than married to Lindsey, Mr. Mordant. You can contradict all such shameful rumors," Sherwood replied, coldly.

If the allegation had been true, Alfred Lindsey could scarcely have felt worse, and the evening which had passed so delightfully, set in mortification and sorrow. A weary, restless night followed—a night of discouragement and bitter despair. It is no use, the tempter whispered, try as hard as you may, you will never be anything but "a Lindsey." You might just as well give up the struggle first as last.

The morning found him feverish and nervous. It was later than usual when he went down to the store. Two men were standing on the sidewalk, and when he opened the store, followed him in, amusing themselves by sauntering about, looking at the show-cases, and apparently making a mental valuation of the contents of the store.

"How long before I could see one of the partners?" one of them asked, sauntering to the door and looking back.

"I am one of the partners," Alfred answered, in a rather ungracious tone.

"Ah! May I ask if it is not something quite recent?"

"It is sir."

The men glanced at each other, and, one said in a low tone, "wait."

"We will come again. Good-morning, sir," bowing, and passing out as unceremoniously as possible.

It was perhaps half an hour later when Mr. Sherwood, senior, came in, and passed

at once to the office. Two hours were away; a few straggling customers dropped in, then came the post-boy bringing rather more than his usual complement of letters. Alfred took them into the office at once. Mr. Sherwood was sitting in a listless attitude, his chin resting on his hand. He sprang up with a little flash of excitement in his face as Lindsey came up to the desk, and took the letters with a short nervous clutch, running them over rapidly in his hand till he came to one superscribed in a coarse, scrawling hand. Tossing the rest on the table, he tore this open with hands that trembled visibly. It was very brief, for he crumpled it in his hand almost instantly, and sank back in his chair with a low groan.

"Take me home," he said, in a hoarse whisper, as Alfred held a glass of water to his white, drawn lips.

A carriage was at once brought to the back entrance, and leaning on Lindsey's arm, he walked out to it, and was driven speedily homeward, leaving his bewildered junior in a state of doubt and perplexity.

Slowly the hours dragged away, and the bell of the office clock rang out sharply—one sharp, ringing stroke. One o'clock! No word or hint from the great silent house on the knoll—not so much as an open door or blind all that long, long forenoon! Alfred Lindsey grew positively nervous watching it through the restless leaves of the beeches that ran in a slender zone about the soft, velvety knoll. Had some fateful hand fallen upon and paralyzed every living thing? The suspense was becoming intolerable, when the front door opened, and Robert came swiftly down the street. Lindsey stood in the door awaiting his arrival, a strange, overwhelming sense of danger shutting down upon him. He leaned forward eagerly, scanning his face, trying to get some hint of the story he felt lay behind its immobility and pallor.

"Ah, Lindsey! how hungry you look! Don't devour a fellow so with your eyes, man," he said, with a laugh, as he came up the steps.

Something in his tone—its lightness, perhaps—jagged upon his highly-strung nerves with such suddenness that it was with difficulty he could repress a cry. A moment, and he had himself in hand, and could laugh at his nervous anxiety.

"I believe I am a little faint," he said, taking up his hat. "I have no recollection of eating any breakfast," his face darkening at the remembrance of what it was that had taken away his appetite, and driven sleep from his pillow.

"You need not hurry back, Lindsey," young Sherwood said, turning over the leaves of a huge ledger, "I am at liberty, and if you are back by three, the time trade usually sets in, it will be soon enough."

"I have nothing to keep me so long unless I take a row up the river."

"Do, by all means," was the eager answer; "you keep too close indoors. Yes, take a good long row, and don't feel hurried about it."

"Thank you, I believe I should feel better. Do you know," laughing still a little nervously, "I imagined all sorts of terrible things about you up at the house, this forenoon."

"Why?"

The question came sharp and vibrant, and in a voice so strange that Lindsey involuntarily stopped and looked back at the speaker, feeling very much as if he had been hit by some invisible ball. But the face was turned away—it had been all the time—and the leaves of the ledger turned slowly, the white fingers slipping down mechanically. He quite forgot the question for the moment, but presently recollecting, answered:

"Your father was taken ill here this morning, you remember, and I suppose that, added to a sleepless night—"

"You should know nothing of sleepless nights—you who are free from—"

He paused abruptly, and as Alfred did

not choose to enlighten him as to the cause of his sleeplessness, there was no more said on the subject, or indeed on any other, for Lindsey went immediately out.

