

The Bloomfield Times.

FRANK MORTIMER,
Editor and Proprietor.

AN INDEPENDENT FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

Terms: IN ADVANCE
\$1 25 Per Year.

Vol. V.

New Bloomfield, Pa., Tuesday, October 31, 1871.

No. 44.

The Bloomfield Times.

Is Published Weekly,

At New Bloomfield, Penn'a.

BY

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SUBSCRIPTION TERMS.

\$1.25 PER YEAR:

75 Cents for 6 Months; 40 Cents
for 3 Months,

IN ADVANCE.

TURNING THE TABLES.

I WAS IN LOVE!

Rather a startling confession to begin a story with, isn't it?

But the confession cannot strike you more startlingly than the fact of my being in this predicament did me.

The way of it was this:

Mrs. Townsend gave the last party of the season. Everybody was going out of town in a week or two, and of course everybody must attend this last "demonstration" of the "best society." I had been absent from the city for some time, and my friend Tom Lesley promised to introduce me to the prettiest girl of the season, so I went arrayed in my best, prepared to see and be seen—to conquer, I hoped, but I never once dreamed of being conquered. So little we know of what fate has in store for us, you see!

"There she is," whispered Tom to me, as we entered the room, and pointed to a tall young lady opposite.

I was struck at the first glance. These blonde women always had a peculiar fascination for me. Miss Stanfield was a blonde of the purest type. Tall with a willow grace in every motion and gesture. Her complexion was of a rare creamy tint, deepening into faint rose color on the cheeks. Her eyes were blue, deep, intense and changeful. But the principal charm was in her hair of pale dun gold—fine, soft and remarkably luxuriant. It was her own; I could tell that by the careless way in which she wore it looped up, with an arrow set with pearls, with a white rosebud or two fastened over her ear in the most bewitching way imaginable.

"Introduce me," I whispered back to Tom. "She's perfectly splendid; the most magnificent woman I ever saw."

"In love already?" asked Tom, as we elbowed our way through the crowd. "She's a regular flirt, they say; so be careful of your heart. There's a rumor afloat that young Lesmith offered her his heart and his million of money last week, both of which she very coolly declined."

"She can't be manoeuvring for money, then," I replied. Young Lesmith was the most wealthy young man in our set.

By that time we were near Miss Stanfield, and Tom proceeded to introduce us. She bowed pleasantly, and made room for me on the sofa where she was sitting. Tom gave me a warning nudge by way of a reminder that I must be careful, and took himself off, leaving me alone with the woman who had won my heart in five minutes. I had heard and read of love at first sight, but never believed anything in the doctrine before. There I was, an illustration of the theory.

I can't tell you what we said. I don't think I am exactly clear on that point, for it seemed to me that I was in fairy-land while I was sitting by Lucia Stanfield. It was very bewildering to sit under the spell of such deep blue eyes, and the fascination of such a low, musical voice. I was bewitched, and I don't think you could expect me, under the circumstances, to remember what was said.

By and by some one called for a song, and I had the pleasure of leading Miss Stanfield to the piano, and of turning her music, after she began to sing. Turning music had always been my special dislike before. I began to think it nice, and remember vaguely of wishing the world was a grand piano to be played upon by Miss Stanfield, and that I might have the exquisite pleasure of turning her music for her and listening to her as she sang "Captain Jacks" or "Up in a Balloon." You may know from that, that I was pretty far gone.

Miss Stanfield's taking young Sedley in tow, isn't she? I heard some one remark to another during a pause in the music. "It looks so," was the reply. "Poor fellow!"

What did I care for what they said about me? It was all jealousy on their part probably. I glanced down at Miss Stanfield and knew that she had heard what had been said, for she looked up to me with a charming blush on her face, and then dropped her beautiful blue eyes in a manner delightful to me. I was not aware then that such an appearance of "delightful confusion" could be "manufactured expressly for any occasion where required." I am wiser now than I used to be.

Later in the evening I was introduced to Miss Stanfield's sister, Mary. A very pretty quiet girl, with none of her sister Lucia's dash or brilliance about her. I remember thinking at the time that such a girl would make a capital wife for whoever was fortunate enough to get her. There was something in her quiet, well-bred ways and half-shy face that gave me that impression. But her sister outshone her completely in my estimation; she was nearer my ideal, "this Lucia with the yellow hair," than any other woman I had ever happened to meet.

I met Miss Stanfield and her sister once or twice after that before they left the city. I found out that they were going directly from town to Cape May, and declared my intention to Tom Lesley of going to Cape May too.

