

# The Bloomfield Times.

FRANK MORTIMER,  
Editor and Proprietor.

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## The Bloomfield Times.

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### GRACE BLENCHFORD'S LOVER.

JONAS BLENCHFORD, with coat, hat and gloves already on, heard the tinkle of the sleigh bells, and arose to go down but when he reached the door he felt a light touch upon his arm, and heard the well known voice of his daughter.

"Pa, may I go?"  
"But I am only going to the bank, Grace."

"After what, father? I will go there and wait for you. It will not take me five minutes to get ready."

"Well—well! Be sly, and I'll wait," said the old gentleman, quite merrily, "and I'll give you such a sleigh ride as you never had before—a sleigh ride extraordinary. You know I have the black before the cutter."

"So much the better," said Grace, and she ran away to dress, little dreaming how well the promise would be kept.

John Normandy stood by the window looking out upon the busy street, ever and anon glancing at his watch, as if impatient for the time to pass. And indeed he was. He had no thoughts for what was passing in the street below. He saw Jonas Blenckford and his daughter as they drove up to the bank, but forgot them the moment they passed from sight within the entrance. He had weighty thoughts upon his mind, that could not be cast aside by any ordinary occurrence.

He was somewhere about thirty years of age, tall, erect, dignified, and very plain of feature. He had battled with discouragements and poverty until his very face bore marks of the terrible struggles, but he had conquered. His motto had ever been, "Onward and upward," and, never flinching, never giving way, he had at last become cashier of the bank of E—, a position both honorable and lucrative.

Only a twelvemonth had he held the position, but in that short time he had won the confidence of the officers of the bank, the regard of his fellow employees, and was generally liked by those doing business with him.

Still he was unsocial. He lived a life of his own. He asked no companions—wanted none. When the bank closed for the day, he hurried away to his lodgings, and was seen no more until the hour of business on the following day.—Business was his only pleasure. He talked little—worked much; he was a poor companion, but a true friend.

He merely turned his head when the president and his daughter entered the bank, and then went back to his thinking; but Blenckford seemed disposed to molest him.

"Day dreaming, Normandy?"

"I have encountered so much reality that there is but little of the imaginary left," said he, turning toward them, half reluctantly.

"Oh, fie! Normandy. Not quite thirty, I should judge, and settling down into an older man than I am. What are you thinking about? It must not be.—Grace, can you do anything to show this practical old gentleman the error of his ways? I'll leave you with him to try, while I devote a few moments to business."

"Don't forget the ride, father."

"Never fear. You shall have it."

Normandy was really vexed to see the old gentleman trot away, and leave him to entertain the peerless Grace Blenckford. Grace suspected it, and she led him a pretty race of words that brought the smile to his face in spite of himself, and provoked some almost merry replies, that sounded strangely from his lips. When Blenckford returned, he found them quite sociable. Normandy, leaning over the desk, listening to Grace's merry talk, and occasionally putting in a word that showed how well he was enjoying it.

"Thawing, by—smoke!" exclaimed Blenckford in surprise, but his manner changed immediately. "Grace, we must

postpone the ride. Some very urgent business keeps me here. Wait, Normandy can take my place."

"I should be pleased," said he.

"Very good, Normandy; and remember that I promised her a ride such as she never had before."

"A ride extraordinary, father."

"Yes, yes; that was it. Do not disappoint her."

"Assuredly not."

While Normandy was drawing on his greatcoat, a gentleman stepped to his side and spoke to him in a very low tone. Normandy's face blanched whiter than snow, but he recovered instantly.

"Thank you, Ganson, for this proof of your friendship, but I have known it for some hours. Please let it rest where it is, if you can, and I will make it all right in the morning. There is some great mistake."

With a buoyancy of manner that surprised Grace, after what she had seen, he conducted her to the sleigh, and with a gallantry little expected from one so practical, he handed her in, arranging the robes about her more skillfully than even her old father could have done.—Then he took his seat by her side, and off they went.

Through the crowded streets, through the less crowded suburbs, out into the quiet country, Normandy all the while chatting merrily, a startling contrast to his real feelings. But when once they were out of the reach of the din of the great city his manner changed entirely. Turning his dark, searching eyes full upon his companion's beautiful face, he asked, earnestly, almost beseechingly:

"Miss Blenckford, can you trust me?"

