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. VII. New Bloomfield, Pa., Tuesday, August 5, 1873. No. 31.

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.

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CAUGHT IN HIS OWN TRAP.

MATTERS had come to a crisis between myself and landlady. My bill was sadly in arrear, and Mrs. Rigwoodie, having passed from frowns to words, and from words to importunity, had ended with a pre-emptory demand of payment.

Not being ready—or having the ready—to comply with her requirement, I had nothing for it but to vacate my room and surrender my night key; the former being wanted, I was given to understand, for Mr. O'Bosh, an old customer of Mrs. Rigwoodie's, whom she was under a standing promise to accommodate, and whose arrival was hourly expected. Mr. O'Bosh, I may here say, was Mrs. Rigwoodie's Mrs. Harris—a convenient myth—one who never came, but was always coming when a delinquent boarder was to be got rid of.

I had come to the city to be an author; but my efforts with the pen to scrape acquaintance with fame and fortune had not proved over successful.

Down to my last dollar, with no immediate prospect of another, and wearied with a long search for a cheap boarding house; whose terms were not "invariably in advance." I sat me down in an out-of-the-way restaurant, to face a tough beefsteak and the still tougher question of what was best to be done.

A grave looking gentleman sat opposite, dividing his attention between a bottle of wine and the evening paper.

"What a bungling set these detectives are," said the gentleman, whose tone left it doubtful whether he spoke to himself or me.

"Why," he continued answering my look, "here's that bank robbery, nearly a week old; yet, with every clue to guide them, and the stimulus of a handsome reward besides, those who should have been hot on the scent within an hour, still stand gaping with their fingers in their mouths. Things were managed differently in my day.

"You were a detective once," I ventured to surmise.

He nodded.

"This reward—is it very large?" I asked.

"Five thousand dollars," he answered, "for the recovery of the property and capture of the thief."

"'Twould be a quick way to make money," said I, "if one knew how to go about it."

"Would you like to go halves in making the effort?" he queried summing me up with a scrutinizing glance.

"I fear I should be of little service," I returned; "I have no experience in such matters, and am almost a stranger in the city."

"The very thing to render your aid invaluable. This crime is evidently not the work of a novice, and to your professional thief every detective's face is as familiar as a pal's. The mere sight of one puts the game to flight. With you it would be different. Under skillful guidance you could work unsuspected. Now, if you'll put yourself in my hands for thirty-six hours, I believe we can bag the prize.—What say you—is it a bargain?"

It was not exactly the road to fortune I had set out in, but it looked like a shorter cut at starting. At any rate, my circumstances were desperate, and I saw no better chance to mend them.

"I accept your offer," I said.

"Come along, then," said the stranger, rising; and having settled our scores, we left the place together.

In the street he took my arm, and after a long walk through unfrequented by-streets, my companion called a halt before a sombre looking house, into which he admitted us with a latch key. He led the way up stairs to a shabbily furnished apartment, in which a dim light was burning.

We seated ourselves, and my companion was beginning to unfold his plans, when a knock was heard at the door.

He held up his finger in token of silence.

The knock was three times repeated in a peculiar manner, when my host got up and cautiously opened the door.

A man stood outside with his hat pulled over his eyes.

"Excuse me a moment," said my companion, stepping out and closing the door.

I heard low and earnest voices in the passage, but only distinguished the words, "*Train for Boston at ten—San Francisco train at half past eleven.*"

Soon there was a sound of departing foot-steps, and the door of the room opened, and the proprietor entered.

"I've no time to explain further now," he said. "Meet me at the depot in time for the ten o'clock train to Boston."

"But I have no money," I answered.

"I'll see to that," he replied.

There was little time to lose, and I rose to go.

"Would you mind carrying this satchel?" said he. "I have a short stop to make by the way, besides having a valise to look after."

I received from his hand the article in question, which was small and light.

In the waiting room of the depot my attention was drawn to the clicking of a telegraphic instrument.

I had once been an operator, and had learned to read messages by the ear. It is said eaves-droppers rarely hear good of themselves, and the present case, though listening was involuntary, proved no exception.

