

The Bloomfield Times.

FRANK MORTIMER,
Editor and Proprietor.

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BY
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A Young Man's Adventures.

ONLY twenty-one, with a good education, and five thousand dollars in my possession, I felt like taking the world easy for a short time before settling upon a profession, as I had not yet made up my mind what to be, a doctor, a lawyer, or an editor, and I did not think there was any need to be in a hurry. I wanted to see a little of life, and my experience at Yale College, among some of the madcaps there, had given me a strong desire to venture into the great world beyond.

Walter Brainard, my especial chum, a native of Baltimore, suggested that we should "do New York" for a week or so, on his way home for the vacation. I closed with the proposal at once. I had never visited the great metropolis, and was anxious to do so; but he had been there often, and was well acquainted. He promised to show me "the ropes." He did. Let me not anticipate. I will merely promise that most people who undertake to "do" New York generally get "done." I was not an exception.

We took the night boat from New Haven, and arrived without accident, in fine feather, and prepared for sport. I merely took with me a small carpet-bag, containing a change of clothes and a few necessary articles, and about eight hundred dollars.

In one week I got rid of five hundred dollars, fell in love, and got into a terrific fight. We Yale boys rather pride ourselves on our "muscle." You will admit I was expeditious enough. The way I fell in love was this:—

Walter was acquainted with the proprietor of a popular newspaper, who gave him an invitation, and permission to bring a friend, to a grand party he was about to give at his elegant mansion on Columbia Avenue, Brooklyn. The guests were expected to come in fancy costumes, and there was to be private theatricals and dancing and a great supper.

He took me to a costumer in Walker Street—I think that was the name—and we selected our costumes. He chose the dress of a cardinal; I that of a cavalier of the reign of Charles II. of England. I had rather a good figure, and I was anxious to show it to advantage.

The night came, and we went. The large parlors were thronged with a most brilliant assemblage. There was every conceivable character represented, and the elite of the literati of New York were there. Walter introduced me to a number of notable, who rather despised my youthful ignorance without creating any very lasting impression, and I accidentally made the acquaintance of a young lady dressed as "Spring," who took my heart captive in a quarter of an hour.

In a short time we were conversing together as freely as if we had known each other for years. There is not much ceremony or reserve between eighteen and twenty-one. We exchanged confidences. I told her my name and residence, and in return she informed me that her name was Edith Nones. She made her home with a married sister, whose husband owned a large coal mine at Scranton, Pennsylvania. At present, however, she was stopping with an aunt who lived in Cottage Place, New York city. She gave me an invitation to call upon her, which I gladly accepted. I was desperately smitten with her, and fancied she was rather pleased with me.

I devoted myself to her for the entire evening, escorting her to the supper-table, doing the gallant in every possible way. She left before we did. The aunt was there, by the way; a Mrs. Forbush, a fine-looking old lady, to whom I was introduced. I cloaked them and put them into their carriage. The rooms seemed desolate when she was gone—my fun was over for that evening.

"Let's go home," I said to Walter.

"It's about time," he answered.

getting slow. Say, old boy, I think you've made an impression."

"Pshaw!" I returned, and I felt that I was blushing like a green girl.

"Nice girl, that Edith Nones," he rattled on his careless way, "a good catch too. I have been making some inquiries about her; got some money—she and her sister came in for about fifty thousand between them, at the old man's death. Go in and win!"

We went home together—that is, when I say "home," I mean to the room we occupied at the International—in very good spirits.

I called the next afternoon upon Edith; found her alone in a cosy little parlor that looked out upon a garden—rather a rare thing to find in New York; had a long chat with her upon indifferent subjects, and left her with my good opinion strengthened, and feeling strongly inclined to adopt Walter's advice, and try to win her. I hesitated a little over this important step, as I did not think I had seen sufficient of life to settle down into a sober married man. The free-and-easy life I had been leading for the last few days had been very exhilarating, and I wanted to have a little more of it. I got it, with a vengeance, that very night.

Walter had picked up a friend, a sallow-complexioned man, with piercing dark eyes, and splendid black hair and full beard apparently about thirty years of age, who went by the name of Parks. He was very gentlemanly, had delicate white hands, and wore a profusion of rings. One of them, on the little finger of the right hand, was a peculiar seal ring, with some device cut upon the stone. I remember one day trying to examine this ring, but he would not let me, turning the stone inside his hand, with some playful remark about curiosity. Of course I did not press it, but the circumstance struck me as being a little odd at the time. Where Walter picked this man up I do not know, but I noticed that whenever we were in his company our steps were invariably directed to some haunt of vice.