His dinner eaten, he went to the boat-house, but both boats were out. Well, he might go back to the store. He would take a stroll down street first, he thought, turning involuntarily in the direction of Mr. Sherwood's. He passed the house, noticing how still everything seemed, and how closely-shut the blinds were. He remembered all at once that he had not asked if Mr. Sherwood was better or worse. He saw Terry Dermott, the gardener, out in the field, and went out to him.

"How is Mr. Sherwood, Terry, better?" he asked, as soon as he could make a break in Terry's oration upon the relative merits of the various fertilizers in the market, and the mode of applying the same.

"Och, and ye must ask somebody else but I," he replied, with a mysterious nod which was very vaguely expressive. "I reckon though he be mighty bad, for there was no dinner ate in the house, only what I ate myself in the pantry, and Miss Corrie's eyes looked as if she had cried a week, when she came out to ask me to stay about the house—somewhere within call, she said—the afternoon."

"There's something strange about it," Lindsey said, under his breath, the old nervous, uneasy sensation taking possession of him, together with a feeling that he was needed at the store immediately. He had been away scarcely an hour, yet as he walked down the street it was with difficulty he could keep himself from breaking into a run. It seemed as if his feet were made of lead, they dragged so. He had experienced a similar sensation during sleep, but never before in his waking hours.

The store door stood slightly ajar when he came up. He walked directly through to the office. Something told him he would find the door locked, and without trying it he took a duplicate key from his pocket and endeavored to fit it in the lock, but the key on the inside prevented. There was, however, a smothered exclamation, and a sudden rustle of paper, and a hurried voice he scarcely recognized, asked, hurriedly:

"Is that you, Lindsey?"

"Yes, open the door, I want to come in," was the quick answer.

"Wait a minute, I am busy."

Lindsey went back to the store, and two ladies coming in, kept him busy perhaps fifteen minutes. At the end of that time, and just as they were passing out, Sherwood came to the door and called him.—He was deadly pale and his hands trembled, but there was a firm, hard look about his eyes and mouth which Lindsey had never seen there before.

"I want you to be off for Hartford in the half-past five train, Lindsey," he said, in a hurried, nervous way, quite unlike his usual open, calm manner.

"Certainly; but I must know what the trouble is, first. You look like a maniac."

"Do I?" passing his hand hastily across his forehead. "Well, I am not sure but I am—or shall be. You see we are in rather a tight place—if you insist on knowing. A bill for ten thousand dollars worth of goods. It is in the hands of one of the hardest men in existence. He would not hesitate an instant to shut up the store if every dollar was not forthcoming at the precise moment it was due. Five thousand dollars takes every cent of money the firm can command for a week. In this extremity we are obliged to borrow. You are therefore to take this check to Hartford, get the money, and return immediately."

"Mr. Morrison?" Lindsey said, looking at the check.

"Yes; he has accommodated us before, you probably remember."

"I think I once took one of his checks into the bank. A year or more ago, wasn't it?"

"I don't remember. He has helped us several times. I am going down to the

house, and will send Terry down with the team. He has got to go down to Windsor Locks, and you can ride down so far with him and take the train from there. I want you to attend to a few small bills that are due. I'll come down to the store again before you leave. By the way," pausing and looking back with his hand on the knob, and speaking cautiously, "I wouldn't say anything to any one, if I were you, about going down to the city."

"Very well," turning and going behind the counter, a troubled, perplexed expression on his face.

Several customers came in, and among them one of the men who had been in to inquire for one of the partners that morning. He said nothing about them, now, however, but bought a pair of gloves, loitering about the store till Terry drove up. Lindsey at once went out, leaving him in the store. Robert had ridden down with Terry, and paused a few moments, giving some additional directions concerning the business at Windsor Locks. Just as he was turning away, the man in the store sauntered leisurely out, bowing coolly to Sherwood as he passed.

"Who is that man Lindsey asked. "He came in company with another man very early in the morning and asked to see one of the partners, but he went away without mentioning any business."

"It is Clark Hunter," Sherwood replied, his face darkening.

Lindsey said no more; he understood at once, Clark Hunter had been a former suitor of Miss Austin's, Robert Sherwood's bride elect, and he had heard that there were not very pleasant relations between the rivals. Terry tried very hard to interest his companion in conversation during the journey to Windsor Locks. At length he hit upon a new topic.

"Some trouble between yourself and the old one?" he asked, insinuatingly.

"Mr. Sherwood, do you mean?" looking up surprised.

"Yes, the old gentleman. You see I heard it all last even," looking exceedingly wise. "It was after the company had all gone, and I just in from the stables, stopped a bit in the kitchen. The doors was open, and I heard the old chap say angry like, 'I'll never have my daughter a disgracein' herself in such a way,' or sumthin' like it."

