

The Bloomfield Times.

FRANK MORTIMER,
Editor and Proprietor.

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BY

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SUBSCRIPTION TERMS.

ONE DOLLAR PER YEAR!

IN ADVANCE.

THE UNTRIED GOVERNESS.

A Step-Daughter's Experience.

BUT Mrs. Muciller was a student of expediency. She felt it would be undesirable (a favorite word of hers) that Noddy should continue to take her meals apart from the family, with a visitor in the house. The continuance of such a course would convey an impression, not so much false, as undesirable. She therefore "desired" Miss Norah's presence at supper, and made known her wishes for the future. But Noddy pleaded headache as excuse for the evening, and remained in her room, hearing the sounds of music come faintly up from the drawing-room, when the door was opened, till bedtime.

Next morning, Noddy was up and about soon after the lark. As blithely as he, she was singing about her work, for there is nothing in all the world like cheerful work to prevent any one feeling dull and unhappy.

How strange a drawing-room looks in the morning light, in all the disarrangement of only a "little music" of the night before! Nobody ever dared touch the drawing-room to "tidy" it but Noddy—that was her particular province and her pride. There she was, that bright June morning, sweeping and sweeping away, and singing, as her mind like the lark's, soared above the dust.

"Bravo! Cousin Noddy!" It was Mr. Frank who had been strolling about the lawn with a cigar in the fresh morning air, and who had walked up to the window.

"Oh dear," said Noddy, "please don't tease me. Don't you see I'm busy?"

"I'm coming in to see," said he, entering the casement.

Noddy looked pleasant enough in her print morning dress—her hair neatly arranged close to her head, where it could not stop without struggling out into little curls here and there, and a faint blush on her cheeks, partly shy, partly vexed at being teased. "O, please, go away,—do—or I must sweep you up," she entreated; "and O, please go away," she added more seriously, remembering Mrs. Muciller had cautioned her respecting her behavior to Mr. Geogagan.

Six weeks had come and gone at Braithfield Villa. The advertisement had been inserted five times, but still no answer. A situation as governess is not the easiest thing obtained. It is something like that of prime-minister, there are always plenty of candidates for the office, and most of the candidates (poor things) are about as well fitted for it.

Mr. Frank had more than fulfilled Mrs. Muciller's most sanguine anticipations.—He had proved a most attentive cavalier to Julia. They were not actually engaged, however; indeed, beyond the courtesies referred to, Mr. Frank had not made the slightest attempt at anything more decisive. But still, people will talk, and Mrs. Muciller liked to hear them. People began vaguely to suppose that Julia had made a fortunate hit, and that was in all probability an accomplished fact; but they hesitated to do more than hint their belief, without something like foundation. Mrs. Muciller, fully aware of the important part

gossip plays in the history of daily life, determined to turn it to account. She reasoned thus: Mr. Geogagan is evidently impressed with Julia, but he is a little shy, or dilatory, in coming to the point. In either case, a favorable rumor may do much in bringing about a desirable result. It may encourage him; it must stimulate him.—With this idea, in the course of her next private conversation with Mrs. Sharing, when that lady inquired, with certain friendly nods and elevations of the eyebrows, if she might venture to offer congratulations on a certain fortunate event, Mrs. Muciller gave her unmistakably to understand that she might, although perhaps expressed in that coy language of partial reserve with which women like to enhance the value of private communications.

Now, thought Mrs. Muciller, I know Mrs. Sharing to be the greatest gossip in the neighborhood. She will be certain to spread the news of Julia's rumored engagement far and wide. It will undoubtedly get round to Frank Geogagan, and will lead him at once to make that proposal for which he seems so ready. So the rumor shall make the fact and the fact keep the rumor in countenance.

Meantime the the subject of Mrs. Muciller's design appeared to be in the most genial ignorance. He continued to pay the same respectful attentions to his charming cousin Julia. He took little notice of Noddy, as a consideration for the lady of the house indeed dictated, for he had more than once observed that any slight attention to Miss Cray was visited on her with a glance of disfavor from Mrs. Muciller when she thought he was not looking. But Frank Geogagan had very quick, restless eyes that could see round a corner.

As for Noddy, if she owned to herself one feeling at all about the matter, it was just one of sadness that a school girl should render a man so artificial and constrained, and unlike his real self, as she thought Mr. Geogagan was becoming. But there was another feeling at the bottom of her heart, that Noddy would not own to herself. The wind bloweth where it listeth: you cannot tell whence it comes or how. There were Phœnician ships with sails ever set that carried their owners without oar or effort whithersoever they listed.

And in these six weeks Noddy had come to love Mr. Frank. She would not have confessed it to herself; she would have despised herself had she believed it. How was it? Dear soul! Is there any better reason to be given for loving any body than the child's reason—Because I do? Must we not all come back to that? Noddy had seen few people; few people had ever taken notice of her, or seemed to think of her as worth talking or caring about. Mr. Frank always had a word of some sort for her.—Many a morning he would chat pleasantly to her as she dusted the room; many a time he would refrain from speaking to her, or of her, before Mrs. Muciller, for her sake.—Well, you may say this, or you may put it how you will, but you will have to come back to the little child's reason at last, for all the wiser people in the world who have tried to give any better explanation have talked nonsense, and, what is more, owned it.

