

The Bloomfield Times.

TERMS:—\$1.25 Per Year,
IN ADVANCE.

AN INDEPENDENT FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

{ 75 Cents for 6 Months;
40 Cts. for 3 months.

Vol. VI.

New Bloomfield, Pa., Tuesday, January 9, 1872.

No. 2.

The Bloomfield Times.

IS PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY MORNING, BY

FRANK MORTIMER & CO.,

At New Bloomfield, Perry Co., Pa.

Being provided with Steam Power, and large Cylinder and Job-Presses, we are prepared to do all kinds of Job-Printing in good style and at Low Prices.

ADVERTISING RATES:

Transient—8 Cents per line for one insertion.
13 " " " two insertions.
15 " " " three insertions.
Business Notices in Local Column 10 Cents per line.
Notices of Marriages or Deaths inserted free.
Tributes of Respect, &c., Ten cents per line.
YEARLY ADVERTISEMENTS.
One Square, one year..... \$12 00
Two Squares per year..... 20 00
For longer advertisements a reasonable discount will be made.
Ten Lines Nonpareil or one Inch, is one square.

Lost and Found!

A NEW YEAR'S STORY.

CONCLUDED.

THERE was a great gray stone mansion, with an imposing front, located on aristocratic ground, delightfully distant from the noise and turmoil of the great city. A long flight of marble steps, guarded by couchant stone lions, led up to its massive door—an elaborate mingling of carved oak and ruby stained glass. Silken drapery, rosy as a summer sunset, and softened and shaded by filmy laces, delicate as the foam of crested waves, hung inside the polished windows, where the glad morning sunshine strayed in to light up the costly pictures in the great saloon, gleaming amid the faded gold of some fair woman's hair—streaming over moonlit ruins and summery landscapes—or mingling recklessly in the wanton pleasures of a mad carnival scene.

Although it was eleven o'clock in the forenoon, the owner of this fair abode had not yet breakfasted. He was feeling the weight of his seventy years, and the chill wintery mornings found him cross, cold and rheumatic. Seated in his deep-cushioned chair before an open wood fire that obstinately refused to be poked into a steady blaze, the old man waited for his breakfast, grumbling and muttering to himself in factious discontent.

"Breakfast, sah," announced Black Sam at last, "here's de broiled salmon, cream toast, eggs and coffee, sah." And he set the delicious meal on a table conveniently near his master, and sliding half a dozen steps backward, stood, napkin in hand, waiting further orders.

The old gentleman peered at his breakfast out of his stormy blue-gray eyes, and snarled out:

"Broiled salmon, indeed! Who said anything about broiled salmon, you idiot? You might as well bring me pickled sharks, and expect me to digest it. Did I not say particularly that I wanted a few fried oysters this morning? Take away your salmon. Carry it to Egypt!"

Sam did not appear seriously disconcerted. Experience had hardened him. Let the fare be what it would, fish, flesh or fowl, he was sure always to get precisely the same order—to carry it all to Egypt.

"Certain sure I neber hear nuffin' 'bout no fried oysters; s'pect I better go ask de cook," said Sam, shaking his head like a reflecting crow.

"O no, of course not; you never know anything, you woolly-headed scamp. Hang the cook! Let her alone, tell her to go to Egypt!"

A tinkle at the doorbell and Sam's exit in that direction proved disastrous to any more definite orders concerning either the speedy execution or exile of the cook. Sam came back presently, announcing:

"A young lady to see you, sah."

"Well, show her in, and stop grinning, you mummy."

But the young lady, standing in the hall, heard the order, and stepped quietly along into the room, and sat down in the green velvet chair, Sam solemn now, as an owl, had set forward for her.

Having seated the girl, Sam made a show of removing the breakfast, but his master interposed:

"Let it remain; I'll make it do; and get along down cellar and see what has got into the furnace; something besides coal, I should say. The whole house is as cold as

a tomb. Wont you sit near the fire, child? I believe it has decided to burn," he said, looking at Amber for the first time.

She drew her chair nearly opposite his, as he sipped contentedly at his coffee, and pushing back her veil, turned to him her timid rose-flushed face, with its smiling mouth and soft wishful eyes.

For a moment old Morris Vanstone sat and stared at her. It seemed to him that the dreamlike woman had stepped suddenly out of the golden frame on his parlor wall, and was sitting before him, radiant as of old, in the warmth of winsomness of youth and health.

"You wanted to see me?" he asked, at length, coming to his senses.

"Yes," said Amber, who had got used to having people stare at her; "you wanted a young lady to read to you. I came, hoping you might be induced to give me a trial. I believe I read pretty well."