Surprised and somewhat annoyed, she hardly knew how to answer. But she saw that he was in earnest, and in the brief time, she thought of all her acquaintances, and not one of them would she trust sooner.

"Why do you ask, Mr. Normandy?"

"If I should tell you," said he, "that those whom you hold most dear, yourself included, were in great peril, and a peril that you never could guess, and that I had the power to save you all, would you believe me? Would you trust me? Would you be guided by me for a brief time?"

Startled by his manner, and convinced by his earnestness, she replied as earnestly:

"Yes, Mr. Normandy; I can and do trust you. But why do you ask?"

"Do not ask me. It will be enough to tell you that you and your father and brother are truly in great danger, and if you will place implicit confidence in me, I can save you. Drop your veil if you please. Thank you."

Almost tenderly he wrapped the robes around her, yet uttering no word. Then gathering the reins, he gave the horse a light cut, and away they went, at a pace that soon left the city far out of sight.—"An extraordinary ride, surely," thought Grace, as they sped over the crisp snow; and there was a wonder how it would end. But she felt no fear, no regret that she had placed herself in his hands.

For hours they rode, he doing all in his power to entertain her, succeeding so well that she almost forgot the singular position, in listening to his brilliant talk and varied experience. About dark they drew up to a farmhouse, where Normandy ordered supper. While it was preparing, he looked after the comfort of his horse, rubbing him down with his own hand and feeding him; for the ride was not yet over.

"We have four hours yet to ride, said he to Grace. "Shall we go on?"

"I trust you, Mr. Normandy. Let me help you if I can."

"Thank you! Thank you, Miss Blenckford," he said, gratefully. "You shall not repent it."

Out in the night they started again.—He procured additional robes at the farm-house and wrapped his fair companion so closely that she did not feel the biting cold. He needed no covering; his blood was at a fever height, defying the cold north wind more effectually than the warmest furs.

On they drove through the still keen air; past farmhouses, over hills, across rivers, through dense woods and damp valleys, and yet the end of that ride was not yet."

Could it be that John Normandy was playing false? Did he know that the officers of the law were searching for him far and near? That his name and description had been flashed over the wires in all directions? That his name was whispered upon the street as a defaulter—a robber? That he was already charged with the abduction of Jonas Blenckford's fair daughter? He could not have driven faster had he known all of these, nor seemed more impatient to get over the ground. It

looked very dark, yet Grace Blenckford trusted him.

"We are almost there," said he, halting the steaming horse, and pointing to a light ahead. Are you sorry you trusted me? It is not too late yet."

"Your conduct is very strange, yet I have no fear," replied Grace.

"You are one among a thousand," he said, honestly.

He stepped out, and taking the bells from the horse, stowed them away in the sleigh. Then he drove off cautiously toward the light.

"It is our beacon," said he. "It tells me that I am in time."

He stopped again, when within a few hundred yards of the house. Securing and well blanketing the horse, he helped Grace to alight, and together they walked toward the building.

"We must be very cautious, else our ride will be for naught."

He drew a revolver from his breast, and placed it in his greatcoat-pocket, where he could reach it without waste of time.

"I have come prepared," he whispered, feeling his companion's arm tremble within his own. "Do not fear. I would sooner lose my own life than that one hair of your head should be harmed."

They stopped in the shadow, just before the door.

"Now, Miss Blenckford, you will have need of all your courage and fortitude," he whispered. "Within this house you will see that which will be agony to you, but it cannot be avoided. By no other means could I save the Blenckford name from disgrace. Follow me."

Revolver in hand, he burst the door, and entered quickly, followed closely by Grace.

With a cry of fierce anger, the only occupant of the room sprang up to meet the intruders; but the moment the light fell upon their faces he sunk back into the chair with a groan, and buried his face in his hands.

"Oh, God! Lost, lost?"

Grace Blenckford recognized her only brother, James; and seeing his distress, she sprang to his side to comfort him.

"Don't touch me, Grace!" he exclaimed in terror. "Normandy, take her away! Don't let her come near me! Why did you bring her here? Oh, my sister! Is it possible? Great God! I shall go mad! I cannot endure it! Why did you ever bring her here?"

"To save you," replied Normandy.

