

The Bloomfield Times.

FRANK MORTIMER, }
Editor and Proprietor.

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THE INQUIRY.

BY CHARLES MAKAY.

TELL me ye winged winds,
That round my pathway roam,
Do you not know some spot
Where mortals weep no more?
Some lone and pleasant dell,
Some valley in the West,
Where freed from toil and pain,
The weary soul may rest?
The low wind dwindled to a whisper low,
And sighed for pity as it answered "No."

Tell me, thou mighty deep,
Whose billows round me play,
Know'st thou some favored spot,
Some island far away,
Where weary man may find
The bliss for which he sighs—
Where sorrow never lives,
And friendship never dies?
The loud waves rolling in perpetual flow,
Stopped for a while, and sighed to answer "No."

How I Found Her.

CHAPTER I.

WIFE!
It sounds odd to me yet! I, a bachelor of forty—a bachelor "dyed in the wool," as my acquaintances were wont to say—to come forth at the eleventh hour as after a resurrection into a new and true life: a married man at last, and what is more, happily married!

While residing in Albany it was my custom to make three or four business trips to New York in the course of the year, putting up with a married sister who resides in Waverly Place. On one of these occasions, having on hand several affairs of importance, my mind was more than usually pre-occupied; no light statement, as you will see, and readily believe, when I tell you that I am by habit absent-minded in the extreme, and you see what follows.

The morning after my arrival I overslept, and upon descending to the breakfast-room, I found the family had concluded their morning meal, and after leaving directions relative to my comfort, had dispersed to their several occupations.

This did not surprise me, as I was never made a stranger in sister's family, and I was easily reconciled to solitude as the perfume of steaming coffee and of a savory breakfast greeted my olfactorys, and Dinah issued from the kitchen, bearing buttered toast and hot muffins. I ate, drank, and read the morning news without interruption, lost in comfort so extreme that when I at length looked at my watch, an exclamation of surprise escaped me at the lateness of the hour. My mind at once reverted to business details and perplexities and I jumped up, late by half an hour in the fulfilling of an engagement.

I seized my hat—a glossy beaver, which, according to custom, I had carefully polished before leaving my room—felt for my gloves—new brown kids, my other weakness—hurried on both gloves and overcoat in the hall, and issued forth, lighting, as I went, a fragrant Havana which, all

through breakfast, had nestled in my vest pocket.

The cigar, of course, forbade my taking an omnibus, so on I went at a brisk, business-like pace, down Broadway. It struck me that passers-by, wore an unusually smiling aspect, but the weather, though cold, was fine, and perhaps, like myself, they had enjoyed a good breakfast and were at peace with themselves and with mankind generally. I reached the place of destination to learn that Mr. L. had gone out. This information was given by one of the clerks, with an evident amusement that struck me as both senseless and utterly uncalled for. I glanced toward his companions; pens were flying and all heads were bent low, but I heard a suppressed giggle.

"When will Mr. L. return?" I asked sternly.

The clerk did not know: "He had waited some time to meet a gentleman, and at last had given him up."

"When he comes," I said, with dignity "tell him Philip Morris called and will come again at ten to-morrow."

Four heads quickly raised: four bewildered faces with eyes staring at me!

I closed the door, not over softly, and muttered as I strode away, "A deuced pretty set of clerks Lawrence keeps; about as much politeness as so many grinning monkeys!"

Pursuing my way, I soon came upon the skirts of a crowd that blocked the sidewalk. Curious to ascertain what was going on, I pressed close to an oldish gentleman, very well dressed and carrying a goldheaded cane who evidently was bent upon the same object. His keen little eyes at once perceived and scanned me. Promptly buttoning up his coat and squinting at me, he whispered, "No you don't!" with an audible chuckle.

"What do you mean, sir?" I demanded, somewhat excited.

My only response was the chuckle repeated, with an extra touch of self complacency.

Exasperated beyond measure, I hastened out of the crowd lest self-control should give way. A few blocks further on, I saw Miss Place, an intimate friend of my sister's and an acquaintance of my own, advancing toward me. Very naturally the frown cleared away from my brow and a pleasant expression of morning greeting took its place.

We met. I made a motion to raise my hat. She swept her eyes over my person with a surprised glance, and passed on without a sign of recognition.