"Miss Stanfield is to be there, isn't she?" quizzed Tom. "Seems to me that I heard a fellow by the name of Sedley declare Cape May a bore about a year ago. Has the place 'met with a change,' or is it you?"

"Both, most likely," I answered, as indifferently as I could, for I didn't care to have everybody know how much I cared for Lucia Stanfield.

I slipped off to the Cape the day before the Stanfields did, to avoid the appearance of having followed them. I met Lucia and her sister on the steps as the carriage drove up, and was rewarded with a luminous smile from one, and a half-shy, graceful little smile and bow from the other. I helped them to alight, and managed to tell Miss Lucia how delighted I was to know that she was to spend a portion of the season at the Cape; which I thought a charming place. At which she smiled upon me more beamingly than before, and said something about "always being happy to be among congenial friends."

I shan't attempt to tell what was said and done for the next three weeks. With walks on the beach by moonlight, and sails down the bay, with long afternoons on the cliff, reading Tennyson or Owen Meredith and evenings full of music and gaiety, the time passed swiftly. Before I began to think of it, people were talking of going to Saratoga or the mountains. When Miss Lucia asked me if I was not intending to go to Saratoga for a week or two, remarking incidentally that they were going, I did not hesitate to remark that "such had been my intention all along."

"From there we are going to the White Mountains for a little rest before returning to the city," said Lucia. "This kind of life isn't rest. It is better than city life, of course, but one can't help getting tired of it. I want to get away among the mountains. I always feel better there. Life seems worth something more to me under their influence. Doesn't it to you?"

Of course it did. I was fully prepared to agree with anything in the sentimental line that Lucia had to offer. All her drafts on sentiment would meet with acceptance at par at my bank.

To Saratoga we went. Things had gone on swimmingly at Cape May, and things went on in the same way at Saratoga. I made up my mind, the first time we walked together beneath the pines in the park, with the moonlight shining over all like a blessing, and the mellow crash of the music from the band sounding in the distance, that I would not propose to Lucia until we had got to the mountains. There, with the shadow of Mount Washington falling at our feet, would be the fitting place to perform that somewhat difficult task. I am free to confess that it did seem like a difficult matter for me to ask the peerless Lucia if she would marry me. But ask her I was determined to. Could it be possible that she would say no? A thought of the sails at Cape May, the walks and talks by the sea, was sufficient to dispel any doubt that might obtrude itself upon my mind.

"Lucia is getting in a hurry to go to the mountains," said Mary to me one day. I started. Could it be that they knew what I had been thinking about? I looked at Lucia's sister, as she sat opposite me on the veranda, and met a look that was a curious mixture of amazement and sadness. She dropped her eyes beneath my glance, and blushed a delightful pink. For the

twentieth time, if not more, the thought came into my mind of how fortunate some one would be in getting Mary Stanfield for a wife. She looked so fresh in her white muslin, with blue flowers in her brown hair, and the knot of blue ribbon in the lace at her throat, that I could not help admiring her, and I told her something to that effect. Her brown eyes lit up softly at the flattery, which, from its truth, was not flattery after all. I liked to see her eyes smile as they could when she was pleased. I had seen a good deal of her since my acquaintance with the Stanfields began, and liked her only second to Lucia, I concluded, of all the young women I knew.

A week or two after that the Stanfields took their departure for the mountains. I did not accompany them, for the reason that I wanted to have a chance to collect my wits before proceeding to lay my heart at Lucia's feet. After they were gone, I recollected that she had not even asked me if I were coming after them. But then, perhaps, she had taken it for granted that I would follow them. She evidently knew what my intentions were.

The thought occurred to me that perhaps I had better write to her before I went to the mountains, and prepare her for what was coming. Not but that I thought she knew that I intended marriage, but that she might have time and opportunity to think the matter over, and give me a final answer at once. I was so sure what that answer would be that I was not troubled much about it.

Consequently I wrote to her. Here is the epistle, word for word, I have thanked my lucky stars a thousand times since it was written, that it was so non-committal.

"MY DEAR MISS STANFIELD:—The Springs are dull since you and your sister have left them. I think I shall have to try the mountains. I think I could find a little rest there. Do you suppose I could find a wife, too? Ask Mary if she knows of any young lady—say a Stanfield for instance, that would be apt to accept the name of Sedley in exchange for her own? I am coming to find out about it.

"Yours,
MACK SEDLEY."

"There," I said, folding the somewhat peculiar epistle, "she'll know what I mean, of course." You will see that I did not speak of marriage as connected with herself, though I certainly meant it in that way. But fate was smiling on me when I wrote that letter.

