

The Bloomfield Times.

FRANK MORTIMER,
Editor and Proprietor.

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BY

FRANK MORTIMER.

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ONE DOLLAR PER YEAR!

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IN ADVANCE.

ONLY A BOY.

Only a boy with his nose and fun,
The veriest mystery under the sun;
As brimful of mischief, and wit, and glee,
As ever a human frame can be,
And as hard to manage as—what? ah me!
'Tis hard to tell,
Yet we love him well.

Only a boy with his fearful tread,
Who cannot be driven, but must be led;
Who troubles the neighbors' dogs and cats,
And tears more clothes, and spoils more hats,
Loses more kites, and tops and bats,
Than would stock a store
For a year or more.

Only a boy with his wild, strange ways,
With his idle hours or busy days;
With his queer remarks and his odd replies,
Sometimes foolish and sometimes wise,
Often brilliant for one of his size,
As a meteor hurled
From the planet world.

Only a boy, who will be a man,
If nature goes with her first great plan—
If intemperance, or some fatal snare,
Conspire not to rob us of this heir,
Our blessing, our trouble, our rest our care,
Our torment, our joy?
"Only a boy."

LITTLE FEET.

In castle halls or cottage homes,
Wherever guileless childhood roams,
Oh, there is nothing half so sweet
As busy tread of little feet.

The sighing breeze, the ocean's roar,
The purring rill, the organ's power,
All stir the soul, but none so deep
As tiny tread of little feet.

My First Love Scrape

AND
ITS CONSEQUENCES.

AS NATURALLY as a steel needle flies to a magnet so have I felt always ready to hurry to the aid of a lady in distress. I do not say it vauntingly, nor put it forward as a virtue, for the act has generally been involuntary; and so it was one day last year, when, having seen my small quantity of personal luggage on board the great screw liner lying at the wharf getting up steam, ready for her race across the Atlantic, I was loafing about, watching with considerable amusement the arrival of passengers, for the most part excited, worried, and the prey of porters and cabinmen, who seem to be troubled with no more perfections in Liverpool than in the metropolis. A lighted cigar was between my lips, and I was trying to enjoy it—for judging from old experience of my sensation in a rough sea, I did not anticipate much comfort for the next two or three days at least—when a very ordinary-looking man, evidently a commercial traveler for a cutting house, walked up and asked me for a light, starting at me the while in so offensive a manner that as I handed my cigar, I glanced down at his left hand to see that it was not meddling with my watch chain.

"Looks like a commercial, but may be a pick-pocket," I said—mentally, of course—while he puffed at his cigar, putting mine out in the process.

"Going across?" he said abruptly, and to use what would probably have been his expression, taking stock of me the while.

"Sir?"

"Going across the pond—*Helvellyn*?" he said again, coolly, and nodding his head toward the great steaming and snorting vessel.

"My cigar—thanks!" I said, in a tone meant to be perfectly Belgravian in its hauteur, as I turned aside, for I had met the appeal of a pair of dark eyes—a lady was in distress, and, between porters and baggage, apparently perfectly bewildered.

"Are you going on board?" I asked.

"Yes, oh, yes," said the owner of the

eyes, eagerly. "Are you connected with the steamer, sir?"

"Er—no, not exactly," I said, taken somewhat aback; and I felt somewhat disposed to say, "Do I look as if I was?"

"Allow me, though—these men!"

"Yes, yes," said the lady; "they ask six shillings for bringing my luggage from the station. Is it correct?"

"Absurd! No," I said; "half a crown is ample." And, espousing the lady's cause, I dismissed the ravenous monsters who prey upon the unprotected, and then sent her luggage on board the *Helvellyn*, casting more than once a glance aside to see that my new acquaintance was tall, with handsome, well-marked features, very ladylike, and dressed in the first fashion.

"Seems odd," I thought, "traveling quite alone. Strong-minded woman, perhaps."

But this latter thought was set aside the next moment as I handed her along the gang-way; for there was a quiet, earnest, trusting look in her dark eyes; and the answers she gave to my entreaties that she would not be alarmed at the rushing water, the uneasy motion of the steamer, and the pushing, excited crowd, were grateful in the extreme. I felt flattered, and not at all sorry that such a companion was to share my voyage.