"Well!" thought I, irritated and bewildered, "circumstances seem to have combined to annoy me to-day. I will go back to the house, write my letters, and recover my equanimity at leisure. I wonder if Miss Place really did not know me!"

But my thoughts soon passed to other matters; and I was feeling quite tranquil again, when I encountered a group that attracted my attention. It consisted of two ladies and, at their feet, a little lame dog. One of the former, apparently the elder, stood scornfully erect, looking down upon the small, helpless creature evidently suffering from recent injury, while the younger, and, to my mind, the prettier by far, was bending over him, softly patting his head and murmuring all sorts of soothing words.

I am by nature strong in my sympathies with animals (dumb animals I mean), but I think—yes, I know, dogs are my specialty; nevertheless, I think I should have passed on had I not been directly appealed to.

"Don't, Clare, make such an absurd ado over that miserable dog," I heard the elder lady say. "I am really ashamed of you; do come along."

"I will not leave him here to die, or what is worse, to be hurt still more. Did you not see that cruel man kick him, in passing?"

"Oh!" she continued, appealing to me, "won't you be so kind as to carry this poor little dog to my home for me? It is only a short distance," she added, hesitatingly, looking up into my face, "and I shall be so much obliged to you. Much as I dread hurting him, I will take him myself rather than leave him here."

This was too much for the elder sister, for sisters they proved to be, and she walked haughtily away, leaving us a tete-a-tete in the public street. I confess I thought this a strange proceeding inasmuch as I was an entire stranger. Bending over the dog I endeavored to ascertain the extent of his injuries. "I think," I said slowly "that his leg is broken."

"Oh! I hope not! Poor little fellow!" exclaimed the sweet voice at my side, while the head bent lower, close to mine; "can he not be cured with care?"

I raised my eyes to meet hers full of tears but they did not hide the dark hazel lustre nor the depths of womanly tenderness which shone through them.

"I think he will get over it in a measure with good nursing," I said raising the shivering little creature from the ground, somewhat to the detriment of my left-hand glove, which I had not removed; "but he will be lame always; at least a little so," I hastened to add, to brighten the sorrowful face at my side.

It proved, as she had stated, but a short distance to her home, which we reached all too soon I thought notwithstanding my questionable occupation.

I would gladly have walked miles with those expressive eyes looking up so often not at me evidently but to note how I bore my charge and how he stood the journey.

Upon reaching No. 14 D street she ran up the steps, rang the bell, and put out her hands to receive the dog.

"Do you think I shall hurt him?" she asked anxiously; "and will he bite?"

"No," I replied, laying him gently in her arms, "instinct tells him you are his friend; even should you hurt him he would not bite."

She looked up to thank me, glanced at my soiled glove with a perplexed expression hesitated, then with merely a few earnest words of thanks, passed into the house. I raised my hat, descended the steps, and the door closed upon the kind-hearted girl and the little lame dog.

As I re-entered my sister's house she was in the act of descending the stairs. She started, and gave vent to a most emphatic "Why Phil!" then, quite overcome sat down where she had stood and gave way to a fit of convulsive laughter. I was getting angry as well as alarmed at the extent and duration of her unaccountable mirth, when the door behind me opened and closed, admitting my brother-in-law upon the scene.

I turned vexedly toward him, when lo! he too stood still and staring!

"Theed—I! Phil! that isn't you!" and off he went into a hearty haw! haw! that rang through the house.

One after another, the events of the day came up before me; without a word I entered the library and approached a full-length mirror. There, my whole form and costume were revealed. For one moment you could have heard a pin drop, then another burst of laughter echoed through the room.

Reader, I was in a coachman's livery!

I did not join them in the mirth, though I had many a hearty laugh afterward at the figure I cut, and at the remembrance of my face when the truth dawned upon me.

My brother-in-law spoke first.

"What does that mean, Phil; what in the name of all that's good have you been up to?"

"Those are questions," I replied, gravely, "that I would like to have answered by some one better informed than myself. If any one can tell me how I got inside this infernal old coat, I wish they would have the kindness to do so. No wonder the clerks giggled! No wonder a shrewd old broker took me for a pickpocket! No wonder Gertrude Place cut me in the street! and no wonder a lady asked me to carry a lame dog, and hesitated whether or no to offer me money in recompense!" And again I contemplated my costume, cast aside even by coachmen, ragged and rusty, with here and there a button the size of a dinner-plate. In short, three degrees below respectability, even for a coachman.