Judge of my amazement when I heard clicked off in language to me as plain as speech, a full description of my person and everything pertaining to me, down to the satchel in my hand—in which latter, it was said, would be found a portion of the bonds stolen from the ———Bank! I did not stay to hear what followed, which was doubtless an order for my immediate arrest.

The truth at once flashed upon me. I had been made the dupe of the real culprit, who had sought to cover his own retreat by a ruse, of which I was to be the victim.

I walked rapidly, avoiding public thoroughfares, and had gone a considerable distance before venturing to stop a policeman, and inquire the way to the Chief Detective's office.

Following the direction, I lost no time in presenting myself to that functionary.

"I think I have discovered the robber of the———Bank," said I, as coolly as I could.

"It'll be money in your pocket and a feather in your cap if you have," said he, eyeing me curiously, "It's very queer, though," he added, looking from me to a paper before him.

I proceeded to give a minute narrative of what had occurred since my falling in with the pretended ex-detective, expressing the opinion that the latter would be found taking the half-past eleven train for San Francisco.

"The telegram for your arrest," said the Chief, "was sent by myself, on information coming from an unknown source, but which I did not feel at liberty to neglect. Your coming directly here speaks in your favor. But let us see what is in the satchel."

It was speedily opened and in it was found a package of missing bonds, a description of which was in the possession of the authorities. In giving them up my late acquaintance had sacrificed but little, as they had been so advertised that there would have been danger in disposing of them, while putting them into my possession was a cunning device to divert suspicion from himself to me.

A carriage was called, and, in company with the Chief and two subordinates, I was taken to the———depot, which we reached a few minutes before the departure of the train.

Snugly esconced in a sleeping car, a whole section of which he had taken for himself, we discovered the object of our search, in whom the officers recognized an old acquaintance. In his possession was found all the stolen money and securities, except those he had placed in my hands.

I was formally detained till next morning, when Mrs. Rigwoodie and several of her boarders—the former being kind enough not to mention my little delinquency toward herself—gave so good an account of me, and proved so clearly that I was quietly at home on the night of the robbery, that I was discharged on the spot.

I got the five thousand dollars, quit courting the Muses—who but a Mormon *would* think of paying attention to nine sisters at once?—married Nancy Walker, gave up poetry for the pork business, and have found, if not fame, at least something like a fortune in it.

A Lively Postoffice.

An amusing experience which recently befell a special agent of the Post Office Department illustrates the ideas which postmasters in the far West entertain regarding the dignity and importance of their position. The agent, commonly called "Mac," while officially visiting various offices in Montana Territory for the purpose of correcting any irregularities of postmasters, stopped at Iron Hood. Going into the postoffice he found the room divided into three sections—first a saloon, next the postoffice, and the last a faro bank.—The mail bag was brought in, a rough looking customer opened it and emptied the contents on the floor. The entire crowd got down on their hands and knees and commenced overhauling the letters, among which were several registered, and selected such as they wanted.. After they were through, the remaining letters were shoveled into a candle-box and placed on the bar. The special agent, thinking the office needed a little regulating, asked the bar-tender, who had received and distributed the mail, if he was the postmaster. He answered, "No." "Are you the assistant postmaster?" "No." "Where is the postmaster?" "Out mining." "Where's the assistant postmaster?" "Gone to Hell's Canyon, and by thunder Bill Jones has got to run this office next week; it's his turn." The government official then asked who he was, and demanded the keys of the office. The bar-tender coolly took the candle box from the bar, put it on the floor, and gave it a kick, sending it out of the door, saying: "Ther's your post office, and now git." The agent says: "Knowing the customs of the country, I lost no time in following this advice, and got." The office was discontinued.

Snakes in India.

There are two ways of accounting for the superabundance of snakes in India. One is by the superstitious veneration of the Hindoos for the most deadly serpents, which leaves them unmolested, and leaves them to multiply without limit. Some such result as this must also have been realized in ancient Egypt, where all sorts of reptiles were worshiped. Josephus tells us that Moses was in the military service of Pharaoh before he quarreled with the potentate. In one of his expeditions against the Nubians his army was so harrassed by the serpents, which swarmed the line of his march up the Nile, that he lost more men by snake bites than from the darts of the Nubians. Indeed, his army, according to this authority, on one or two occasions was nearly put to route by venomous snakes.

