

For the Bloomfield Times.

Tim's Matrimonial Speculation.

"NED, you're a fool!"

"Perhaps I am, Tim."

"But I know you are."

"You may think me a fool," said Edward, in reply to his brother's last remark, "but will you tell me wherein?"

"Wherein?" uttered Timothy, brandishing a yardstick by way of emphasis.

"Why did you not tell me that you thought of proposing to that servant of Capt. Simpson's?"

"I told you, Tim, that I would make Lizzy Florence my wife, if I thought she would accept me."

"Yes, so I understand you; Lizzy Florence—servant, sewing-girl, drudging for a living—a pretty wife, truly?"

"Serves those who pay her, I suppose, same as you and I do," coolly remarked Ned.

"Serves a fiddlestick!" petulantly retorted Tim. "If you think of marrying at your age—"

"Only a year and a half younger than yourself," interrupted Ned, with a smile.

"Then you'd better wait till you have gained that year and a half's experience, Ned, and perhaps then you wouldn't be so anxious to throw yourself away upon a penniless girl."

"I don't think I should, even then, be willing to sell myself to an heiress."

"Bah! Trash!" exclaimed Tim, finding that there was a weight at both ends of the beam.

"Just look at the girl I shall have—the beautiful Arabella—with a cool half million. Egad! I know she loves me. What a magnificent creature! Did you notice her small white hands, Ned?"

"I noticed the big rings she had piled on to them," equivocally returned Ned.

"What a love of a neck!" suggested Tim.

"Must be strong to bear the weight of that chain," said Ned.

"Such hair," continued Tim.

"Such oil and paper roses," responded Ned.

"A waist like Venus!" enumerated Tim.

"More like a wasp," ventured Ned.

"Five hundred thousand dollars!" shouted Tim, as he swung his yard-stick more furiously.

"And you are knocked down to Arabella Forbush at that price, body and soul," said Ned, as he buttoned up his coat.

"You're a fool, Ned, a consummate fool, and you show it in every word you utter. Here you are, twenty-four years old, a clerk with only a salary of a thousand dollars, and talk of marrying a poor seamstress. How'll you ever get into business with such a weight on your hands?"

"If I wished to hurry into business, I could do as you have done—go in on credit," replied Ned.

"But I shall have a wealthy wife to help me on, while you will be forever drudging," uttered Tim, with a spice of tartness in his tone.

Then changing his manner to one of earnest meaning, he continued: "I am in earnest in this matter, Ned. I do not wish to see you degrade yourself by such a marriage. Miss Florence is pretty enough to look at, but she is not fit for your wife. I bid you redeem yourself while yet you have opportunity."

"Look you, my brother," replied Edward while a flush of indignation mantled his handsome features, "if it is degrading to be honest, upright, intelligent, kind, virtuous, and lovely, then Lizzy Florence is so; but in my own heart I have a monitor that guides my actions, and I assure you that no words of yours can turn me from its monitions. I love Lizzy Florence for the truth and loveliness of her woman's soul, and if she will but say yes to my suit, then she becomes my wife. As long as I have two hands with which to earn an honest livelihood, I will not sell myself for an independence."

"Then go your own way," said Timothy with a show of offended pride; "but mark me, Ned, if you marry that girl, you may never expect to visit me in her company, for I will not subject Arabella to the mortification of descending to the association of one who has been a servant in her uncle's family."

"Just as you please," calmly answered the younger brother, as he put on his gloves and turned to go. "With such a wife as I desire I shall not be under the necessity of seeking for enjoyment abroad. I want a wife for my own fireside—not for yours!"

As Edward spoke, he left his brother's store to seek his own place of labor; and Timothy, with a half-uttered oath upon his lips, went at work arranging his unpaid for stock of goods.

It was a cold evening, and a searching wind, that bore upon its bosom clouds of falling snow-flakes, went sweeping through the streets; but within the spacious parlors of Capt. Simpson, this outward show of stern old winter served only to add a charm to the well-filled grates, and make the inmates more happy and contented in their comfortable quarters. Upon the stool at the piano sat a young lady, who might have been twenty summers, or, perhaps, twenty-five. Her skin was fair to look upon—perhaps nature made it so, and

perhaps, art had a hand in its snowy whiteness. The jewelry that flashed and sparkled upon her wrists, fingers, neck, ears, bosom, and hair, bore to the world an index of wealth, and it is not impossible that they all became her. She was rather tall, but yet she bore herself with a graceful ease, and her form was really symmetrical and fair. Such was Arabella Forbush, a niece of Capt. Aaron Simpson, and she was in fact a belle, a beauty, one of those who command a sort of wondering admiration, made to shine in a ball-room and adorn the parlor.