On the night in question he introduced us into the most fashionable and frequent gambling house in the city. A marble-front building, with plate-glass doors, with a very conspicuous gold number upon them and fitted up in what might truly be called a "palatial" style. After passing through the long corridor and two doors, which opened slowly, as if the entrance was vigilantly guarded, though I saw no one but a couple of very sedate-looking colored men, and up a flight of stone steps we emerged into a hall, resplendent with gas chandeliers, plate-glass mirrors, long tables, and elegant sideboards, covered with decanters of choice wines and dainty little baskets holding the most fragrant Havana cigars.

The room was comfortably full, and "faro" and "roulette" were in full operation, but every thing was conducted in a quiet and orderly manner. Attentive black waiters, in snowy white jackets, flitted noiselessly about, supplying the gamblers at the table with liquors and cigars. To my inexperienced eyes it was like a scene from fairy land. We took a drink—the best Madeira I ever tasted—as a preliminary, and then watched the progress of the game. I was leaning over the chair of an old fellow, who appeared to have been playing a vigorous game, and with rather poor success. He looked like a drover from the West, being much more coarsely dressed than those around him, and his features bore evidence of having been "exposed" to rather rough weather. He had a pile of round pieces of ivory, or some kind of bone with a red ring round the edge, and a red figure 5 in the centre, before him, and he kept placing them on different cards that were fastened to a green cloth—one of each denomination in the pack—whilst the dealer, opposite, was sliding other cards from a square silver box, just large enough to hold a pack, and contrived in some manner so as to pass but one card at a time.

"That's 'faro,'" whispered Walter.

"That's what they call 'bucking against the tiger.'"

I asked him where they kept the "tiger," and he gave me an indescribable leer as he answered:

"Just you stake ten dollars on one of those cards, and you'll feel his claws."

"Yes," said the old fellow, who overheard us, looking up in my face—he had just staked his last ivory chip and lost—that's so, neighbor. This ere fighting the tiger is the surest thing out."

"How sure?" I asked, in surprise.

"The more you put down the less you'll take up," was his answer.

He grinned at me in a ghastly, cadaver-

ous sort of a manner, got up, made a bee-line for a decanter labelled 'whisky,' poured out a generous portion into a glass, and drank it off as if it had been so much water, then quietly walked out of the room.

A whole moral lesson against gambling could not have had more effect upon me at the time, than these few quaint words. I recognized their point at once, and resolved that I would put down nothing. Parks appeared very much chagrined at this determination upon my part, though I was at a loss to understand why it should trouble him, as my losses or gains would not effect his pocket; yet that it did trouble him was quite apparent even to my unsophisticated eyes.

Finding that I was resolutely bent upon abstaining from the game, and that Walter was of the same inclination, under some pretext or other he got us out of the gambling house and into Broadway again.

Our next stopping place was in some private supper rooms down a basement.—We had stopped at several saloons on the way, and drank in each. My brain was reeling under the effects of these numerous potations, and, literally speaking, I was full of the "old Harry"—I did not care a tinker's old sauce-pan whether "school kept or not." Like a great many other young men, fresh to city life, I was in for a "high old time"—and I had it.

At the supper rooms Parks found a friend, a small, dapper-looking man, with curly brown hair, and a splendid moustache—in fact a splendid-looking fellow, with a jovial manner, and a rakish appearance altogether—a man that, if I had been perfectly sober, I should have avoided as a dangerous character—one of those elegant human panthers who are always ready to pounce upon verdant young men from the country. I took him for a jolly good fellow on that occasion, and fraternized with him at once. Parks introduced him to us under the name of Shirley, and whispered confidentially in my ear that he "was one of the bloods"—belonged to one of the first families in the city. I felt rather proud of the honor of knowing this young man. We exchanged tokens of mutual esteem before we parted.

Parks had been badgering me all the evening about my timidity in refusing to play at "faro," and asked me if I could play "everlasting," in that sarcastic, taunting manner so extremely annoying to young men just taking their first experience of life, and who wish to be thought very worldly wise. I told him that I could not only play "everlasting," but that I would bet him fifty dollars that I could beat him three out of five games of "euchre." He accepted at once, and we all sat down to cards in a private room—which appeared to have been expressly arranged for the purpose—Walter and I partners against Parks and Shirley.