The other and more convincing reason for the vast number of snakes in India is the scarcity of hogs in a country where the use of swine's flesh is prohibited as an article of food. Neither the Hindoo nor the Mohomedan religion permits the eating of pork in any form. The country is thus deprived of a most efficient auxiliary in the destruction of these pests. The hog is the mortal enemy of snakes. He kills them because he hates them, and devours them when dead. When the increase of this useful animal is encouraged, he compensates society for its protection by thus abating a harmful nuisance. But the Hindoo despises the hog while he patronizes the snake, and gets rewarded for his preference by his race being stung to death at the rate of twenty thousand annually.

☞ A clairvoyant trio, two women and man, have been traveling in the South, pretending to cure epizooty by the "laying on of hands." They practiced on a Kentucky mule the other day, and the firm has since dissolved.

☞ A young lady at Troy, while engaged in conversation with a gentleman, spoke of having resided in St. Louis. "Was St. Louis your native place?" Well, yes, part of the time," answered the lady.

☞ A merchant being asked how large an advertisement he wanted in the *Enquirer*, replied that they might "put him in about three pints of type."

The Professor's Courtship.

A CORRESPONDENT of the Indianapolis Herald tells the following anecdote of Prof. Foster, who filled. with ability one of the chairs of the Faculty of the college in Knoxville, Tenn.

Prof. Foster was well educated in the sciences usually taught in college, but his ignorance of the common affairs of life rendered him a remarkable man, furnishing a rare subject for the study of human nature in one of its multiform phases.—Being advised by some of his friends to get married, he with childlike faith and simplicity, accepted their advice, and promised to do so if he could find a young lady willing to have him. They referred him to a number of the best young ladies in the city, any one of whom, they had no doubt, would be willing to accept his hand and make him happy. He was one of the most kind-hearted of men, as void of guilt as of offence, and an entire stranger to the forms and ceremonies of modern courtship. He couldn't see the necessity of consuming a year or two in popping the question—"Sally, will you have me?" So he went that very day to the residence of the nearest young lady who had been commended, and being welcomed and seated in the family circle, as he always was wherever known, he at once made known the object of his vist by saying in a clear and distinct voice:

"Well, Miss Sarah, my friends have advised me to get married, recomending you and a number of other young ladies to me as suitable persons, and I have now called to see if you are willing to marry me."

Had an earthquake violently shaken the premises, the household could not have been more astonished. Like a frightened roe, Sarah started to run, when her mother caught her, and said:

"Why, child, don't be frightened, the Professor won't hurt you."

Being again seated, a deep blush succeeded the paleness which had been caused by the startling announcement, and she rallied enough to say to the Professor that as his proposition was entirely unexpected, she must have time to consider the matter. This he granted, but said:

"As I am anxious, in case of your refusal, to see the other young ladies to-day, I can wait only one hour for your answer."

Knowing the worthiness of the Professor, the matron took her blushing daughter up-stairs for consultation, while the father was left to entertain his proposed son-in-law as best he could under the novel circumstances. Of course the discussion of the sudden proposition between Sarah and her mother was private, and cannot be given in full. The most essential points of it, however, were told afterward. It was readily admitted that he was entirely worthy of Sarah's hand and heart.

"But, mamma," said Sarah, "how would it look to other people for me to have to give an answer in one short hour—only sixty minutes—jump at a hasty chance—and to think how my young friends would jeer and laugh at me.—Wouldn't they tease me to death? No, ma, I can never face the music."

"But stop my child, and listen to me. There is not a young lady in the city that would not jump at the offer made you.—Let them laugh. Girls must have something to laugh at, but it won't hurt you. Tell him yes, emphatically. If he were a stranger whose antecedents were unknown to us, however prepossessing in person and manners, or profuse in his professions of love, I would withhold my consent. But we have long known him, his moral character is without reproach, he is amiable, kind hearted, and sincere, and a fine scholar, with an honorable position in the college, and he makes no false pretences. You know just what he is. What more do you want?"

"But, mamma, I don't know that he loves me, he hasn't even said so."