Two days after the letter was sent I followed it.

The Stanfield party was stopping at a pleasant, quiet place near the village, and after supper I started to call on them. I felt, I can hardly tell how, but I'm safe in saying that I've felt considerably more at my ease than I did when walking toward the Stanfield's hotel. Was I not about to propose to a young woman? I'll leave my sensations to the imagination of every young man who has been on a similar errand. Such can appreciate them. To other people I could never hope to describe them. I have only to say that "they're awful!"

It was beginning to get dusky as I reached the place. There was a large garden all about the house, filled with great clumps of shrubbery, taller than a man's head.

I heard Lucia's voice as I walked up the path, and stopped to listen.

"It was really amusing," she was saying. "I do believe he loved me with all his heart. I like him well enough as a friend, but I couldn't think of marrying him. I couldn't resist having a little fun at his expense, though I got bored occasionally—they were so marked, you know—so monopolizing, as if he thought I belonged to him. He wrote yesterday that he was coming to see about getting a wife, and wanted me to ask Mary if she thought a Miss Stanfield would change her name for that of Sedley. Of course I knew well enough what he meant. Won't he open his eyes when I tell him that I am expecting my 'ain true knight' every day? Mary gave me a regular scolding for encouraging him. I did not know that I did. He need not have taken everything for granted. I'm almost sure that she wouldn't tell him so, if he asked her the question he is coming to ask me. They would make a pretty good match, I think. He's of good family, wealthy, and not objectional in any way. But my marrying him! The idea!"

Then I was treated to a chorus of feminine laughter. I shan't make any effort to tell you how I felt while listening to Lucia's narration of my love affair. What's the use to try, when I couldn't do the subject a shadow of justice? If your imagination is very strong, you might bring it to bear on the case, and think how you would have felt under those circumstances, but you

can't come up to the reality. Nothing short of personal experience could give you to understand precisely what my feelings were at that period of my existence.

At first I was too astonished to think.—Then I began to get disgusted, to realize what a fool I had been in allowing myself to be so egregiously fooled, in spite of the warnings I had had given me, from those who knew what they were talking about, to be careful. And I began to grow mad, and cast about in my mind how I could turn the tables on Lucia to her utter discomfort. Thank fortune I had not proposed and the probability was that I never should to her, but people would think I had all the same unless by some brilliant manoeuvre I contrived to show them how much they were mistaken.

What if I should propose to Mary? Would she accept me, as Lucia had said? Would not such an action on my part be just the thing to defeat Lucia's anticipated triumph? Somehow, as I thought the case over, I found myself glad that the case stood as it did. I had been fortunate in finding out the real state of the case, and might I not be more fortunate in securing for myself the woman I had often thought so well calculated to make some man happy? I think I must have been in love with Mary all the while, only I did not know it. Lucia bewildered and dazzled me so that I hardly knew what I was about. Now my eyes were open, and I began to see how matters stood.

I heard Mary's voice down the path. She was singing softly. I walked toward her, and met face to face, as we turned an angle made by an old lilac bush.

"So you have come?" she said, softly, giving me her hand. "Lucia got your letter. If you ask me the question you told Lucia to ask me, knowing as I do how the case stands, I should tell you not to ask her that important question. You must excuse me for saying this, Mr. Sedley, but—but I am your friend, and I would spare you pain. Lucia does not care for you—she is already engaged. Don't give her a chance to refuse. You had better forget her if you can."

She spoke rapidly—and her voice trembled a little. She did not look at me at all.

"Mary," I said tenderly. "I want to ask the same question of you that I told Lucia to—do you know if Mary Stanfield would change her name for mine? Don't misunderstand me, Mary, I want you. May I have what I want?"

Such a swift, glad light as flashed into her eyes! She lifted them to mine, and I answered the unspoken question in them by pressing one little hand, and saying—"I do mean it, Mary. Lucia is too showy for me. I want some one to make home the best and dearest place in the world. I love you, Mary, and I want you for my own."

She answered me by putting both her hands in mine, and by the look on her face I knew that she had loved me while I had been under the spell of Lucia's charms.

We heard steps coming down the path. Lucia and her friend came towards us. She smiled as she saw me. Now was my time for triumph.

"I have come—and have asked the question of Mary that I told you to ask. She has answered yes. Allow me to present to you the future Mrs. Sedley."

I said this very coolly. I was conscious of holding the trump cards of this little game in my own hands at the time when they were most needed.