Nearer to the fire-place, and by the side of a work-table, sat another female, whose age was more palpable than that of the former, and who, if not so dazzling in her appearance, was by far more lovely. She could not have been more than eighteen summers, and the years that had rolled over her head seemed to have left all the warmth and sunshine of their seasons upon her brow, with none of their chilly frost. She was as unlike the other as the dove is unlike the eagle. Though one might stand entranced by her loveliness, yet it was all so gentle, so mild, and so sweet, that it commanded only the soul's true worship of trustful, confiding love. Her face, with her soul of kindness shadowed forth in its every feature, was fair—not as the blaze of the noonday sun, but more like the beaming smiles of the sweet goddess Aurora. Such was Lizzy Florence, a young orphan girl, who had been for a month in the family of Capt. Simpson, and who, it would seem, rather to make some compensation for her board than for the sake of the pay she might receive, was doing the sewing for the family. At the present time, however, she was engaged in looking over the pages of a magazine.

Around on the other side of the grate from where sat Lizzy, reposed, within the depths of a capacious stuffed chair, the form of old Capt. Aaron Simpson, a merry old fellow, who had spent the meridian of his days in the ups and downs of ocean life, and who had now settled down with a competent fortune to enjoy himself as best he could. He loved life for the joys it gave him, and he was never more happy than when he felt that he was imparting happiness to others.

"Lizzy," said the old man, who had been regarding the fair girl for full ten minutes, "what are you doing with that book?"

"Book?" repeated Lizzy, looking up from a page of advertisements, "O, I'm just looking it over."

"Over, is it?" returned the old man, with a merry sort of a twinkle in his eyes.

"You've been looking at that same page for the last ten minutes. Ah! I'm afraid, Lizzy, that there's something else on your mind besides books."

"Yes, your kindness in giving me a home," responded the fair girl, with a bright smile upon her face. "That rests upon my mind."

"My fiddlestick," uttered the old man. "I believe you were thinking of that young—"

Capt. Simpson said no more, for at that moment Lizzy sprang from her chair and clasped her hand over her mouth, uttering as she did so:

"Stop, sir, I shan't allow you to take liberties with my private affairs, even though I be for the present dependent upon your bounty."

A moment after the laughter-loving girl had taken her hand from the old man's mouth, he gazed affectionately into her face, and then, in a low tone, half to himself, he uttered:

"Ah, the man who gets you won't want money to make him happy!"

Lizzy might have made a reply to this honest piece of flattery had not a servant at that moment announced Messrs. Timothy and Edward Barbour, but as the name of the latter struck upon her ear, the old man thought the small hand which had been transferred from his lips to his shoulder trembled rather more than was its wont, and another twinkle, more roguish than the first, sparkled in his eyes.

The young gentlemen entered the room, and were received by the old man with that kindness which marked the reception of all his friends, while the young ladies expressed an equal pleasure in their visit, though they showed it somewhat differently. Arabella paraded herself magnificently, smiled bewitchingly, and did not fear to speak her pleasure in words, while Lizzy, with a feeling too deep for outward show only blushed as she received Edward's "good evening," and then resumed her seat at the work-table.

The evening had passed half away. Mr. Timothy Barbour and Arabella had been saying all sorts of fine things about music, poetry, prose, theatricals, &c., &c., while Edward had spent most of his time in a conversation with Capt. Simpson. The old man talked of ships, storms, rocks and foreign ports, and anon he would listen to some of his young friend's remarks upon business matters, such as stocks, stores, and markets. Lizzy, all this time, remained an almost silent member of the social company.

Now Capt. Simpson's parlors were very long. Timothy and Arabella were by the street windows, and at the other end of the apartments there were also windows which overlooked the garden, said windows being

situated in deep, tapestried alcoves. At length Lizzy Florence arose from her seat by the table and went to one of these back windows, where she seated herself upon an ottoman. Why she should have done this it is almost impossible to tell, for the ottoman in that recess was not half so comfortable a seat as had been the easy chair by the fire which she had left. She could not have gone there to enjoy the garden scenery, for everything was covered with snow, nor could she have gone there to look at the moon and stars, for the thickly falling snow-flakes entirely hid them from view. The next movement was made by old Simpson, who, without a word of farewell, put up his helm and sailed out of the room.