"O, well, daughter, never mind that. Generally; those who are the loudest in their professions of love have least of the pure article. You can teach him by example to love you. It is far better than precept."

Leaning her head upon her mother's bosom; Sarah said, in a submissive tone:

"Well, ma, just as you say—I'll tell him yes; but although the hour isn't half out, we'll not go down until the last minute of the hour."

At the expiration of the fifty-ninth minute they returned to the Professor and papa, Sarah still blushing, but more calm than before. Then, with a firmness that astonished herself as well as her parents, she extended her hand to the Professor and said:

"Yes, sir, if papa consents."

He gave his consent without hesitancy, and it was readily agreed by all that the wedding should take place a week from that time. Then the Professor with his usual calmness, conscious of having done his duty, withdrew to report progress to his friends.

Well in due time the Professor went to the clerk for his license. The clerk informed him that the law required a bond and security in the sum of $1,250, to be void on condition that there was no legal objection to the proposed union of the two persons named. The Professor very promptly replied: "Oh, never mind the bond, Mr. Clerk; I will pay $1,100 down, and will hand you the balance in a day or two." After further explanation by the clerk, the Professor soon complied with the law and obtained his license.

At the appointed time the wedding came off in the best style in the city, and the company enjoyed the occasion with the occasion with the greatest zest. The hours flew like humming birds. As the clock struck twelve the Professor picked up his hat and started for his boarding house. His principal attendant, surmising his attention, followed to the front door and informed him that matrimonial etiquette required him to stay and board and lodge at the house of his father-in-law until he and his wife wished to live by themselves; that he would be furnished with a room adjacent to Sarah's room, in order that, if she happened to get thirsty, he might be near to get her a drink of fresh water.

In the morning the bride and groom were greeted with the smiles of the family, together with those of some early callers, and inquiries made if they had slept well. Both responded that they had never slept sounder in their lives, he adding with his childlike simplicity, that he was happy to say that Sarah did not call for water during the whole night. That last remark was quite a riddle to her, and she looked curious, but said nothing, no one venturing to ask him to rise and explain. He did not know it was a joke played on him until the attendant told it as such to the company.

Finally the happy couple went to housekeeping, and never were man and wife more heartily congratulated and more highly esteemed than they were. They were the favorites of the city. Never was wife more lovely or husband more kind and devoted, but he didn't know anything about providing for the larder, only as Sarah taught him. One little incident may suffice to illustrate. She told him one day to get some rice. He went immediately to the store and told the clerk he wanted to get some rice. "How much?" inquired the clerk. "Oh, not much," said the Professor, "I reckon three or four bushels will do for the present." The clerk was very sorry to say they had not so much on hand, but that they would soon have more. The clerk persuaded him to try to make out for a few days with fifteen or twenty pounds. Sarah and the clerk were not the only ones who laughed over the incident. He never called for the three or four bushels afterward.

If the Professor and his wife are still living they must be well stricken in years, and if they see this brief sketch of their early lives and find any errors in it, they will pardon the writer.

Higgin's Dog.

It was a great many years ago, at a camp-meeting, that Brother Higgins, a good man but passionately fond of dogs, came in one day accompanied by a black-and-tan hound. Somebody asked him to address the congregation, and he mounted the stand for that purpose, while his dog sat down on his haunches immediately in front, looking at his master. In the midst of the discourse, which entertained us much, another dog came up, and after a few sociable sniffs at Brother Higgin's dog began to examine the hind leg of the latter with his teeth, apparently for the purpose of ascertaining if it was tender. An animated contest ensued, and one of the congregation came forward for the purpose of separating the animals. His efforts were not wholly successful. He would snatch at the leg of Higgin's dog, but before his hand got there the yellow dog would be on that side, and would probably take an incidental and cursory bite at the deacon's hand. Brother Higgins paused in his discourse and watched the deacon. Then he exclaimed, "Spit in his eye, Brother Thompson; spit in the hound's eye!" Brother Thompson did, and the fight ended. "But I just want to say," continued Mr. Higgins, "that outside of the sanctuary that dog of mine can eat up any salmon-colored animal in the State, and then chaw up the bones of its ancestors for four generations without turning a hair! You understand me?" The services proceeded.