"If you would lead me to the cabin where I could see the stewardess," she said, and I immediately handed her to the saloon door, where she turned frankly to hold out a well-gloved though rather a large hand. "I am indeed much obliged. I am obliged to travel alone; but my husband will meet me on landing at New York and he will, I know, be extremely grateful for your kindness."

"The next moment I was standing alone, confounding her husband, and appealing to fate to know why another should have first seen and secured about the only woman who seemed likely to form an agreeable sharer of my pilgrimage through life.

"Nice to be a young, smart-looking fellow," said a voice; and, turning, there stood the bagman, puffing away at his cigar, and staring at me with all his might, though probably from business habit, he was referring from time to time to a pocket-book he held in his hands.—"Now, you know I never make an impression like that on a lady. I never find the sex asking my protection, and all that sort of thing. Very nice, though, I should think, isn't it?"

He accompanied his last words with the slightest approach to a wink, and closing the book he poked me with it in the side, when I felt so annoyed that I angrily turned upon my heel and walked to the side, watching the arrival of late passengers; but to my great disgust he followed me, and heedless of my frowning looks, continued his scrutiny.

I tried very hard to get rid of him, but snubbing was thrown away. Apparently he could not understand that his conduct was obtrusive; and, at last, making a virtue of necessity, I suffered him, and he literally hooked himself on to me.

But all the same he seemed to have a shrewd business eye; and while carefully keeping close to me he scrutinized all who came on board till the time of starting had arrived. The cables were cast loose, the screw revolved slowly, then stopped, then revolved again, and the vessel again began to move forward, the passengers waving their adieus as they clustered by the side. Then once more the bagman stared me full in the face, looked undecided, walked through the throng on deck, got in the sailor's way, stared in face after face, as a dog who sought his master, and then, in the same undecided manner, returned to me, and stopped by my side, as if about to speak; but directly after he checked himself and drew out another cigar.

"How very soon the motion of the vessel begins to affect you," he said, with a smile.

"Affects you, you mean," I replied.

"Yes, exactly. Curious, though, ain't it. Seems as if nature never meant us to leave the land of our fathers—the place of our birth, as the song says, eh? Ever been across before?"

"Yes, twice," I said, sharply; and I then walked away, for now, closely veiled, I had seen the figure of my lady friend emerging from the saloon door; and upon my going up and asking concerning her welfare, she made no demur about taking my arm and walking up and down the deck.

I must confess that I thought very little of the scene around, though I kept, on the strength of old recollections, pointing out the various familiar objects

we were passing; for I had the idea in my head that the remark my companion had made was not the truth; in short, I did not believe that there would be any husband awaiting her upon the quay at New York, and that after all it was but a bold subterfuge by which a single and unprotected woman wished to shroud herself in the respect paid to the married of her sex.

That she was respectable was undoubted; but there was a timid, shrinking way about her, so different from the quiet, calm self-possession of a married lady; and I felt assured that no one whose husband awaited her upon the quay at New York would so readily lay herself open to remark by accepting my arm upon so short an acquaintance.

"Is—that a—a friend of yours?" suddenly asked my companion.

"Friend?—friend of mine?" I said, in a puzzled way. No, I have no friends on board—at least only one, I hope," I added, meaningly.

"I—I thank you," was the hesitating reply, in the most gentle of tones. "Compelled as we are to rely upon the society of so few during a sea-voyage, friendships do soon spring up."

"But to whom were you alluding?" I said.

"Oh, it is nothing. I—but I am very weak and foolish—I fancied that the man, the gentleman you were speaking to was watching us rather particularly."

"Yes, yes, I dare say, I think though, it is his habit. He looked just as earnestly at me a short time ago, and he has been staring at every one in turn. You don't think he is looking after a runaway young lady?" I added, laughing.

In an instant my arm was dropped, and though the veil was down, my companion's eyes seemed to flash fire as she half turned round toward me.

I never professed to be very penetrating, but I was keen enough to see that I had touched upon a chord which kept bent the two ends of a bow of mystery. I saw, too, that, but for careful management, the advance I had made in the good graces of an admirable woman would be destroyed in an instant.

"Pray excuse my impertinent remark," I exclaimed, eagerly. "The words were meaningless, and uttered without forethought."

My companion apparently reassured, took my arm once more, and uttered a little low laugh.

"Meaningless, indeed; but for a moment I thought—"

"She did not finish her sentence; for at that moment my commercial acquaintance passed close by us, gave me a familiar nod and a smile, wafted a cloud of smoke into the lady's face, and walked on."