Edward gazed about him for a moment, after he was thus left alone. A projection of the Moorish arch that divided the two parlors hid Arabella and his brother from view, but an accidental glance upon the surface of a tall-tale mirror revealed to him the solemn fact that Mr. Timothy was most ardently pressing to his lips the fair hand of the glittering belle. Perhaps this circumstance afforded to Edward an example, for with a sudden impulse he started from his chair, and went to the recess, where sat Lizzy Florence. Tremblingly he seated himself by her side, and, seeming to follow up the plan he had in view, he took one of her hands unresistingly within his own.

"Miss Florence," he said, his heart fluttering the while as though it would, if possible, prevent his utterance, "pardon me if I put to you a question upon the answer to which may depend much of the happiness of my earthly future."

Lizzy made no reply; she let her hand remain, while Edward gained courage, and with his heart stilled to a state of anxious suspense, he continued:

"I love you, Lizzy, with a firm and ardent love, a love that springs from an honest heart. Can you return that love? Will you be mine for life?"

"Not now, Edward," murmured the fair girl. "One as poor as myself would, I fear prove a sad weight upon your rising fortune. There are others more wealthy, perhaps, than I, who might—"

Lizzy hesitated as she spoke, and Edward said:

"I have studied my prospects, and I know I can support a happy home. I cannot make it magnificent, but it shall be above want, and with your happy presence to make glad my heart and lead me to the altar of Christian perseverance, my hearthstone shall glow with happiness that the proud Arabella, with all her wealth, could never bestow. May I hope?"

Even in the deep shadows of the Indian tapestry Lizzy Florence's eyes might have been seen to sparkle in their happy lustrous light, and, in tones all frank and fearless, she said:

"As I am, you have loved me! As I am, I am yours, and I am happy!"

"Ned," said Timothy, as, on the next morning, the younger brother entered his store, "I am the happiest man alive. I have pressed my suit, and the beautiful Arabella has promised to be mine!"

"Then I wish you joy of your conquest," quietly remarked Edward, "and if you look for your only joy in gold, you will surely have plenty of it."

"To be sure I will," exclaimed Timothy, as he rubbed his hands in the exuberance of his satisfaction. "And now, Ned, I advise you to drop that foolish whim about your love for Capt. Simpson's sewing-girl, and pick up a wife that is worth something. There is Fidelia Morton, worth thirty thousand, at least—then there is either of Mrs. Fitzcross's daughters, both rich, and they are all after you. But you won't make a hit like mine. Only think! Half a million!"

"Morton!—Fitzcross!—Fitz-wheedle-dee! uttered Edward, in a tone of contempt.

"I am as fortunate as yourself. Lizzy Florence has promised to become my wife!"

"Edward Barbour, are you in earnest?"

"Timothy Barbour, I am!"

"Then go to—Go and marry her! But don't you think to haug upon me. You might have married a moderate fortune, but as you have chosen to throw yourself away, you may now take care of yourself as best you can."

"Timothy," said the younger brother, in a tone of heart-felt pain, "this is unkind. When you first entered business I took my four thousand dollars—my little all—from the bank and lent it to you. I have asked you neither bonus nor interest; and now, though I will never ask of you pecuniary aid, yet I would ask your kindness, your good-will."

"You need not twit me because you lent me money," returned Timothy, in an angry tone. "As soon as I am married, you shall be paid with interest in full; but I never will—"

Edward Barbour did not stop to hear the remainder of his brother's remarks, but with a sorrowful countenance he turned away and left the store.

One month had passed away, and Arabella Forbush had become the wife of Timothy Barbour, merchant. It was in the evening, and within the sumptuous parlor of Capt. Simpson the well-filled grate sent forth its welcome warmth. The old captain was there, in his big easy chair, cosing the coi-

urns of an evening paper. He was alone—yet he was not alone, for within the hangings of one of the alcove windows were ensconced Edward and Lizzy Florence, hidden from view, and happy as angels. The old man was just turning over the paper, when one of the servants announced Mr. Timothy Barbour, and in a moment more the young gentleman entered the room. Edward and Lizzy would have left their place of unintentional concealment, but an instinctive dislike to be seen by the visitor prevented.