Frank Geogagan had made many friends in the neighborhood, and it was not long before one of them congratulated him on his engagement to Julia Muciller. It staggered him at the first; but, bless you! Mr. Frank had his eyes about him. He took it as coolly as possible; never said a word to contradict it. He saw it would not do, as this would be a palpable reflection on Mrs. Muciller, by whose tacit indorsement at least he ascertained such a report had obtained currency at all. He just smiled, and thanked his friends, and so gave renewed credence to the report, which now had received the final stamp of veracity. Mind, I do not defend Mr. Frank's conduct; I only state what he did; and now I am going to tell what came of it.

Dear reader—you have followed me thus

far—do you think I am telling you fiction? If so, I ought not to make Frank Geogagan a party after the fact to a deceit. There was once an audience that thought the squeak of Archippus more lifelike than that of the real pig. Remember this.

The latter end of August a picnic had been arranged to Cherleigh Lake, a most delightful jaunt, and Mrs. Muciller, Julia, and her Indian lover were to go of course. It so happened, however, at the very last minute, that important business required Mr. Geogagan's attention in London. I need not further relate the nature of the business than to say it was understood to be something in connection with the Indian Reclamation of Land Company, and that it was urgent. It was not a letter that summoned Mr. Geogagan, but a printed notice, stating that, in consequence of the sudden depreciation of shares (which had previously gone up many hundred per cent. above their paid-up value,) a heavy call was made on the shareholders.

Mind—once more. It is not for me to defend Mr. Geogagan. I take the facts as they come. I cannot apologize for facts, and won't. It was settled that Mrs. Muciller and her daughter were to go to the picnic, while Mr. Geogagan went to London to transact his business. Mr. Frank never went near the metropolis at all; he just marched over to Mr. Sharing's to smoke a cigar. And when the house was clear, Noddy sat down to her books to study teaching.

It has been said Mrs. Muciller knew Mrs. Sharing for a gossip. Mr. Frank also knew Mr. Sharing for one. With this knowledge, how it was he went and confided to such a man the state of affairs, I must leave you to guess.

Over their cigars he stated something like this to Mr. Sharing: "The fact is this. Every penny I could get together I put into this Indian Land Reclamation scheme.—The shares went up fabulously, till a hundred pounds became worth thousands. The scheme was feasible, and likely to succeed and to pay at any premium the shares could go to, it was good. I had every confidence in it. Suddenly, a panic comes, the shares drop nearly to par before we in England can get the intelligence, and we are called on to pay up our amounts. Now, I know you are accustomed to advance money on security, will you lend me three thousand pounds on a deposit of shares to twice the amount?"

"Ah, my young friend," said Mr. Sharing, "you see that's the way and the way of yours, always. Here you go and mix yourself up in the rashest of speculations without a chance of success—as independent as you can be, all the time—you're all alike. Then you get into a hole as we say, and you come to me to help you out. Look you; your shares are not worth that," and he snapped his fingers; "not worth the paper they are printed on. Three thousand pounds? Three thousand fiddles, sir."

"But," said Mr. Frank, "it is only a temporary depression, owing to a panic; the scheme is a good one; the shares will go up again."

"Yes, like a gunpowder mill! The whole affair will explode—that will be the next rise, and the only one. I'm sorry for you—sorry for you, sir."—Mr. Sharing gently emphasized his sorrow by tapping it out with his finger-points on the table—"thought you had better judgment. You are just like a moth. You have been dazzled with a glittering prospect, and rushed straight into the flame. Now you complain that your wings are singed."

"Pardon—I have not complained. I do not believe my case so bad as you represent, and I do not yet despair of making you see it in a different light. Rumor may have informed you that I have been so fortunate as to secure the affections of Miss Muciller. I have not made minute inquiries as to the amount of that young lady's fortune, not wishing to appear mercenary, but I have every reason to suppose, from

the style in which her mother and herself are living, and from the fact of her being an only daughter, that she will receive a handsome portion on her marriage. If you take this into consideration, you may be disposed to look upon my security as at least sufficient to cover the loan I seek."

Mr. Sharing was silent for a minute.—"That is how the wind blows, is it!" he thought. "So you fancied you had got hold of a fortune, my fine fellow; and Mrs. Muciller, on her part, was of very much the same opinion respecting you. Why, the girl won't have a penny! As if the style in which a woman lives, who has a daughter to marry, could be the least criterion of her means! You know very little of the world, Mr. Frank." But he remarked aloud: "I have certainly heard of your happiness in that respect, but you will bear in mind you are not yet married to Miss Muciller. There's many a slip, you know. And in addition to this, I have every reason to believe that whatever may be the extent of Miss Muciller's fortune, it would be placed beyond her husband's control."—"That's about the nearest way I can put it without injuring the young lady," he thought. "For that matter, her fortune is beyond any body's control!" And he smiled and tapped the table again.