Lucia heard me through with a very changeable expression of face. Surprise—defeat—chagrin—all were there. She had boasted of her triumph too soon. I saw her friend look at her with an evident desire to indulge in a hearty laugh at her expense. Lucia saw the look, and knew what it meant, and tears of mortified pride sprang to her eyes. It was too much. For a woman who could boast of having won so many hearts, to have the tables turned upon her when she was almost sure of having the pleasure of putting her foot on another!

I grow more confident, as the years go by, that my mistake was a lucky one. Lucia could never have been to me what Mary is and never a time I have congratulated myself on turning the tables.

A lady writer blames the men more than the women for the ridiculous fashions now in vogue. She says: "If all men possessing a \$100,000 and upwards should form a league not to marry any woman who mounted a chignon, how long do you suppose the ugly monstrosities would continue to be in vogue?"

A DARKEY WITNESS.

A BLOOMINGTON (Ill.) paper is responsible for the following; it beats "Cousin Sally Dillard" all hollow: "One Wednesday afternoon the examination of Charles Lewis, for alleged attempt at arson, in trying to burn the buildings of Richard Washington, took place—on change of venue from Esquire Lawrence—before Justice Elbiny and Panckake, J. H. Hamilton for prosecution, and John E. Wray for defense.

Richard Washington, (colored) was the prosecuting witness. He was dubbed by the council for the defense with the title of "General" Washington.

After being sworn the "General" said: "Well, I quits work 'bout eight o'clock; I knows 'twas 'bout eight, cause de train comes in; I sets 'round de house a while, my wife she goes to bed; de dog laid down to de foot of de bed; he didn't lay on de bed, he laid at de bed; he is a mighty good dog; and then I heard a noise in 'tother room; I knowed dat dat Lewis was in dar foolin' wid dem women. 'Bout 'leven o'clock he comes 'round to de door and knocks. 'What do you want dar?' says I. 'I want Jones,' says he. 'You just g'way dar, Jones' gone to bed; you can't come in hyar.' 'Well,' says he, 'I wants Jones; you just tell Jones he's got to put up or shut up, dat's what I say.'"

Here the attorney asks, "what did he mean by that?"

"You tell; you're smart. How d'ye 'spose I know?"

"Well, what next?"

"Well, I tells him, you g'way dar."

"Well, what then?"

"Well, den he went away."

"Well you now go on and tell what Lewis did?"

"He come back agin 'bout 12 o'clock; I knows 'twas dat time, 'cause I looks at my watch; I got de best watch in town; I knows 'twas after twelve o'clock; I tells him dis time, just you g'way dar."

"Well, what did he do then?"

"Why, he went away den."

"Now you go on and tell what Lewis did."

"As I was saying I quit work 'bout 8 o'clock, I know 'twas eight o'clock, cause de train comes in; I sets 'round de house a spell, my wife she goes to bed, de dog he laid down to de foot ob de bed, he didn't lay on de bed."

"Hold on. We don't want to hear that again. What did Lewis do?"

"Well, I quit work 'bout 8 o'clock, I knows 'twas 8 o'clock, cause de train comes in 'bout den."

"Never mind that. You charge that Lewis tried to set fire to your house. What did you see him do?"

"Yes, sir. I quits work 'bout 8 o'clock. I knows 'twas eight o'clock cause de train comes"—

"Never mind the train. What did Lewis do?"

"Oh, what did he do? Yis I'll tell you. I quit work 'bout 8, train comes in 'bout 8. I set 'round de house, de dog, he didn't lay on de bed, Lewis he comes and wanted Jones"

"Yes, now what did Lewis do? Did he light a match?"

"I seed him light a match, I did so, dead shure. Didn't see him do nothin' wid de match, but he lit it. Dat's all I know 'bout de match. He said Jones must put up or git up. So I 'lowed he'd burn de house up."

You did not see him set fire to anything?"

"I seed him set fire to de match. I knowed he wanted to burn de house, 'cause he said Jones must put up or git up. I told him to g'way dar, and so he went off. I didn't see him burn nothin' but de match."

And after an abundance of such crushing testimony as the above, from Mrs. "General" Washington and other "distinguished" ladies and gentlemen, the court concluded not to commit Lewis "for jist setting fire to de match."

He was discharged."

A mamma in the rural districts lately gave her five-year old hopeful an outfit of fish tackle. Soon she heard a shout from Willie, and running out, found one of her best hens fast winding up the line in her beak, whither the hook had already preceded it. Willie, observing the troubled look of his mother, quietly remarked: "Don't worry, mother; I guess she will stop when she gets to the pole."

The first ingredient in conversation is truth, the next good sense, the third good humor, and the fourth wit.