"I can readily believe you do; your voice is charming. But I am afraid I should give you more of a trial than you can endure," he answered, smiling grimly; "you haven't the least idea what an old ogre I am. The fact is, child, I am not as young as I was once. There is a coldness in my bones, and I ache all over; my head is dizzy and my eyes are giving out. I have no one living—at least no woman—to care for me particularly, and as I never go out or have company, my loneliness is becoming a torture to me. Perhaps I am an old idiot, but I fancied it would be pleasant, and make life a trifle more tolerable, to have a soft-voiced girl to read my papers to me, and sing a little, perhaps, sometimes. Will you take off your hat, and read me an item or two from the Journal there? The shipping news, first, if you please. I own a vessel or two at sea."

Amber commenced reading, and Mr. Vanstone fell to wiping the moisture out of his eyes with a cambric handkerchief. Then drawing his velvet dressing-gown around him, he leaned back in his chair and listened. After the foreign news and general happenings of the day, Amber read a poem of Alice Cary's from the fourth page; a sweet simple thing, pure and fragrant as the violet-scented breath of a spring morning.

Mr. Vanstone made no comments, but finding that hour the shortest he had known for years, he engaged Miss Gray from three until five, every-week day afternoon, at a price that would render it unnecessary for her to sew steadily all the morning.

She expressed her gratitude with moist eyes. "I shall hardly earn such a generous compensation," she said, tying on her hat.

"Wait a bit and see, Miss Gray," said Mr. Vanstone, shaking a finger warningly. "I hope I shall not be brute enough to send you to Egypt with Sam and the cook—by the way, that Sam is enough to aggravate a saint—but remember, child, if I do ever snap and snarl, and refuse to be smoothed out, I say remember that it is the coldness, and pain, and dizziness that is grumbling and growling, and not I; for if I had prayed to Heaven, which I never did, instead of advertising in the Journal, I think you and no other would have been sent in answer to my prayer."

Amber went home happier and more hopeful than she had been for many weeks. Slowly yet surely her difficulties seemed one by one to be vanishing from her path. It would be so easy, so delightful, to go daily to Mr. Vanstone's splendid library, to sit in the great velvet chair, restful as the bosom of sleep, and read rare and costly books to such an indulgent listener as she was sure he would prove to be. She wondered vaguely what Maxwell Fay would think, smiling to herself as she imagined his expression of blank surprise, not quite devoid of pleasure, should he walk suddenly into his stepfather's study and find her there some sunny afternoon. But perhaps she might go and come for weeks without seeing him, as his office was far down town, and she had heard him say he found little time to spend at home. It was just possible, too, that Mr. Vanstone did not wish the young man to know of his new whim. So she wisely resolved to say nothing of the affair until circumstances revealed it.

Circumstances are, as Charles Reade observes, terrible things. Something occurred very soon to interfere materially with Amber's plan of keeping her vocation secret from her mother. She was great on emergencies, and for a few days succeeded very well in making some plausible excuses for going out the same hour every day. One afternoon, however, while preparing to go, Mrs. Gray saw her looking carefully over the contents of the bookcase, as

though searching for some particular volume.

"What is it you wish to find, my dear?" her mother asked, kindly. "Can I assist you?"

"I think not, mother. I borrowed a book of a friend yesterday, a translation of German fairy tales, which I thought would please Myrtle; but she did not seem inclined to read it, and I want to return it uninjured. I do hope she has not taken it to school."

Both continued searching for a few minutes, and suddenly Mrs. Gray drew a gay colored book, still attractive, though somewhat time-worn, from a tiny basket cradle where Myrtle kept her doll. She opened the volume mechanically, as though struck suddenly dumb, and stood staring at a name on the fly-leaf. Then she gave a cry; and, white and faint, she tottered into a chair.

"For the love of Heaven, child, where did you get that book?" she asked, turning a pallid, troubled face upon her daughter.

Amber, with her glove half on, stood wondering and mystified; but, like the sensible, truth-loving girl she was, she decided to attempt no further concealment.

"Don't be angry, dear mother, and I will tell you all about it. I borrowed that book of Mr. Morris Vanstone. He and I have become acquainted, and are really excellent friends. I go to read to him every afternoon. I found that there were some children's books in the library; perhaps they once belonged to his daughter. What ails you, mother? you are pale and faint. Do try and accustom yourself to the idea of my earning a livelihood wherever fate may lead; and indeed I never had so pleasant a situation before."

"Child, child, you will drive me crazy! You have gone into the very den of the lion. O Amber, do not, I pray you, go there any more. I had rather starve!"

Her daughter would have been more surprised had she been less used to her mother's moods. Sometimes the girl seemed on the brink of discovering the secret of the shadow that darkened the life, and threatened at times to destroy the mind, of her idolized parent.

