

The Bloomfield Times.

FRANK MORTIMER,
Editor and Proprietor.

AN INDEPENDENT FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

Terms: IN ADVANCE
One Dollar per Year.

Vol. IV.

New Bloomfield, Pa., April 19, 1870.

No. 16.

The Bloomfield Times.

Is Published Weekly.

At New Bloomfield, Penn'a.

BY

FRANK MORTIMER.

SUBSCRIPTION TERMS.

ONE DOLLAR PER YEAR!

IN ADVANCE.

ADVERTISING RATES.

Transient—8 Cents per line for one insertion.
12 " " " two insertions.
15 " " " three insertions.
Business Notices in Local Column 10 Cents per line.
Notices of Marriages or Deaths inserted free.
Tributes of Respect, &c., Ten cents per line.

YEARLY ADVERTISEMENTS.

One Square per year, including paper, \$ 8 00
Two Squares per year, including paper, 12 00
Three Squares " " " " 16 00
Four Squares " " " " 20 00
Ten Lines Nonpareil or one Inch, is one square.

The Bank Robbery!

A GOOD STORY.

"IT is not of the least use to argue the question, father. Tell me plainly, yes or no, and I will bother you no more about it."

I cannot indulge you in this, Harry. Indeed, you should believe me when I say we cannot afford it."

Mr. Houghton leaned his head heavily on his hands as he spoke, and seemed to deprecate the displeasure of his handsome, impatient son.

"Very well, sir," said the youth of nineteen, his hand quivering as he arose with the anger he seemed striving to keep out of his words and tones. "I hope you will never be sorry for the trifle you have refused me to-night. I shall make the trip to Lake George, next week, nevertheless, if I have to sell grandfather's watch and chain to get the money."

A half groan came from the hidden face of Foster Houghton, and a reproachful "O Harry," from his mother, whose eyes had been filling with tears as she sat silent during the stormy interview. But the boy was angry and in earnest, and he twisted the chain in his waistcoat to give emphasis to the threat. As he took his cloak and cap from the closet, he continued:

"You need not sit up for me, or leave the door unlocked. I am going to Tinborough with the fellows to a strawberry party, and as there will be a dance, and the nights are short, I shall wait for daylight to come home, if I do not stop and catch a nap at the Valley House before starting."

"Who is going from Elmfield?" inquired the father, more from a desire to show an interest and win the boy from his moodiness, than from curiosity.

"Nearly everybody of my set, said Harry, with something of studied coldness. "Arthur Brooks and Tom Boxham and Frank Pettengill—and Harrison Fry, if you want the whole list."

His father turned sharply away, but the mother spoke appealingly:

"If you would cut off your intimacy with Harrison Fry, now and forever, I think there are few things your father would refuse you. I have seen his evil influence over you ever since he came back from the city. He was a bad boy and will be a bad man."

"Like myself and other wicked people," said the boy, looking at his watch. "Harry Fry is not so black as he is painted. But I am not so intimate with him as you fancy. As to father, I do not think his treatment of me gives him a claim to interfere with my friendships."

Henry Houghton shot his shaft de-iber-

ately, for he knew his father's sensitive nature, in which it would rankle cruelly:—and in a moment he was off, bounding through the low open window, and running with fleet steps down the sidewalk toward the common.

The family circle thus divided was that of the cashier of the Blue River National Bank of Elmfield. Foster Houghton was a man past middle age, and older than his years in appearance and in heart. He had petted his only son in his childhood enough to spoil most boys, and now made the balance even by repressing the exuberance of his youth with a sharpness sometimes no more than just, sometimes querulous and unreasonable. The boy's grandfather, old Peleg Houghton, who died a year before at ninety and over, had almost worshipped him, and on his deathbed had presented his own superb Froescham watch to the lad;—and both father and mother knew he must be deeply moved to speak so lightly of parting with it.

"I fear Henry is getting in a very bad way," said Mr. Houghton gloomily, after a pause in which the sharper click of his wife's needles told that her thoughts were busy. "He goes to the other church too often to begin with. He smokes, after I have repeatedly told him how the habit hurt me in my boyhood, and what a fight I had to break it off. He is altogether too much in Harrison Fry's company. He has been twice before in Tinborough, driving home across country in the gray of the morning. And this project of going alone on a week's trip to Lake George is positively ridiculous."

"Very likely you are the best judge, my dear," said Mrs. Houghton. She always began in that way when she meant to prove him otherwise. "I fully agree with you in regard to that reckless young Fry. But as to Harry's going to the Brown church, and his visits to Tinborough, I think the same cause is at the bottom of both. Grace Chamberlain has been singing in the choir over there, this spring, and now she is visiting her aunt at Tinborough. And as to that, she is going with her aunt's family to Lake George to spend July, and I suppose they have expressed a wish to meet him there.—Grace Chamberlain is a very pretty girl, you know, and Harry is like what you were at his age."