"Such consummate impertinence!" I said. "You would hardly think that I had never seen that man before to-day."

"Acquaintanceships do spring up rather rapidly sometimes," was the meaning reply; and I glanced down, but the speaker's head was slightly averted, and it seemed to me that she spoke in husky tones.

For the next three days the number of passengers who showed on deck was strictly limited in consequence of the state of the weather, and really the offices of steward and stewardess could have been no sinecure. For my part, I can only own to being quailish on the second day, and I paced the deck hopefully in anticipation of the advent of my lady friend. But go on deck when I would I was certain to encounter the cool, easy-assured nod of the bagman, whose consumption of cigars must have been enormous. He was as free and obtrusive as ever; but one evening, just as it was turning dark, I had the pleasure of smoking my pipe in peace; for I saw him in deep conversation with a man I had hardly noticed before, from the fact of his being one of the second-class passengers.

To my great astonishment, though, after I had gone into the saloon, the bagman came strolling in, followed a short time after by the man to whom he had been speaking; and this latter seated himself on the opposite side of the table in an abstracted manner, sat thinking for a while, and then slowly walked past me, and out of the saloon door softly shaking his head.

The next two days passed pleasantly enough; for though unwilling to come on deck, the lady passenger was nearly recovered, and many a pleasant *tele-tele* I enjoyed. I found her most ladylike, and thoroughly well informed; while, as our acquaintance warmed, if I may use the term, into something that was at least friendship, I was delighted to find that mine had indeed been a true surmise; for she confessed to having determined

to travel as Mrs. Saville, there being no husband to meet her at New York, only a brother.

Perhaps I did plume myself on my shrewdness; at all events, that night after winning from her so singular an avowal, I was considerably elated. I listened that evening to the remarks of a passenger respecting the tedium of the trip with a sense of lofty contempt; for I began to feel that I was very far gone, and the Atlantic seemed to be the brightest of seas, overborne by the bluest of skies. I was, in fact, in such a state of ecstasy that I went on deck to look up at the stars for an hour before seeking my berth—for Miss Saville—Saville? what an old and aristocratic name!—Miss Saville had retired, or how glorious it would have been, in that clear, diamond-illuminated night, to have watched the sparkling of the spray, and—

Was I mistaken? Had she not parted from me a quarter of an hour before to retire to rest? and now this veiled figure that glided by me in the darkness, was not this she?

Impossible! I laughed the next moment; for I felt that my mind was full of one form, and that in the hasty glimpse I had obtained I had invested another with attributes of her I loved.

Yes, her I loved. I was ready to own it now; and I leaned thoughtfully over the bulwark, going over the incidents of the past day or so, and making up my mind as to my future proceeding; for I had not lost all feeling of prudence. I wanted to know something of the lady's antecedents and connections—matters I concluded could be easily be arrived at in conversation the next day.

I was standing quite in the shadow beneath one of the quarter-boats, and I had just turned with the intention of descending, when some one passed me whom I recognized as the second-class passenger; and then for a few moments I heard a low murmured conversation at a short distance, when the man passed me again, going forward.

Five minutes after I was at the saloon door, when a hearty clap on the shoulder made me turn, to find that it was the bagman, who laughed softly at my angry face, and then added to his former obtrusiveness by thrusting his hand into my side, as he whispered to me:

"I say, my lad, I'm going to open your eyes for you to-morrow, so look out. There, don't be uppish; come and have a cigar up in the bows—just one before you turn in."

"I am much obliged," I said; "but I am going to my berth."

"Just as you like," was the nonchalant reply, and he turned away.

"Let me see," said the captain, at breakfast, next morning; "where's my friend who sits third down on the left—Mr. Lister? Steward, go and see if Mr. Lister is unwell again—no not again, because he seemed to be an old sailor—see if he's in his cabin."

The steward returned with a reply in the negative; when, supposing him to be on deck, the breakfast was brought to an end, and Mr. Lister, or as I called him, the bagman, was forgotten.

The day passed and evening had arrived, when, as I was sitting in sweet intercourse with Miss Saville, rumor's busy tongue began to announce that Mr. Lister was missing.