More liquor was ordered, and we commenced the game. Shirley dealt, and I was sober enough to see that he manipulated the cards with his dainty white fingers in a very dexterous and skillful manner. He was evidently an old hand at the business. We lost the first hand; I dealt for the second, and we won it. Parks dealt next, and I observed that he handled the cards in precisely the same manner that Shirley did, and on the little finger of his right hand, as he threw off the cards, glistened the peculiar seal ring he wore—a large stone of blood color, with some device carved upon it. I bent over, (with a strange curiosity for which I cannot account) and glanced at the device upon the stone. He drew his hand quickly away, with an angry look, and turned the stone to the palm of his hand, as he had done once before; but my eyes had been too quick for him. I had deciphered the inscription; it was an initial formed by the two capital letters A and B twisted curiously together.

"What does A B stand for?" I asked, rather enjoying his annoyance, and determined to let him know that I had seen the inscription despite his precautions.

"ANY BODY!" he answered, shortly.

Every body laughed, and the game proceeded; but I could see that Parks would have been better pleased if I had not read the letters engraved upon his ring.—The game proceeded, but it was just like open and shut; when we dealt we won, only there was this difference: when we dealt they had some trick cards in their hands; but when they dealt we never took a trick at all. As they had the lead in dealing, they won every fifth game, and unfortunately for us, that was the game on which the stakes depended. Before I hardly knew what I was about, I had lost three hundred dollars. I was satisfied that I had been cheated, and I became enraged.—

The liquor with which I had been plied made me belligerent.

I accused Parks of the cheat; he denied it indignantly. I started up suddenly and caught him by the arm, and an ace fell out of his right sleeve. He grew furious at this detection, applied some epithet which I did not relish, and I knocked him down.—Shirley sprang to his feet, and drew a revolver upon me; before he could fire, Walter seized a tumbler from the table and hurled it at him. It took effect between his eyes, and Shirley crashed down to the floor, the revolver exploding in the fall.

"The quicker we get out of this the better," cried Walter.

I was decidedly of his opinion. He made a bolt for the door, and I followed him.—We met a waiter hurrying along the passage.

"What's the matter?" he asked, sleepily. It was past one o'clock.

"Nothing," answered Walter, coolly.—"One of our party, a little over the bay, dropped his revolver. They will settle in there—we're going home."

The waiter grinned, he evidently knew that we were a couple of pigeons who had been well plucked. We sauntered through the passage liisurly, though our hearts were beating, but the moment we got upon the pavement above, in the open air, we turned down the first corner, into a by-street, and made good speed toward our hotel. We did not hold much conversation until we reached the International, and then, safe in our own room, with the door locked, we held a consultation over "the situation."

"We have got into a very bad scrape," began Walter, dolefully.

"It looks like it," I answered in the same key.

"I wonder if I killed that fellow?" he continued, thoughtfully.

"I should not be surprised," I returned. "It was a heavy cut-glass tumbler; it struck him full in the forehead; I saw the blood spurt as he fell."

"Tell you what, old boy, we must get out of this as soon as possible. Got any place where you could hide away for a short time?"

After a moment's reflection I answered, "Yes."

"You see," continued Walter, "they couldn't prove much against us any way, as Parks was non-compos—that was a scientific rap you gave him—before I hit this—what's his name—Shirley, only they can put us under bonds, and worry us; so we had better get out of the city before they catch us. I don't think they will make much of a hunt for us, and I will try to compromise matters with Parks, and the affair will soon blow over. Where do you think of going—home?"

"By no means," I answered, quickly; "that is just where they would be likely to look for me. I shall go to Scranton, in Pennsylvania."

"Got some friends there?"

"Yes."

"The very thing. The depots are near together—or that is to say where you start from, for you will have to take the ferry-boat to Elizabethport. I'll show you the way, and see you off."

We laid down in our clothes for an hour or so, for it was already near daylight, then packed our carpet-bags, settled our bill at the hotel, and getting into an omnibus, were whirled down to the Battery. Walter saw me on the little steamer, shook hands, and we parted; it was quite a time before I saw him again.