He had closed and bolted the door, but still retained the revolver in his hand. He moved nearer to the conscience-stricken man.

"James Blenckford, calm yourself," said he. "We have come, not to harm, but to save you. The presence of your sister should tell you that."

Young Blenckford raised his head with a hopeful look.

"God bless you, John Normandy! You know not what I have suffered, but I dared not come back. And now you will keep it from my dear father?"

"I will," said Normandy, solemnly.—"No one shall ever know it, save ourselves."

"But Grace?" said James Blenckford.

She need know no more, said Normandy. I brought her that the sight of her might give you courage to return to us."

"John, I shall tell her all," said James.

"I shall tell her everything, but not now."

"Spare the pain, James."

"No, John. It is my duty. But not now."

"Where is your accomplice?"

He will arrive by the next train," said Blenckford, with a shudder. "I was waiting for him."

"And that is due in thirty minutes," said Normandy, looking at his watch.—"Give me the money, James, and we will leave this place before the villain arrives."

Grace saw all, but heard nothing, for they had withdrawn to the other side of the room, that she might not be pained; but a great fear was weighing upon her heart—a dread of some approaching calamity. When they came back she looked from one to the other for some explanation, but very little they gave her. Normandy spoke first.

"Miss Blenckford, you are puzzled at my words and actions, but you will pardon me, I know, when I tell you that it is better for all of us to say but little about it. Your brother has been led into an error that threatened to be almost serious. Fortunately, everything is now arranged quite satisfactorily, thanks to your presence, and he will return to the city with us. Watch over him, and pray for him," he added, solemnly, "that he may not stumble again."

"I ask it," said James, bowing his head; and without another word they left the house, and were soon on their way back to the city.

Silently they rode until the limits of the city were reached. Then John Normandy gave the reins to Blenckford, and alighting bade the brother and sister adieu.

"But you, John?" said James. "What will you do?"

"Fear not for me," replied Normandy, adding in a whisper, I shall not betray you, whatever happens."

Then he charged them both never to tell what had passed between them that night; and, without waiting to hear their replies, he strode rapidly down the street.

He went directly to the bank, reaching it just at opening time, and, without a word to any one went straight to the vaults—his custom every morning—and deposited the money that James Blenckford had stolen from them. Then he went back, and met the officer to arrest him. He expected it; but he had left the money in its place, and now he was ready for prison. He felt thankful that he had been allowed so much time. He had saved James Blenckford, and his father, and Grace, and what did he care now? He was alone in the world; he had done his duty; and he had hope.—James Blenckford went to him in prison, but Normandy would hear nothing about surrendering himself.

"I will tell you a secret, James, and then you will see a motive for my actions. I love your sister better than my own life, and I could not bear to have a word whispered against her. Let it rest as it is. I am content."

Again James Blenckford promised, but it was hard for him to abide by it. With all his faults, he had a generous heart. That very day he told Grace the whole story of his disgrace, and how John Normandy was suffering for them; and she was touched by the recital, and thought of every means to liberate him.

"The money, James, where is it now?"

"Normandy placed it in the safe, unknown to any one."

"And has it not been found? Would not the whole matter be looked upon as a great blunder; and would not Mr. Normandy be liberated at once, and exonerated from all blame, if the money was found there?"

Away went James Blenckford without waiting to answer his sister's question, and within ten minutes he was mounting the steps to the bank. He sauntered up to Ganson, and carelessly inquired if there was anything new in Normandy's case.

"Nothing," replied Ganson. "He protests his innocence, and I am inclined to think he speaks the truth."

"So am I, Ganson. Do you know I am half certain that it is all a great mistake—that the money is now somewhere about the safe?"

"I wish it might prove so. It is a hard blow for Normandy, and if it is gone, who else could have taken it? He has the key to the safe."

"I don't believe it is gone," said Blenckford, controlling himself wonderfully. "I would like to have another search made.—I'll ask father and here he comes."

Jonas Blenckford felt very sore over the disgrace of his favorite, and especially since his daughter had returned, and spoken in the warmest terms of her treatment during the ride. He was therefore willing to do anything to clear up the matter. He readily consented to make another search for the missing money, though he was well satisfied that it would be fruitless.

