

The Bloomfield Times.

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Vol. VI.

New Bloomfield, Pa., Tuesday, August 6, 1872.

No. 32.

The Bloomfield Times.

PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY MORNING, BY

FRANK MORTIMER & CO.,

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THE DISCARDED DAUGHTER.

OR

CAPTAIN JOHN'S COURTSHIP.

ONE cold, wet morning in November, 1855, Captain John Burrill, master of the fast-sailing clipper ship Dreadnaught, left his vessel at her pier on South street, at the port of New York, and started for his lodgings in the upper part of the city. Although the rain was descending heavily, the captain, who had a contemptuous disdain for umbrellas, wrapped his greatcoat tightly about him, and as he trudged bravely forward over the glistening pavements, plunged his hands deep into his wide pockets and lost himself at once in profound meditation. It was not unnatural that, among the busy thoughts which lingered in his contemplative brain, those of his lady-love should occupy, just at that time, a prominent place, somewhat to the exclusion of moral reflections and business schemes. For Captain Burrill was in love, and surely was scarcely to be blamed if his mind, during most of his leisure moments, did chiefly run upon the stately beauty whom he had asked to become his wife, and who had graciously accepted his hand and fortune, and promised to marry him within the month. Captain John, remembering his early days as cook's scullion, and his subsequent success, achieved by unremitting exertion and his own merit, could hardly help wondering how it came about that from the foot of the ladder he should so soon find himself at the top, and how fifteen short years could so metamorphose him from a pitiful mixer of "lob-scous" to a captain of a ship and possessor of an independent fortune. To be sure, the latter had fallen upon him like a golden thunderbolt, launched by a distant relative who had taken a whim to leave him most of her money, and now that the captain came to think the matter over, he began to wonder whether, had it not been for the latter streak of luck, Jacob Marshall's daughter would have accepted him. It did not seem to him that she cared for him in the way he had seen some sailors' sweet-hearts care for their beau, but then she was proud and aristocratic, and Captain John, being a seafaring man, concluded that, as he knew so little of such things, he had best trouble himself about them as little as possible.

"She's a grand young woman," thought he, "and I'm thirty-five—too old to expect her to play sweet on me much. I suppose it's all right. She's a handsome girl and better suited to me than a younger one would be."

Since the arrival of the vessel he had made the Marshall mansion his home, and had thus been able to pay his attentions at short range. He had done this at the earnest invitation of old Jacob Marshall himself, who owned the ship, and who had been particularly polite to Captain John since the latter found his pockets so unexpectedly full of money. Thrown thus into the constant company of a beautiful woman, the captain, to whom, through all his life, a woman had been a *rara avis*, fell immediately and irrecoverably in love. The result was an engagement, though whether Marion Marshall cared most for his heart or his pocket, the captain found himself in considerable doubt. And so the wedding day had been fixed, and Captain John had begun to debate in his mind whether he could find it in his heart to give up his ship and see her sail out of port in command of another master, or whether he could not persuade Marion Marshall to marry him, ship and all.

Thinking deeply of these things, he took his way steadily toward Peck Slip, with his eyes fastened upon the shining sidewalk

and his chin buried in the great collar of his coat. There were few people in the streets, for the hour was nearly eleven and the rain came down in a continuous drizzle. Therefore it was with no little surprise that the captain felt the wet edge of a woman's shawl flirited into his face by the wind as its owner brushed swiftly past him.

"Some Water street girl," he thought, glancing toward her; "a hard life, poor thing."

The woman flirited quickly by, but when beneath the glare of the next street lamp, she turned her head and looked hurriedly behind her.

"Blast my topights!" said Captain Burrill to himself as he caught sight of her sad, white features; "that girl never came from Water street. Where is she bearing now?"

The woman, or rather the girl, for her lithe, supple movements denied the possibility of her being more than eighteen or twenty at most, paused a moment under the lamp and then darted suddenly across the street toward the shipping.