"Mother," she said, softly, "be calm and reasonable, I entreat you. Doubtless you have heard of Mr. Vanstone, as he is proverbial for being an unmitigated tyrant, and you probably fear that he may wound my pride in some unkind way. But, mother, people wrong him. He is simply a broken-hearted old man, on whom the years lie heavily; and he feels his lonely, childless life is too bitter to be borne. If he has sinned, he has also suffered. In his longing for human sympathy, shall I refuse to aid, God helping me, in guiding him into the light, after which he gropes blindly? Indeed, mother, he would grieve sorely were I to leave him now."

Tears were in the soft blue eyes of Mrs. Gray as she listened to her daughter's earnest appeal, and the hard unrelenting look went slowly out of her face, leaving it quieter than before.

"You are right, my darling," she said, softly; "far be it from me to withhold you from your self-imposed duty. You have a great work before you."

Walking down the street Amber lit upon every possible conjecture but the true one. Life is so full of paper walls. Opening the book she held in her hand, expecting to find the name that had so excited her mother, she read, written there on the fly-leaf—Helen Estabrooks Vanstone.

The name puzzled her anew. It was so familiar, yet so utterly strange. "This book must have belonged to Mr. Vanstone's daughter in her childhood. Eastabrooks! Ah, now I know what makes it so familiar; mother's maiden name was Esther Brooks—so at least she always said—but father disliked the given name, and always called her Nellie."

It was no use wondering; she could not solve the mystery. "I will not try," she said at last; "mother evidently wishes her past to remain buried out of sight forever. I know that father was never very tender to any of us, and that we were never either happy or comfortable while he lived. I shall never ask mother how she came to marry a man so evidently her inferior. Her sorrows shall be sacred to her children."

The weeks wore on into December, and still Amber Gray went daily to her new friend. She found herself walking slower than was usually her way, the afternoon before Christmas, lured by dazzling temptations in the store windows. She stopped here and there to admire and sometimes covet. Turning slowly away, she said, longingly:

"I should like to get mother a nice dress, and, indeed, I need one myself; but 'no-body cares for me.'"

Mr. Vanstone was waiting for her in pleased expectancy. He had wreathed the mirrors and the picture she had admired—the fair woman he thought she resembled—with rich branches of holly, gleaming with waxen scarlet berries; Amber found him in his library, hanging Christmas wreaths in the windows.

"Peace on earth, good-will to men!" she said, fervently, as she looked in pleased surprise around the tastefully decorated room fragrant with hothouse flowers.

"Amen; and may you, child, have the merriest Christmas the sun ever shone upon. What would people say to see cross old Morris Vanstone at this child's play? But I thought it might please you, my dear, to see me growing human. Ah, little girl, you are robbing the lion of his mane. Just see my heliotropes and tea-roses. Those three little nosegays are for you, and your mother and little sister. I had Sam cut the flowers and I arranged them myself. Decently well done for such an old novice, isn't it?"

"They are lovely—perfectly exquisite; too beautiful for me," murmured the girl, delightedly, inhaling their soft spiritual perfume.

"Not at all; nothing is too pretty for youth and innocence. But let us go about our reading. We will let the greenery hang until after New Year's day. I have a little plan in my head which I will tell you by-and-by. Now I want to hear that poetry that says:

"Rouse to some high and holy work of love,
And thou an angel's happiness shalt know."

You can't think how that haunts me. Ah, Amber, I begin to think that is the only happiness worth living for after all."

The hours flew on charmed wings. Just as Amber was putting away the books and papers, as it was her custom to do, Mrs. Howell the housekeeper put her head in at the door, but seeing Miss Gray, made some slight apology, and was about to withdraw.

"What is it, Mrs. Howell? Come in; you will not disturb us," Mr. Vanstone said, good-humoredly.

"It's only a whim of mine, sir," said the pleasant-faced woman, smoothing down her black silk apron; "we've a fruit cake and some mulled wine down stairs, sir, and as it is Christmas eve, I thought you and the young lady might come down. Mr. Max has a taste for sweets; I'm hoping he will drop in by-and-by."

Mr. Vanstone who really looked very tired, begged his good housekeeper to excuse him.

"Miss Gray shall come down and taste that famous cake. I have a word to say to her, and then I'll ring for you to come and take her down stairs," he said, and Mrs. Howell bowed herself out.

Mr. Vanstone lifted a neatly tied package from under the sofa, where he had hidden it, and put it in Amber's hands.

"There child is some finery for you. You know I poked the embers out on your dress the other day, and burned it sadly; so it was only fair that I should buy a new one. True, I did not select it, but my stepson did, and he has excellent taste. He has been out of town for some days, but returned this morning. I have told him about you. I wish he would happen in, so you could get acquainted. I hope you will like your dress, and accept it from a man old enough to be your grandfather, and who sincerely wishes that he had such a claim upon you."

Amber opened the bundle and found an elegant garnet poplin of costly texture, and a generous allowance of rich black Malta lace for trimming. Her face glowed with pleasure.