"Well, sir?" said Mr. Frank.

"Well, sir?"

"Then I am to understand that you refuse to entertain the question?"

"Entirely. I don't discount impossibilities, but only extreme probabilities. It is not in my line."

"I need not remind you, at any rate, that the subject of our conversation is private," said Mr. Frank.

"And confidential. Certainly. May I offer you another cigar? No? Well, if you must be going, good morning, sir."

"Private and confidential—stuff and nonsense!" Mr. Sharing observed to himself, as soon as he was alone. "That is all very fine, young gentleman—but it is right Mrs. Muciller should get just a hint that her catch is a very little fish that had better be thrown into the river again. I will tell Mrs. Sharing, and trust her to make use of the information."

Mr. Frank went back to Braithfield, and found Noddy sitting in the window trying hard to perfect herself in the mysteries of the accordance of French *participes passés*. She was huddled up with her book in her lap, her elbows on her knees, and her head in her hands.

"Noddy!"

"What, not gone to London? Have you missed the train, Mr. Geogagan?"

"No—neither; I was not going. Put on your bonnet, and come out for a walk."

She hesitated.

"Come, put away your books. The walk will do you good, and Julia will not be jealous."

Still she hesitated; she thought of Mrs. Muciller.

"Come, Noddy; I'm in difficulty and some trouble, and I think you can help me. So put away those books."

Noddy hesitated no longer. In two minutes she was ready, and came down with a calm, wise expression on her little face, ready to help.

They set out, and walked for nearly half an hour without a word. Noddy remembered that she was wanted for help or advice of some kind, and so was quiet waiting to hear. Through pleasant cornfields, glistening like seas of restless gold, while the warm summer breath passed over the ripe ears, and bowed them in long, fleeting waves, whereon the cloud shadows floated—wide, swelling waves that calmly rolled the sunshine along the cool reedy music, as the breeze played on the heavy grain—and burning poppies were upheaved or borne under by the chasing waves. By hedges, bright with summer flowers, and cool with ferns and creeping green. Along paths patterned over with the moving shadows of oak, and elm, and willow.

"Noddy, what would you say if I told you I was ruined?"

"I should say I didn't believe you."

"All the property I have in India is in the 'Anglo-Waddy Company' for the reclamation of land from the sea. I doubt if I shall ever see a sixpence of it again. Mr. Sharing told me to-day the share certificates are not worth the paper they are printed on."

"Well," said Noddy, "I thought you were ruined. Is that all?"

"All?" he returned, rather sharply.—

"Is it not enough to be ruined? Not a sixpence of it, not a penny-piece, shall I see again?"

"O," said Noddy, half talking to herself,

"is that ruin? It seems to me a man is never ruined while he has life and strength and health, and cheerful courage."

"It is easy to talk. You never had any money to lose."

"No, not much. But I have a little property for all that."

"Indeed. And, pray, how much?"

"Thirty pounds in the savings-bank, which my father left me."

Mr. Frank laughed, despite of his own trouble.

"Dear me! I didn't know you were an heiress before. Now you would grieve to lose your money!"

"I should be sorry."

"Then you can't find fault with me for being the same at losing so many thousands."

"The amount makes no difference. My thirty pounds is my all, and I should be just as sorry to lose it as you are at losing your all. But though I'm only a woman, I shouldn't say I was ruined—that is absurd."

"You are a Job's comforter, at all events."

"There are very few comforters like Job's, in these days," said Noddy—"very few persons who would sit down in silent sympathy, the deepest of all sympathies, for three days and three nights with a friend."

"So you look upon me as a friend?"

"Yes," said Noddy, blushing a little, but displeased with herself for doing so, on account of an avowal so innocent.

"And can you give me any better advice than Job's friends?"

"Perhaps not."

"Tell me what you think I ought to do."

"Do?" said Noddy, quickly. "Go and work. It's a brave thing, work is. You will forget all about being ruined, and only remember you are a man, doing a man's work. I don't know what I should do without work myself; it is the most soothing and refreshing comfort I know, even to me, and it must be better to a man. But your case is nothing like Job's. If it had been only his money Job had lost, his friends would just have staid at home, and sent messengers offering to help him to work, and Job is just the sort of man who would have been content to take it."

"Noddy, I really believe you're right."

"I'm sure I am. Haven't you seen me sweep?"

"Yes," laughed Mr. Frank; "but that is hardly in my way—digging would come more natural than that."

"Then dig. But there's plenty of work for earnest workers with brains without digging. I don't pretend to tell you the exact direction in which it lies, because that is out of my province; but I am sure you will find it, if you are in earnest."

"I will," said Mr. Frank, and he was quiet again for a little.

And Noddy was quiet too. She had something on her mind she wished to say, but hardly liked to mention it. However, she began: "If you mean what you say, you will not remain much longer here."

"I shall not remain much longer here," he echoed abstractedly.

"You will begin at once to strike out a new path, as a brave man should; and you will walk as straight, and feel as proud as a man ought who feels he is neither ruined nor disgraced when he has only lost his money."—[CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.]