"Mr. Simpson," said Mr. Timothy in a somewhat tremulous manner, after the civilities of the evening had been passed, "I have called upon you on rather a peculiar, and, I may say, delicate business."

"Ah," uttered the old man, raising his spectacles and his eye brows at the same time, but uttering no further remark.

"The fact is, our marriage relation has been so short that I feel a little delicacy in approaching the matter to my wife at present; but at the present time I am sadly in want of a small sum of money to help me over a business pinch."

"D'ye want to borrow some of me?" bluntly asked Simpson.

"O, no, I—I—ahem—merely wish you to break the ice for me."

"Break the ice?"

"I mean that you should broach the matter to my wife," said Timothy, breathing more freely, now that the "ice" was out.

"Why, really, my dear sir," returned the old man, "I have nothing in the world to do with your wife's property."

"But you might hint the subject to her, my dear captain. A few thousands would answer me,—say six thousand."

"Six thousand what?"

"Why, sir, six thousand dollars, to be sure," answered Timothy.

"What, from your wife?"

"Why not?"

"Why not? Why, simply because I don't believe she owns six thousand dollars!"

"Capt. Simpson, I beg you will not trifle with me, sir," uttered Timothy, trembling and turning pale at the fearful suspicion that flashed upon him.

"By no means, sir," returned the old man, in a tone that carried conviction with it, "I mean what I say when I tell you that your wife is not worth, of her own estate, over four thousand dollars!"

"Death and fury!" exclaimed the astounded bridegroom, leaping from his chair and clenching his hands. "Then I have been most basely deceived!"

"Deceived, Mr. Barbour? How, what, who has deceived you?"

"You, sir! Everybody, sir!" uttered the excited man. "I was left to believe that my wife was worth half a million of dollars!"

"Really, sir, I don't see how you could have entertained such an idea," said Capt. Simpson, without betraying any anger at his visitor's manner.

"I will tell you how, sir. The world was given to understand that your niece was wealthy, and you have suffered them to think so. You knew that was the impression, and yet you did not contradict it."

"W-h-e-w!" came from the old man's lips in a prolonged whistle. "Now I begin to see through it. Oh, oh! that's it! Ha, ha, ha! Why, Timothy, you've caught the wrong fish! It's my other niece that's salted down with half a million dollars!"

"Your other niece?" gasped Timothy, catching at a chair for support, and gradually sinking into it.

"Yes, sir, my other niece. That little witch of a Lizzie Florence is the golden niece!"

"Your sewing-girl?" faintly articulated Timothy.

"Sewing-girl!" responded the old man, with an energetic expression. "She tried to sew herself out of the company of those who would want nothing but her money, and I think she has succeeded. Timothy, had you asked me, or had you even asked Arabella concerning her fortune, you would have learned the truth; but it seems that you have been steering on the wrong course. You are something like a mariner who, in setting out upon his voyage, imagines to himself a luminous beacon somewhere ahead, and, without chart or compass, steers recklessly for it. He finds out too late that his supposed beacon is nothing but a 'will-o'-the-wisp,' but, having got fairly upon the sea, he must weather it out the best way he can. You have got the wife you wanted, and one whom you swore you loved for herself alone, and I have no doubt that, with proper training, she will be all that you deserve. Arabella and Lizzie are both my nieces, and though I must admit that, for her own benefit, Miss Florence has practiced a little deception, yet your wife has not. If you have been deceived it was by your own cupidity. But don't be downhearted; for, if you prove a faithful husband, you shall not suffer materially from your error, though the wealth at which you grasped has most truly slipped through your fingers!"

With a trembling step and a bowed head, Timothy Barbour left the house.

"O, Lizzy!" uttered Edward, as soon as his brother had gone, "it was not right to deceive me thus!"

"And will you love me less now that you find yourself deprived of the pleasure of incessant toil in my behalf?" archly asked the fair girl, as she cast a look of tenderness up into the face of her companion.

Edward caught the lovely girl in his arms, but his answer was drowned in the loud din of a long and hearty laugh which at that moment burst forth from the lips of the old captain.

One of the first acts of the gentle Lizzy, after her marriage with Edward, was to bestow upon Arabella a munificent gift, meant, of course, as a delicate token from the younger to the elder brother. Timothy received its benefit—he knew from whence he came; and he lived to be a wiser and better man.

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