"You are too kind, too indulgent; you will spoil me," she said smiling.

"I think not. Now, child, I have a favor to ask. You know I told you I had a little plan in process. The New Year is at hand the blessed New Year, and I am going to commence a new life. I am seventy years old, but it is never too late to mend. Those who know Morris Vanstone shall know him an idler in the vineyard no longer. God helping me I will live the true life yet, and if those I have wronged still live, I will find them and do them justice. Ah, child, I have a story to tell you sometime. But I am wandering from what I began to say. I want you, and your mother, and that little girl who wants to see my canaries, to come and pass New Year's eve, with me. I can't ask you to leave your family on that night, sacred to home joys, and I can't do without you at all. My stepson

has promised to be at home, and I assure you he is a grand fellow."

"I should enjoy it, and Myrtle would go into ecstasies; but I don't know about mother. She never goes any where. I will try, however, to arrange it."

"See that you do. I have faith to believe that your mother will honor me this once. Tell her, from me, that her refusal will grieve and disappoint a childless and desolate old man. And remember, I shall send the carriage at six. Now I am going to part with you for a week. Stay at home and make your dress, and have a good rest. Here is your money, child. Now I am going to ring for Mrs. Howell."

He pressed the crisp bank notes into her hand, and rang the bell. After she had left him he sat down in the rapidly darkening room, and mused lonesomely. All the brightness seemed to have departed with the girl.

"Who, are you, child, that you charm me so?" he said, aloud, with his eyes shut and his great finely formed head thrown back against his chair. "Why did I not see her before I ever met Max after that Miss Winterglade. I am afraid she is too high pitched for him; my little bluebell is the woman of all the world I want to see him marry. She is like my lost one—O so like her! Ah, Helen, why did you not die, my little golden haired baby, instead of living to break your father's heart? Child of my love, are you indeed in your grave, that you cannot know how truly I have forgiven all, repented all?"

Mrs. Howell cut her cake in a flutter of delight at the thought of hearing it praised by Miss Gray. Amber's appreciation of it quite filled her heart, and the two stood at the luncheon table eating and chatting.

"We always have cake and wine Christmas eve, in place of our regular tea, for the master will have dinner at two the year round. Bless my soul, if there isn't Mr. Max. I'm right glad."

I was indeed. He came in leisurely, whistling a gay opera air, and just then some favoring late called Mrs. Howell away. So the two young people exchanged greetings, with no one by to count smiles or blushes. So Amber, it is really you whose influences has so tamed the old gentleman. Tell me all about it. The old story of Beauty and the Beast?"

He walked home with Amber by-and-by, as they had not met for a week, of course they did not hurry. But at last they stood at Mrs. Gray's door, reluctant still to part.

"A merry Christmas, my friend at least a happy one," the girl said, as she stood silently, holding her hand in his.

"There is just one gift, Amber—a precious priceless gift—that I madly crave. I want your love, my darling—your promise to be some day my wife," he answered fervently.

And so, there under the starlight, the promise was given.

"You will go, wont you, mother dear? Myrtle and I anticipate so much pleasure, you surely would not disappoint us now. So Amber, who had a talent at coaxing, had it all her own way. As for Myrtle, she was wild with delight at wearing her bright plaid, and going to see Mr. Vanstone's canaries and Java sparrows.

Mr. Vanstone, in an evening dress that was vastly becoming, and made him look at least ten years younger, and walking up and down his long parlor, waiting with nervous anxiety the arrival of his guests. As was his habit, when moved by any great emotion, he was talking earnestly to himself:

"Twenty years ago to-night! Ah, how desolate, how loveless the years have been! How strangely this Amber Gray is like my lost daughter. But let me be patient; if my plan does not fail, there may be a clearing up of this vexing mystery. I cannot endure the thought of being disappointed in this strange new hope."

From the moment that Mrs. Gray crossed the threshold of Mr. Vanstone's door, and stood in the elegant marble-javed hall, a change seemed to come suddenly over her. All nervous tremor and uncertainty fled from her manner; her eyes grew soft and her cheeks scarlet. Casting aside her heavy shawl, she walked quietly ahead of her wondering daughter, and slowly pushed open the parlor door. At sight of her, standing there in her widow's robe, the old man stopped, and then tottering forward he stretched out his feeble arms to her. She was kneeling at his feet.

"Father, forgive me! she cried, brokenly; "these years of separation have broken my heart."

"God bless you, my poor darling, and may he forgive us both!" the father said, fervently, missing her as tenderly as ever he did in the dear old days.

"One more blessing, dear father, for me and my promised bride," said Maxwell Fay, in his deep tender voice, as he came proudly forward leading Amber Gray.

And when at last the midnight chime rang out on the star light air, each head bowed in silent heartfelt prayer for the true guidance through the coming days of the glad New Year.