"Something wrong there," muttered the captain to himself, stopping to look after her as she disappeared among the shadows on the opposite side of the way. "Now I shouldn't wonder—"

He left his sentence unfinished, and regardless of the danger from river thieves and the night prowlers who haunt the dark corners among the wharves, crossed the street, also. He groped his way out on a long pier extending into the river between two huge vessels which cast their black shadows over it, and then paused for a moment to listen. There was nothing to be heard but the steady patter of the rain and the washing of the river under the piles, and so he walked softly on again toward the end of the pier. As he neared the extremity of the wharf, however, he heard a light step close by his side, and caught sight of a woman's figure standing upon the string-piece, the dark outline of her form revealed against the lighter sky above the river. Stealing nearer to her, he saw that she had removed her shawl and had stepped back as though about to cast herself into the water. With a sudden exclamation he seized her quickly by the arm.

"For Heaven's sake what are you about?"

She made him no answer, but sank down trembling at his feet.

"Were you going to jump to your death?" he asked arising her gently.

"O sir, let me go," she said plaintively.

"What I can do is nothing to you. Let me go."

"What you do is a good deal to me, when you try such things as this," he replied. "Where do you live?"

"Nowhere."

"Have you no friends?"

"Friends?"

She clasped her hands and looked down at the black water, dashing in sad, continuous surges against the wharf.

"No—no friends."

"I see," said the captain picking up her shawl and wrapping it about her, "the old story. Well, I will be a friend to you, my poor girl, and if you will give up the idea of going to Davy Jones locker just at present. We can't stand here in this rain, talking about it. Come with me."

"O," she cried, passionately, "you don't know what I am. You are a good man I am sure and you would never touch me, you would never speak to me, if you knew what my life has been."

"I don't care what you are," said the captain, decidedly. "I know you're a fellow-creature without a shelter, and I'm going to find a dryer lodging for you than the one you proposed engaging. Now put your hand on my arm and come with me."

She obeyed him passively, and without a word followed him down the wharf and out into the street. As they reached the street lamp again, Captain John stopped to look at his companion more closely, and could not help giving utterance to an exclamation of surprise when he found what manner of woman it was who leaned upon his arm.

It was no plebeian face that turned toward him as he did so. A pale delicate complexion, with features finely cast, and a pair of wide, soft hazel eyes, deep and lustrous as those of a fawn, were what Captain Burrill saw, as he turned back the girl's hood to look at her. She was young, not more than twenty, and her brown hair, loose and wet with the drizzling rain encircled with a shining halo a face that, though livid with mental suffering, was beautiful even now.

"There's more of a story here than I thought," he muttered, taking the girl's arm again and moving on. "I shouldn't

be surprised, Jack Burrill, if you had put your foot into somebody else's history tonight, too."

He led her quickly around several corners, and finally stopped before a building at the lower end of Frankfort street and knocked upon the door.

"I have a friend here," he said, to the trembling creature at his side. "He was once an old shipmate of mine, and if he won't be kind to you, nobody will."

In a few moments there was heard the approach of heavy footsteps, rather rambling rather discursively towards the door, and directly the bolt was drawn back and a rough-featured individual, with a beaming red nose, presented himself for Captain Burrill's inspection.

"Well, Saddler, how are you?" exclaimed the captain.

"Tol'able thank ye. What fetches you down here in this weather?"

"I want a lodgin for this young woman, Saddler. She's had a notion of bunkin' in the East River, and I told her I could find her a better place, don't stand there looking at us. Let us in and fix up a room and a fire."

"All right," quoth Saddler, slowly revolving a quid of tobacco in his cheek, "all right. The best in the house belongs to Jack Burrill and Jack Burrill's friends."

He swung the door open and led the way to a little, dingy parlor at the end of the hall, and then without another word disappeared up stairs, leaving the captain and his charge alone.