I immediately recalled his promise to open my eyes that day, and also that he had invited me forward with him to smoke a cigar; and I know not why, a strange feeling of interest made me leave my seat, apologize to Miss Saville, who bowed stiffly and went below, while I walked forward to a group to find the subject in full discussion. Two of the watch had seen him go forward with a lighted cigar between his lips, and perch himself close to the bowsprit; but they could not recollect seeing him come back, though one man had some faint idea of something black close by him, but he was not sure.

More excited groups formed, and I soon found that search had been made through the steamer, and that the captain was in great trouble respecting the missing man; for all pointed to one fact—that the poor fellow had chosen a dangerous position, and had, without giving the alarm, slipped and fallen into the sea, to be borne under in an instant by the huge out-water of the vessel.

I shuddered; for I thought that, had I accepted his invitation, and, if powerless to stay him, still have given the alarm perhaps in time for a boat to have been launched.

"Can any gentleman afford any information?" said the captain, addressing the group where I stood.

"I can only add," I said, "corroborative testimony that Mr. Lister invited me to go forward with him, but I declined."

"You did not go forward with him?" said the captain.

"No," I replied; "and I have no recollection of seeing him come back into the saloon. But stop," I said, for I had suddenly encountered a close, searching glance directed at me; "there is a gentleman here who was talking to Mr. Lister late last night." And I pointed to the second-class passenger.

"How do you know?" he said, calmly, regardless of the many eyes fixed upon him.

"Because I stood by one of the quarter-boats when you came aft to speak to him, and I saw you go back."

"Quite right," said the second-class passenger.

"Did you know, Mr. Lister?" said the captain.

"Yes, I knew him," said the other, calmly.

"There seems to be some mystery here," said the captain. "Was he a friend of yours?"

"Yes," was the almost abrupt reply; and then, after a moment's silence, the second-class passenger walked quietly up to the captain, took him by a button, led him apart, and whispered a few words in his ear.

I saw the captain give a slight start, stare hard at the man, and then apparently ask a question, when, whatever was the answer, he seemed satisfied, and gave orders for a further search, which was, however, futile.

I was not alone in directing curious glances at the second-class passenger; but he was a quiet, dry-looking course-haven fellow, with an apparent power of shutting himself up within himself; and he paced the deck to and fro, with his hands behind his back, in a furtive, thoughtful way, till all searching was at an end, and the conclusion arrived at that our luckless fellow-passenger had met his fate.

I noticed that the quiet man's eyes were fixed on me as I went to the saloon; and on going to where Miss Saville was seated a strange feeling made me turn my head for an instant to see that he was watching me from the door; but he disappeared on the instant.

Full of the event, I was about to tell all I knew of my companion; but with a show of real horror she held up her hands begging me to forbear.

"It is too dreadful!" she exclaimed; "I can not bear it. I know all—I have heard all. Poor man! here in health last night, and now—pray, pray say no more about it."

She was excessively pale and agitated; so much so, indeed, that I summoned the steward to bring wine, for I was afraid the poor girl would faint; and she drank a glass with avidity, shuddering afterward, while the cold perspiration stood in beads upon her forehead.

I proposed a walk on deck, but it was declined; and to my great sorrow, the shock had such an effect upon her that she was confined to the cabin to the end of our rather protracted voyage.

But the morning was bright as we came in sight of land; and as we slowly steamed in, I found to my great joy, that Miss Saville was once more visible, though I was not prepared for the constraint with which my advances were met.

I asked myself had I neglected anything; had I fallen off in warmth. But no lover could have been more attentive or assiduous as to her welfare. I felt wounded; but I was determined not to show it, and almost in opposition to her wishes, I saw to her luggage, and, brother or no brother waiting, determined to see her to her home.

I was ready to upbraid her with coquetry; but I refrained, feeling that it was possible she had taken my attentions as being merely intended to last the voyage; and at last, cold and constrained, we stood close together, for in another ten minutes we should be debarking.

Happening to gaze around, I suddenly became aware of the second-class passenger standing close to my elbow, and I could not avoid a start—one which made Miss Saville turn wonderingly to me, at the same time holding her veil closely to her face, for the breeze was rather brisk.

"It was nothing," I said; "but pray, Miss Saville, allow me to carry that bag; it seems heavy." And I pointed to the little black traveling bag she carried in her hand.

"No, no, I thank you, no," she said; "indeed, sir, I can dispense with your offers of service."

"As you please, madam," I said sharply, for there was a harshness in her voice