And indeed it came very near being so. For full two hours they looked, pulling drawers, turning and unfolding papers, till every one but James was satisfied that it was not there. He knowing, or fully believing that Normandy told the truth, did not give it up, and at last brought the package to light, from an obscure corner where it might have been overlooked a score of times.

With a cry of joy Jonas Blenckford took the package, and counted out the money, all in bills of a large denomination.

"It's all right, boys!" he shouted.—"Normandy is innocent."

Then all was confusion. James ran home and told Grace, and they rejoiced together; while their father went in person and procured the release of Normandy, telling the strange story as he went. It was the happiest moment of his life when John Normandy took his place in the bank again.

James profited by his bitter experience. He never again swerved from the right,

and is living now a respected citizen of his native place. Grace never has forgotten her extraordinary sleigh ride, and never will, for her name is now Grace Normandy and she loves her plain, noble-hearted husband, with true affection.

### A POOR FELLOW'S FORTUNE.

MANY years ago, a singular trial took place in Dublin, about a Queen Anne's farthing. There was, at a popular restaurant in that city, a sharp lad, named George Home, Scottish by birth and training, who was intrusted with the till, and had a high reputation for honesty. He had occupied that position for some years, and was about twenty-one at the period I am alluding to. One day as he was going out, he took change for a tenpenny bank-token out of the till, and the particular silver coin which he put in was one with a special mark upon it, which he had long carried in his pocket as a "luck penny."

He was unaware at the time that he was parting with this particular coin. Among the change which he took were two farthings—one of them had been in the drawer for some time, and being a handsome, old-fashioned coin had been shown to two or three customers, who admired it, but had no idea of its value. While Home was out he got a glass of beer, and, in paying for it, pulled out the particular coin in question. A gentleman who was present picked it up off the counter, and said: "Your fortune's made. That is a Queen Anne's farthing. I should not wonder if 'tis worth a thousand pounds."

Home hurried back to his place of business, and in an excited manner, mentioned what he heard. His employer claimed the coin. Home refused to give it up. The master said he had stolen it. Home produced a fellow clerk to prove that he had taken it, in change, out of the till, and showed the identical coin—Home's "luck-penny,"—which had been put in the drawer. The master sent for a policeman, charged Home with theft, and had him taken before a magistrate. As they were taking him to the police office he slipped his hand into his pocket, and thence removed the farthing, chucked it into a heap of mud piled up on the side of the street. He was searched by order of the magistrate, and though the coin was not found, was committed to Newgate on a charge of robbery. Incredible as it may appear, Home was tried in the Recorder's Court, Green Street, Dublin, convicted, and sentenced to twelve months imprisonment.

This matter got into the newspapers, of course, and caused no small excitement.—A humane attorney was struck with the injustice of the proceeding, and called upon Mr. Daniel O'Connell, then in large practice as counsellor-at-law, who examined the records of the court, and finding evidence of the illegality of the whole proceedings against Home, placed the case before the Irish Government, and declining to accept a free pardon for Home (who had done nothing wrong), succeeded in having the whole proceedings quashed, the Recorder reprimanded and Home liberated, his prosecuting employer paying him a considerable sum to forego law proceedings for damages. There also was a liberal subscription in Dublin; and with the money thus obtained, George Home took a lease of extensive premises, which had been occupied as an arcade, and opened a restaurant, called the Arcade Hotel, which, in a short time became famous for good cheer, low price, great cleanliness, and civil waiters. In about ten years he realized a fortune, with which he returned to Scotland. His former employer, whose business was ruined by Home's competition, finally became his cashier, and was faithful and trustworthy.

This story has an end. At Home's, where I have often dined, I saw the Queen Anne's farthing which made his fortune.—Soon after he had opened the Arcade Hotel, the identical coin again came into his hand, among other money taken over the counter. He was able to identify it by a certain nick or cut upon the edge. It was supposed, that, on the removal of the mud-mound into which Home had flung it when he resolved that his master should never have it again, the farthing had been found, and had again got into circulation. At the Bank of Ireland, its value, to a coin-collector, was estimated at \$25. But Home never parted with it. He had it mounted in a silver frame with glasses over it, so that it could be seen, and not touched, and was fond of exhibiting it. The coin in fact was one of the great attractions of the arcade. So after all, a Queen Anne's farthing did make a poor fellow's fortune.