The facts of the case, as gradually involved, were these: Thomas, the owner of the coat, had worn it on a rainy day and hung it in the kitchen to dry. Over-careful Dinah had transferred it to the rack in the lower hall, and from thence I had transferred it to my back, not perceiving in my absent-mindedness that I had not ascended from the breakfast-room to the upper hall, nor questioning but what the only coat left must be mine. The rest of the dress being that of a gentleman, and of a fastidious one at that, was, of course, most indifferently out of keeping.

The whole affair was pronounced "a jolly mistake!" A lucky one it certainly proved, for thereby I found my wife.

After partaking of lunch, and with it some fine old sherry, I went to my room to write letters and read the papers, enclosed in a bright-colored dressing gown inside a luxurious easy chair, my feet in slippers resting on the fender before a bright hickory fire, writing desk on one side, a table on the other, with cigar-stand and match-box, both full—not those matches that never light except in the region their name and perfume suggests, but sweet-scented, rolia-

ble ones, and the cigars the real imported twenty-centers. With these surroundings I could defy all the old coats in christendom. Even being taken by my brother-in-law for his coachman, which at the time was the last straw for the poor camel's back, now only excited merriment. I lit a Havana, took up a paper and settled myself for an hour or two of real bachelor comfort. I glanced over the news; saw nothing to interest me. The fragrant weed had a delightfully soothing effect upon my nerves and spirits, and while the curling smoke floated over and around me, my paper fell to the floor, and I fell into a half dream and half reverie. I went back twenty years and forward forty,—how long I lived in that ecstatic half-way dreamland! How easily "Ike Marvel" must have written his "Reveries of a bachelor." Why, I could have beaten him both in quantity and quality; the only difficulty would have been in making a discerning public see it in that light. I lit another cigar, like his it would not go, and like him I persisted that it should, and when I had succeeded, it sent me off again into the land of imagination, where my thoughts ran fancy wild, but ran which way, or what length, they would fetch up against a pair of fine hazel eyes and a lame little dog.

The morning after my misadventure I had my beard, which had been my pet and pride for eight years, shaven close. I wished to lose my identity for the remainder of my stay in Gotham, for I was ever hoping to meet again the sweet compassionate face that was so indelibly fixed in my memory, and if good fortune should favor my wish, I did not care to be recognized as the coachman. The metamorphose was complete; my friends would not believe that it was I, and I certainly did not recognize myself; but as far as it concerned those hazel eyes, it availed nothing—I never met with them while I remained in the city.

It was rather a mild morning on the 1st of April, when, bidding my brother and sister good-by, I hurried to the pier in time to take the "St. John" for Albany. The boat was crowded, but I made my way at once to the deck and secured a seat, hoping to be able to read the news in peace; but the hum and confusion were distracting, and I found myself, involuntarily, following the conversation of those about me. That of a group of ladies near, led me to glance around in order to ascertain if they were acquaintances. But one of them faced me, however, and she was a stranger, so I returned to my paper. The breeze brought their words distinctly to my ear, and it was but a moment before my attention was again arrested.

"What are you looking at Clare, or rather, what are you thinking about? You look so serious I fear you regret coming," said a rather pleasant voice in a matronly tone.

"No, I do not regret coming, aunt. I shall enjoy the trip very much, and my visit still more. I was only thinking how poor little Joe will miss me, and how glad he will be to see me again. But they all promised he should have good care," she added.

"Clara is too ridiculously foolish concerning that broken-legged dog," broke in a sharp voice, that I recognized at once; "she knows not who he belonged to, or anything of his origin, yet pets and fondles him as a mother would her child. She actually picked him up in the street."

"There you are mistaken, Estelle," replied the voice that was music to me.—"That kind coachman performed that service for Joe. He had been run over and hurt, aunt, and left on the pavement to die for all any one seemed to care. I don't believe the coachman would have passed him by."

"Oh! of course not," laughed her sister; "she is more ridiculous about the coachman than about the dog, even. I believe she never goes out without the hope of meeting him again."