When Walter had asked me if I had anywhere to go, the idea had suddenly flashed through my mind that I would go to Scranton. It was Edith Nones' home, and I need scarcely admit that she was the magnet that attracted me thither. She had told me, during my visit to Cottage Place, that she expected to return home in a day or two. What I purposed by this unauthorized visit is beyond my power to say. I merely felt an irresistible desire to be near her, to gaze upon her, drink in the loveliness of her features, bask in the sunshine of her eyes, and listen to the melody of her voice.

Seated in the cars, lulled by the monotonous rattle and whir of the wheels, I indulged in a most delicious day dream as we rolled speedily along. There came a jolt, a crash; the roof of the car suddenly became the floor; down the embankment it went, finally landing on its side. There were shrieks of pain, cries of dismay, and exclamations of astonishment, mingled with the crash, as the accident took place. I clambered through the broken window and gained the ground, finding to my great surprise, that I had received

no material injury, and had escaped with a few bruises and a good shaking up. Others were not so fortunate, and many harrowing sights met my gaze as I surveyed the scene of disaster. Let me omit the details—I have no taste for horrors.

Two of the cars—the rear ones—by some defect in the rail, had been thrown from the track. The one in which I was had been pretty well smashed up; the other, which had remained beside the track, and had not been thrown down the embankment, was not seriously damaged. Cries of alarm, amongst which I recognized female voices proceeded from it. I hastened to the assistance of the inmates. I clambered up the steps, and forced open the door, which had got wedged together some way, and handed out the affrighted women and children.—The last lady that came gave a glad start of surprise as I assisted her out, and my astonishment was so great that I nearly dropped her. She was Edith Nones.

I could but think it a singular circumstance that she, who had occupied such a prominent place in my thoughts during the journey, should have been upon the train unknown to me.

"Why, Mr. McVeigh," she exclaimed, "is it you?"

As I could not deny it, I did not attempt to. Indeed I never was at such a loss for words in my life.

"What in the world brings you here?" she continued, as I remained silent, trying to think what plausible motive I could invent for my journey.

I stammered out something about having a strong curiosity to visit the coal regions and inspect their wonders. She gave me an arch glance out of her soft, dove-like eyes, and I had a strong suspicion that she more than half suspected the truth. I blushed to my very temples, and attempted to turn the conversation by speaking of the frequency of railroad accidents at the time.

"If you are merely sight-seeing among our hills," began Edith, when we were once more on our way, "I trust you will not refuse to make my sister's house your stopping-place while you remain. I need scarcely assure you that any friend of mine will be made welcome."

"If you count me among your friends already," I returned, "I shall most certainly accept your kind invitation."

The rich blood glowed ruddily in her cheeks, and she turned away her head under pretence of looking out of the car window; but she did not appear to be displeased, which I took as encouraging. I certainly was very far gone, and I could not help showing it.

"You will find my sister very amiable," she said, after a slight pause, resuming the conversation; "and Mr. Briscoe, her husband, is a most genial gentleman. It was a love-match between them, and though they have been married six years, they are more like a pair of lovers now than a married couple."

"Have they any children?" I asked, casually.

"No; they have lost two—and that seems to draw them nearer to each other," responded Edith.

"Ira Briscoe was quite a poor man when Hermina married him," Edith went on with charming confidence, "and our folks thought it rather a poor match for her, thinking, with her money, she might have looked higher, and found some one better than a hard-working overseer of a coal mine; but she had known him from a boy—he was her heart's choice, and as she was her own mistress, no one could gainsay her. The marriage was the making of him, and he is not ashamed to own it. I have often heard him say he owed all to his wife.—They say now he is worth a hundred thousand dollars; and he has paid Hermina back what she advanced, and her property is all in her own name."

I conceived a great admiration for this Mr. Ira Briscoe, and was anxious to make his acquaintance. I like these men who carve out their own fortunes.

"Mr. Briscoe comes of a hard-working race, I presume?" I observed.

"Perhaps he does," returned Edith, "but he seems to be the only one of the race who has inherited the family virtue."

"How so?" I asked, in surprise. "Has he relatives?"

"One only, a brother—an elder brother—the pet of too indulgent parents."

"Does he live in Scranton?" I asked, feeling quite interested in this family history.

"O, no; he lives in New York city. He is a stock broker, or something of that sort. Always dresses well and lives in good style. He visits us quite often. He is very civil and agreeable. Hermina likes him, but I—I—don't!" Concluded next week.