"Bless my soul, Mary," said the cashier, "then why didn't the boy tell me what he was driving at? Chasing across the country after a pretty face is foolish enough, at his age, but it is not so bad as going to a watering place merely for the fashion of it, like some rich old nabob, or professional dandy. If Harry had told me he wanted to dangle after Grace Chamberlain, instead of talking in that desperate way about the watch, I might have taken it differently.—There is a charm on the chain with my mother's hair that I wouldn't have got out of the family for a fortune."

Just here the door-bell rang as if a powerful, nervous hand was at the handle. Mr. Houghton answered the ring, for their one domestic had been called away by a message from a sick sister, and the mistress of the house was getting along alone for a day. So when her quick ear told the visitor was one to see her husband on business, she quitted the room to set away the milk, and lock up the rear doors of the house for the night.

The caller was Mr. Silas Bixby. He would have been a sharp man in Elmfield estimation who could predict the object of one of Silas Bixby's calls, though there were few doors in the village at which his face was not frequently seen. He was the constable, but he was also the Superintendent of the Sunday school, and the assessor of internal revenue in the district, to say nothing of his being the agent of two or three sewing machine companies, and one life insurance company, and the correspondent of the Tinborough Trumpet. He owned a farm and managed it at odd hours. He gave some of his winter evenings to keeping

a writing school, with which he, sometimes profitably combined a singing school, with profitable concerts at the end of the term. He was clerk of the fire company and had never been absent from a fire, though some of his manifold duties kept him riding in his light gig through the neighboring towns a great deal of the time. He had raised a company and commanded it, in the nine months' army of '62. He kept a little book store on the corner of the village square, and managed a very small circulating library, with the aid of the oldest of his ten children; and he was equal partner in the factory at the Falls. Mr. Houghton did not venture to guess on what errand Mr. Bixby came to see him, and showed him to a chair in the twilight sitting room, with a face composed to decline a request to discount a note, or to join with interest in a conversation on the Sunday school, or to listen to a report on the new fire engine fund, with equal ease and alacrity.

Mr. Bixby looked about him to see that nobody was within hearing. "You'll excuse me, I know, 'Squire, if I shut the windows, hot as it is;" and before his host could rise to anticipate him he suited the action to the word.

"It's detective business, it's a big thing. Do you know I told you, Mr. Houghton, the first of the week, that there was dangerous characters about town, and asked you to keep your eyes open at the bank. Will you bear witness of that?"

"I remember it very well, Mr. Bixby, and also that there has not been a single individual inside of the bank since that day, other than our own townspeople and friends."

"That is just it," said Silas, reflectively. "They have some accomplice who knows the neighborhood and whom we don't suspect. But we shall catch him with the rest. The fact is, Mr. Houghton, the Blue River National Bank is to be robbed to-night.—The plot is laid and I have every thread in my hand."

Foster Houghton was one of a class who were habitually incredulous as to Silas Bixby's achievements, as announced by himself; but there was a positiveness and assurance about the constable's manner which carried conviction with it, and he did not conceal the shock which the news gave to him.

"Just you keep very cool, sir, and I'll tell you the whole story in very few words, for I have got one or two things to do before I catch the burglars, and I have promised to look into Parson Pettengill's barn and doctor his sick horse. There is two men in the job, beside somebody that is working with them secretly in the village, here. You needn't ask me how I managed to overhear their plans, for I sha'n't tell.—You will read it all in the Tinborough Trumpet of the day after to-morrow. They are regular New York cracksmen, and they have been stopping at the hotel at the Falls, pretending to be looking at the water power. They come here on purpose to clean out the Blue River National Bank."

"Do they mean to blow open the safe?" inquired Mr. Houghton, who was pacing the room.

"Just have patience, 'Squire," said Silas Bixby. "I thought it best to 'prepare you, and so let you up kind o' gradual.—They have got false keys to your house door and to your bed-room door. They are going to come in at midnight or an hour after, and gag you and your wife, and force you at the mouth of the revolver to go over to the bank and open the combination lock. Your 'help,' they say, has gone off; and they did not appear to be afraid of Henry."

"Henry has gone to Tinborough," said Mr. Houghton, mechanically.

"I presume they knew that, too, then," said the constable. "They calculate on forty thousand dollars in the safe, government bonds and all. Their team is to be

ready on the Tinborough road, and they mean to catch the owl train. You they calculate to leave, tied hand and foot, on the Bank floor, until you are found there in the morning."

Foster Houghton stopped his rapid walk up and down the room, and took his boots out of the closet.

"Fair play, 'Squire," said Bixby, laying a hand on the cashier's arm as he sat down and kicked off his slipper. "I've told you the whole story, when I might have carried out my plan without telling a word. Now what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to order a stout bolt to be put on my front door immediately, and to deposit the bank keys in the safe at Felton's store."

"You will think better of it if you will just sit still and hear me through," replied the visitor. "Don't you see that will just show our hand to the gang who are on the watch, and they will only leave Elmfield to rob some other bank and make their fortunes. Moreover, the plot never would be believed in the village, and such a way of meeting it would make no sensation at all in print. No, Mr. Houghton, you are cashier of the bank, and it is your business to protect your property. I am constable at Elmfield, and it is my duty to capture the burglars. I propose to do it in a way that the whole State shall ring with my brilliant management of the matter, and yours, too, of course, so far as your part goes. The programme is complete and you have only to fall in."