I felt the blood tingle to my ears; most foolishly, of course, for with what motive could a lady desire to meet a coachman unless still further to express her gratitude?

"Yes," she responded, "I should like to see him, if only to let him know of little Joe's welfare."

"But you admired the man aside from his devotion to Joe, if I mistake not," persisted Estelle.

"I confess I never saw a finer face, nor eyes where benevolence shone forth more clearly than in his. He impressed me as a gentleman, and it must be peculiar circumstances that could induce him to accept so inferior a position."

"And his beard?" pursued her sister, sarcastically.

"Was the longest, glossiest, darkest, handsomest, that I ever saw," was the spirited answer.

"Do hear the child! In love, I do believe, with a shabby coachman! for all I saw was rags and rust, and kids absurdly out of place. Quite old style romance! she never even offered him a dollar, aunt."

"I thought of it, but could not do it; it seemed as though he, would consider it an insult."

"A count in disguise, no doubt, Clare, whom you will some time marry."

"God grant it may be so!" I ejaculated mentally, "so far as the latter part of your statement is concerned."

Clare made no reply, for at this instant an elderly gentleman approached them, and after a few words, led the whole party to the cabin. Clare addressed him as 'uncle,' so I presumed he was the husband of the lady she had previously addressed as aunt. I turned as the party passed me, and I recognized in the gentleman one with whom I had occasionally transacted business, and whose family was on intimate terms with a friend of my own.

Fortune was favoring me. I would secure an introduction.

CHAPTER II.

"The very man I wanted to see," was the exclamation of my friend alluded to at the close of the last chapter, when, shortly after my arrival home, I presented myself at his office. "How've you been, old fellow? I was just going in search of you, having ascertained you were expected any day. You're in luck, or others are, I don't know which. The Lindons give a splendid party to-morrow night, and here is a card of invitation, intrusted to me for you."

"I am not acquainted with Miss Lindon," I said, with assumed indifference, for Lindon was the name of Clare's uncle.

"But you are sufficiently known to her father," urged Stanley, "to be included in so grand an affair; much to their satisfaction I guess, for the old gentleman admires you, and is by no means unwilling, his own daughter being engaged, that you should become known to his niece, in whose honor the party is given. She and her sister both are visiting there. They live in New York. The younger is an odd little thing who cares nothing for gay amusements, but the elder is a catch, not so much in point of wealth, though their father is well off, as that she is superbly brilliant. Lindon promised to introduce her to the finest beard in the State. By the way, I see now what makes you look so strange! What did induce you to have that off, Morris?"

"It was a whim, I suppose; I can't get used to its absence, though, and shall perhaps cultivate another."

"Well, I must be off now. You'll go to the party, won't you, and I'll call for you?"

"Yes, I'll go," I said, "that is, if you think I shall be admitted, beardless."

"Oh! no doubt of that, for if the queenly Estelle is disappointed in you, she can hand you over to the little one, who, to my mind, is the truer woman and the most attractive on that account."

We were among the first arrivals the following evening, but the brilliantly lighted rooms were soon crowded with all the beauty and fashion the city could boast.—Estelle Lindon was regal, and her dress would have done honor to a Duchess, but I had beheld her under other circumstances; I knew the disposition hidden beneath all this splendor, and I also knew of its superiority. It is needless to say, I was not dazzled.

"But where was Clare, would she absent herself?" My heart sank like lead at the bare possibility. Suddenly, it rose into my mouth, for among the camellias and roses in the conservatory, I beheld the friend of little Joe and the champion of the shabby coachman.

Her dress was very simple—pure white; and she wore no ornament save a spring of tiny pink and white blossoms in her hair. A fine-looking gentleman was at her side, minutely examining the flowers and assiduously attentive, I thought, to this, the fairest of them all. I had watched them but a moment, yet I could gladly have shaken that fellow out of his boots, or so far into them that he would not have been visible the rest of the evening.

"Are you fond of flowers, Mr. Morris?" asked Miss Lindon, probably noting the direction of my gaze.

"Extravagantly!" I answered, and she at once led the way to the conservatory.

"My sister Clare, Mr. Morris."

The hazel eyes lingered upon my face for an instant, as though vaguely perplexed, then a slight flush arose to her cheek as she bowed gracefully. Concluded on second page.