"Now," said the captain, "my girl, I want you to promise me two things. I shan't ask you for your history, or for the reasons which led you to this attempt upon your life, unless you choose to tell me. I am going to provide you with a comfortable night's lodging, and to-morrow we will see what ought to be done hereafter. In the meantime you will be well taken care of here, but you must give me your word that you will try no more to destroy yourself, and that you will not venture away from Tom Saddler's house until I see you again to-morrow night. Will you promise me that?"

The girl looked at him with her wide, brown eyes for a moment, and then, burying her face in her hands, burst into tears.

"I will promise you anything she said. "I know that you, at least, are my friend. If you knew what I have suffered, you would know that I am too happy to find any place of refuge, to leave it against your will."

"Well," said the captain, "whatever you are, or whatever you have done, you are safe here until to-morrow, at all events. Here comes Saddler again, and he will tell you what he will do with you."

The rubicund visage of the individual referred to appeared at the head of the stairs and beckoned to the visitors to ascend, but the captain, shouting that it was so late that he couldn't stop, and admonishing Tom to take care of the girl, took leave of his protege and passed out into the street.

With his hands in his great pockets once more, Captain Burrill, as he wended his way homeward, cogitated more deeply than ever. At first, he conceived the intention of relating the whole of his singular adventure to Marion on the following morning. Then the thought crossed his mind that it would be well to ascertain something of the character of his charge before he made known any details of the affair, and this, with the condition that the girl had evidently desired to keep her story a secret, brought him to the determination to say nothing at present about the matter. So he dismissed the occurrence from his thoughts, and, reaching the Marshall mansion near midnight, found his room without disturbing the family, and retired to his accustomed couch of feathers and down in a most tranquil and undisturbed frame of mind.

The next day was a long one to Captain Burrill. His interest in his acquaintance of the previous evening and his curiosity to know her story, whatever it might be, effectively occupied his mind to the exclusion of all else. The magnetism of her eyes had taken possession of him, and he awaited the end of his day's business with all the impatience of a schoolboy. At last the evening closed in upon the city, and making his excuses to Marion he left the house and hastened again to the tenement in Frankfort street.

"What word, Tom?" he inquired, of that semi-nautical personage, as the door swung open to give him entrance.

"Well, nothin' special," replied Saddler.

"The gal's doin' poopy well. She ain't no ordinary customer, she ain't. There's been some trouble there, and it's my private

opinion she's been used to good clothes and havin' things nice."

"Has she been out?"

"No. She had a good cryin' spell after you went away last night, but I made up a good fire for her in the best room and my old woman lent her some dry clothes to put on, and to-day she's been poopy cheerful.

Pleased with this report in brief, the captain passed up stairs and knocked at the door of the room indicated by Saddler as the "best one." It was opened at once by his last night's acquaintance. So marked an improvement was there in her appearance that Captain John retired a step in surprise. She had employed the day in drying and ironing her wet dress, and this was neat and clean. Her hair, gathered up into a light, braided coil, was bound in place by a bright ribbon which set off her white, delicate complexion to fine advantage. A snowy apron, loaned by Saddler's "old woman," completed her plain attire, but although the garb was simplicity itself, the real beauty of her face and form rendered it almost queenly. At least, Captain Burrill, as he took her hand, could not deny as she looked timidly up to meet his own, a vague feeling came over him that there was in this girl an indefinable something worth having, which Marion Marshall did not possess.

"I am glad you kept your promise," he said.

"O sir, that was a small return to make for your goodness. You have shown me more kindness than I have had done me for a long time. How can I ever thank you?"

"Sit down," said the captain, "and let us talk about it. What is your name?"

"They call me Mary Marsh," she said taking a seat on the opposite side of the fire from him, "but I will not deceive you into believing that to be my real name. It is not."

"Never mind the real name," he said. "Any name will do. I don't ask you to confide in me entirely, but if you will tell me something of what your life has been, I shall be better able, perhaps, to help you. And let what you do tell me be the truth."

She bridled somewhat at this, and revealed a little of what might have been the bold-conquered pride of a better period of her life.

"Do I look like one who would tell you an untruth?" she said.