"Well, Mr. Bixby," said the elder gentleman, again surrendering to his companion's superior energy and determination of character: "and what is the programme?"

"As far as you are concerned, simply to remain passive," said the rural constable. "You are to show no knowledge of expecting the visit, and after a proper display of reluctance, you are to go with the burglars, with the keys in your hand. If I were to arrest the rascals now, I should have nothing to charge them with, and could only frighten them out of town. When the bank is entered the crime is complete. I shall be on the watch, with two strong fellows I have secured to help me who served in my company, afraid of nothing, and not smart enough to claim the whole credit when the job is done. When you are fairly inside the bank we shall pop out from behind the bowling alley, guard the door, flash our lanterns in their faces and overpower them at once. It sounds very short now but it will easily fill a column in the papers."

"Mr Bixby," said Foster Houghton, with a good deal of deliberate emphasis, "I have always thought you a man of sense.—I think so now. Do you suppose I am going to stand quietly by and see a couple of ruffians tie a gag in the mouth of my wife, at her age, when I know I can prevent it beforehand?"

"No, sir, I expect no such thing," said Bixby, not at all embarrassed. "I expected like as not you would bring up some such objection, so I have provided for it in advance. John Fletcher's wife is very sick; they have gone the rounds of all the folks on our street, taking turns watching there; to-night they came to me and said: 'Bixby, cannot you find us somebody to watch?' and I said I knew just the one who would be glad to help a neighbor. So I will deliver the message to Mrs. Houghton, and you needn't have a mite of anxiety for her; up there, she is as safe and comfortable as if she were twenty miles away."

While her husband yet hesitated Mrs. Houghton re-entered the room; and Bixby, quick to secure an advantage, was ready at the moment with his petition."

"Good evening, Mrs. Houghton. Been waiting very patient for you to come in. I called to see if you felt able and willing to set up to-night, along with John Fletcher's little girl. The child don't get any better, and Mrs. Fletcher is just about sick abed herself with care and worry."

"You know I am always ready to help a neighbor in such trouble," said the lady graciously, with the prompt acquiescence which people in the country give to such calls. "And now I think of it, Mr. Bixby, I have another call to make on your street. I think I will walk up with you, and so get around to Fletcher's at nine o'clock. My husband has several letters to write, so he will not miss me."

Foster Houghton sat in a sort of maze, while fate thus arranged affairs for him, though they tended to a consummation which was far from welcome to his mind. His wife went out for her smelling salts, her spectacles, and her heavy shawl; and Bixby snatched the brief opportunity:

"I have told you everything, 'Squire, that you need to know. Keep your mind easy, and your head cool, and the whole thing may be done as easy as turning your hand over. Remember, it is the only way to save the bank, and catch the men that may have robbed a dozen banks. Do not stir out of the house again this evening, or you will excite suspicion, and ruin the game.—Between twelve and two you may expect your company; and rely upon me in hiding close to the bank. Mum is the word."—For Mrs. Houghton was descending the stairs.

"Come in again when you come back. Bixby, can't you?" said the cashier, still loth to close so singular and hasty a bargain.

"Not for the world," replied the constable. "It would expose our hand at once, and spoil the trick. Now, Mrs. Houghton I'm proud to be the beau to such a pretty young belle."

And so, with a word of farewell they were off, and Foster Houghton sat alone in the house with his secret.

He was not a coward, but a man of peace by temperament and training, and the enterprise in which he had been enlisted was both foreign and distasteful to him. How many incidents might occur, not set down in Bixby's programme, to make the night's work both dangerous and disagreeable! His very loneliness made the prospect seem doubly unpleasant. A dozen times as he sat musing over it, he put forth his hand for his boots with intent to go out and frustrate the robbery in his own way, regardless of Bixby's schemes of capture and glory. As many times he sat back in his easy chair, thinking now that he was bound in honor by his tacit agreement with the constable, and again that the whole story was nothing but the fruit of the officer's fertile imagination, and that only the inventor should make himself ridiculous by his credulity. Now he wished his wife were at home to make the waiting moments pass more quickly, then that Harry were there to give the aid of his daring and the stimulus of his boyish enthusiasm and courage. And sometimes the old man's thoughts wandered in spite of the excitement of the hour, to his boy, dancing away the night at Tinborough. He recalled his anxiety over his son's dissipations, his associates, his extravagant tastes, the look of hard defiance in his face, but an hour or two before. His heart yearned over the lad in spite of his wild ways, like David over Absalom, and he resolved to try the mother's method, and imagine excuses, and replace harshness with indulgence, hereafter. The village bell clanged out from the steeple close by, and Foster Houghton dropped the thread of his reverie with a start, and went back to the reality again. Clearly he was getting too nervous. He must do something to shake it off.

"I'll get Harry's revolver," he thought, with little purpose what he should do with it; and he took the lamp and went up to the boy's empty room. The drawers were thrown open in a confusion which offended the cashier's neat prejudices acquired in the profession. He knew where the pistol was kept, but its box was empty.

[CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.]