"What did Miss Sherwood say?" Lindsey asked involuntarily, yet despising himself for listening to what was not intended for his ears.

"O," said the garrulous Terry, "she said never a word, only cried as if her little heart would break. And the old one, says he, 'Lindsey will not come here again, and I forbid you from meeting him, only in the presence of others—'"

"Stop, Terry!" Lindsey interrupted, suddenly. "I have no right to listen, or you to tell me this private conversation."

"But there wasn't only a bit more, and—"

"Not another word!" was the peremptory answer.

"Och, jist as ye likes, though if a nice, swate young lady said the likes of me I wouldn't stay away for as many ould ones as there is stars in the skies." And Terry chuckled inwardly at his smartness in putting the gist of Miss Corrie's answer so cleverly.

The business at Windsor Locks was duly attended to, the journey to Hartford made, the check duly presented, and at once cashed without question. The cashier knew young Lindsey, and had that morning seen among the business notices in the "Courant," the advertisement of the new firm, Mr. Sherwood and Mr. Morrison were both old customers at the bank, and had often accommodated each other, but never to quite so large an amount. Morrison was good, however, for five times that amount, and he dismissed all thought of it from his mind.

The evening train found Alfred Lindsey among its passengers. Just as they were

on the point of starting a young lady touched his arm timidly. He looked up, and instantly his face flushed scarlet.

"Mr. Lindsey, pray pardon me, but I am alone, and I suppose you are going to Grantley?" said a soft, hesitating voice.

Alfred arose hastily, and amid a little confusion on both sides—more than there was any apparent cause for—Miss Annie Morrison was seated beside him.

"I was so pleased when I saw you," she said—the faintest bit of an accent on the "you"—for I'm a perfect coward about riding alone at night. I missed the other train, and if I had not feared mother would be alarmed about me, should not have come tonight at all. I am so glad now that I did!" And she settled herself easily down beside Lindsey, who most cordially echoed the last sentence.

Ever since Alfred Lindsey, could remember, Annie Morrison had been the most beautiful and wonderful of creatures to his fancy. He had never touched her hand, or sat beside her, before—he had never expected so much happiness—and it is no marvel that the moments flew, and all the trouble and perplexity of the day were forgotten in the sweet delirium of the moment.

"I read something in the Hartford papers about you," she said, just before they reached Grantley. "Father said a year ago that Mr. Sherwood ought to take you into the firm. He didn't know it when he went away."

"Your father gone away!" Lindsey exclaimed, so suddenly that she gave a quick start, laying her hand on his arm.

"O Alfred, how you startled me!" she said, withdrawing it with a vivid blush.

"Pray pardon me," he stammered, between two contending emotions, of joy and alarm. "I had not heard your father was away—when did he go?"

"Yesterday morning. I went as far as Hartford with him. He has gone out to Uncle Charles' in Pennsylvania."

A terrible crushing sensation almost took his breath away—how came Robert Sherwood by that check?

A moment's reflection, however, served to alloy the fearful suspicion that had forced itself upon him. Knowing of the impending emergency, he had doubtless procured it several days before; but, in spite of this reasoning, he felt uneasy, and the strange illness of Mr. Sherwood, and Robert's subsequent unusual behaviour—the anxiety to get him out of the way, the locked door, the rustle of paper—all combined to fill him with a vague sense of apprehension. Even Miss Annie Morrison's sweet face was for the moment quite forgotten in the fever of emotion.

"Grantley!" called the conductor, putting his head in at the door.

Lindsey sprang up nervously, then colored suddenly as he caught the slightly surprised look in Miss Morrison's face.—She followed him out without speaking. The carriage was waiting for her, and Lindsey went with her, and though there was no particular need, as the coachman was waiting, handed her in, and heard her low "good-night, Alfred," with a vague impression that it was only a beautiful dream—he had heard that voice so often in dreams.

Mr. Sherwood still remained ill—at least he was not seen out. Three days has passed—three of evident anxiety and expectancy on the part of young Sherwood, who now remained almost constantly in the store, watching the mails with feverish eagerness. The morning of the fourth day Lindsey noticed among the letters one with the peculiar scrawling hand he had remarked before—the one had such a remarkable effect on Mr. Sherwood. He observed that Robert grew a trifle pale when he saw it, and that his hands trembled when he tore open the envelop, but he was not prepared for the bitter groan that burst from his white lips as they syllabled the one word, "ruined!"

CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.