The captain looked into the frank, brown eyes which were opened upon him to their widest extent, and then replied:

"No. I do not think you do. Forgive me if I have hurt you. There is something strange about you that I do not understand. What led you to attempt your own destruction?"

She rose from her chair and her face flushed with excitement.

"What led me? Tell me whether you would not have taken the same course. Suppose that you had been like me, a woman. Suppose that you had been reared, as I have been, in a happy and luxurious home, the spoiled pet of doting parents, the willful, capricious child whose will was law—who had but to ask in order to receive whatever you most desired. Suppose that when you were budding into early womanhood, with all your sensitive nature as yet unguarded by the hard foils which contact with the world learns you to use at last, with all your generous, impulsive heart open to receive impressions, whether for good or for evil—suppose, I say, at this most critical juncture of your being, there came across your life one to whom all your affections opened as a flower to the sunlight—one who threw around you a lustrous and magnetic halo, within which magic circle you learned to find your supreme and crowning happiness. Suppose you gave your life, your heart, your very soul to this man, and he cruelly betrayed the trust. What would you do then?"

The captain was silent. The excitement of her manner and the vehemence of her passionate words had heightened the flush upon her cheeks, until she appeared to him royally, divinely beautiful. Standing gracefully by the chair from which she had unconsciously risen, her soft eyes grown hard and sparkling with unnatural fire, she looked at him steadily as she continued:

"Suppose that another woman—your sister, whose comforting ministrations should have soothed and healed the heartless, cruel wound which his hand had given you—had loved this man in secret. Suppose she exulted in your disgrace, rejoiced in your fearful fall. Suppose, when the worst came, she cast you out from all claim upon her sisterly love and reviled you in terms selected for the refinement of their cruelty, and when, at last, broken-hearted and bowed down with grief and shame,

you fled from the house which was a home no more, her jealous hatred followed you until you could find no resting-place for your poor, weary, aching head, except among the haunts of the low and vile, where you found at least some sympathy from the lost creatures who had half forgotten memories of similar sorrow. Tell me, had these things happened to you, would you have borne them with more courage than I?"

"Is that your history?" asked the captain, after a moment's silence.

"It is only a part of it," she replied. "The worst blow of all came to me last night. Throughout the whole, I had loved the man who destroyed me. He had deserted me, left me heartlessly to meet the discovery of my shame alone, but, though he sailed for distant lands and I knew he would never come back to me, still every chord of my nature clung to him with a despairing devotion such as a woman whose heart has been robbed of all its dearest ties and racked with a hopeless misery, alone can feel. Last night I heard that he was dead. She had known it long ago, but the news came to me with the crushing force of a death-blow. What was left for me then, but the dark and glistening river, that would take me upon its soft and yielding bosom and bear me gently away to my death?"

She sank into her seat again and leaned her head wearily against the mantel. Captain John, half-frightened at her passionate eloquence, gazed wonderingly at her for several moments before he ventured to speak.

"Poor child!" murmured the captain, softly, as if to himself.

She started at the words and, rising from her seat, came to his chair and dropped upon her knees at his feet.

"O sir," she cried, "I know that you are my friend. Save me from a fate that I cannot escape alone. Take me away from this life that my sin has brought upon me and give me one chance to become more worthy of your goodness to me. I can work if you will help me find employment. I will do anything to deserve your confidence in me, and to regain any part of what I have lost. Help me."

She bowed her head upon his knee and, bursting into tears, sobbed as though her heart would break; and Captain John Burrill, with tears in his own honest eyes, passed his great, rough, kindly hand backwards and forwards soothingly over the soft brown hair, and gently whispered to her words of comfort. Then bidding her bring a cricket and sit by his side, he took her hand in his own, and tried to lead her thoughts away from her past life and direct them towards the brighter and more hopeful future. And as she became more quiet and the peaceful influence of the flickering firelight enwrapt them both, he ceased to speak, lest he should disturb the reverie into which she had fallen, and, heedless of the flight of time, they