

# THE TIMES

## NEW BLOOMFIELD, PA.

# FRISKY

VOL. XIII.

NEW BLOOMFIELD, PA., TUESDAY, MAY 20, 1879.

NO. 21.

**THE TIMES.**  
An Independent Family Newspaper,  
IS PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY BY  
**F. MORTIMER & CO.**  
SUBSCRIPTION PRICE.  
(WITHIN THE COUNTY.)  
One Year, ..... \$1.25  
Six Months, ..... 75  
(OUT OF THE COUNTY.)  
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Six Months, (Postage included) ..... 85  
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### A POOR BOY'S SUCCESS.

CONCLUDED.

"BUT Verne is a good fellow, and is used to my cross fits. Come, sit by me, Verne, and share some of these delicious bon-bons. You have provided for my comfort so generously that you must eat a few of them."

Verne obediently brought his low seat close to her side, and seemed perfectly happy as he toyed with Frisky's ears, and fed that spoiled pet some of the most tempting of the comfits. The rest of the journey passed amicably away, but Maud was not sorry when the boat veered to shore, the plank was thrown down, and "West Point!" was shouted out from the deck below.

Two fine-looking cadets, in their neat gray uniforms, stood upon the wharf, and one waved his handkerchief at sight of Flo.

"Oh, it's Max!" with an ecstatic little shriek. "Do, hurry, dear, Mrs. Landersdale, for I am so crazy I can't wait."

Flo was first over the plank, was clasped in her brother's arms, and given a right soldierly salute upon her red cheek. But Max's distinguished-looking friend, whom Flo had already surrendered to at discretion, passed her by without even a glance, and clasped the shabby-looking woman in black, who had closely followed her, to his heart.—The one eager tenderly whispered word, "Mother," told the relationship which bound them together.

"My dear son, how very proud I am!" whispered the mother, "but, O John!" in so low a voice that none other heard, "Isaac is on board, and I thought my heart would break when he didn't know his own mother. Poor lamb! though how should he remember me? I am sure his heart is good, and, if he knew the truth, he would claim me before all his proud friends. But I do not mean to tell him, John. I won't ruin his prospects now, after keeping silence all these miserable years."

John looked after his brother with a half-contemptuous, half-amused smile, as Verne, his slight form almost lost to view behind Mrs. Landersdale's voluminous skirts, staggering along under a weight of shawls and bags.

"No matter, mother mine. Isn't one son, and such a devoted one, enough for your ladyship? You look pale," with a pained, anxious glance at her thin face. "The city has pulled you down this warm weather, but this river air will refresh you, I'll warrant. I will take you up to Roe's; and those people will probably engage rooms at Cozzen's, unless they particularly desire the company of us cadets."

Two evenings later, John Fielding's chum, Max Van Ruyter, presented him to his sister Flo, and her friend, Miss Maud Pelham. It was in the parlor of Roe's Hotel, and although Flo was attired in the most bewitching of her evening toilets, and smiled sweetly upon her intended victim, John merely acknowledged the introduction with a few commonplace words, and turned to Maud, whose every look and gesture he watched with a scrutiny which became almost rude. Maud blushed under it, and with a half-saucy laugh inquired:

"Do I resemble any of your dear five hundred lady friends, Mr. Fielding? or am I unfortunate enough to appear peculiar in any way?"

"I—I beg pardon," stammered John, blushing to the roots of his hair. "I have been very rude in my regards, but believe me, I intended nothing uncomplimentary. You do indeed remind me of some one, Miss Pelham, some one whom I parted from long years ago, and never hoped to meet again."

"You talk like an octogenarian!" exclaimed Flo. "How many love affairs

have you had, Mr. Fielding, since you left off long clothes? You cadets are fearful lady-killers, report says."

"Report is most unkind then Miss Van Ruyter," with a grave smile and an evident attempt to tear his attention from Maud. "We are the most tender-hearted of men, and would lay down our lives willingly for any woman."

"Oh, I detest generalism!" with a pretty shrug of the white shoulders.—"Anything but this universal gallantry. Here comes Mr. Ford for that *deux temps* I promised him. *Au revoir*."

She left them together, with a feeling of chagrin at her own disappointment.

"Always the way," she mused. "Everything goes contrary with me, and I go contrary with everybody. He is indifferent and hateful, and I don't see how Max can think him so splendid."

Max passed her just then, and whispered teasingly in her ear, he noted the frown upon her forehead:

"I'll tell Fielding to beware, Sis, or he may get stabbed for his non-appreciativeness. 'Earth holds no fury like a woman scorned.'"

John Fielding and Maud were left together, and Maud felt a sense of embarrassment, new as it was strange, in his presence. Why should this comparative stranger possess such power over her that she should blush when he gazed down at her with his quiet eyes, and stammer at some chance remark of his as to the number of guests and their appearance?

John Fielding had no wish to be presented to Mrs. Landersdale, and that lady watched him complacently as he promenade with Maud Pelham, never dreaming of his true identity. As he walked up and down the moon-lighted veranda, he grew more and more interested in the girl whom he had recognized as the little "Maudie" of years ago. Maud never dreamed that he was the "dear, good boy" her childish heart had pitied in those old days, and as her embarrassment wore off she chatted quite freely with him about her past life.—They were making great strides that first evening toward a love which would in time become the ruling passion of both their lives.

The days flew by and every available moment John spent by Maud's side.—Mrs. Landersdale began to grow alarmed at this increasing intimacy, and Verne looked on in jealous dismay.

John offered his arm one evening after they had tired of dancing, drew Maud's *burnous* over her shoulders, and walked out upon the veranda. They finally descended the steps, and wandered together down "Flirtation Walk."

"I wonder how this place ever got so bad a name?" laughed Maud, for want of something better to say.

"I suppose the poor cadets have had their tender hearts broken here by fair coquettes ever since the old academy has stood."

"More likely the fault lies with your sex, Mr. Fielding. Men are more dangerous flirts than women, because they do not feel so strongly, and have less pity upon their victims."

"Preposterous, Miss Pelham! Who ever heard of a lady having a particle of pity in her flinty heart? Why, you would dress as bewitching and give as dangerously sweet glance, if you knew that one of us was dying for love of you. Yes, and rather enjoy the knowledge too."

They had wandered from the path now, and stood beneath the vast archway of a tree. Below them, the Hudson sparkled in the moonlight, and dashed against the shore. John felt that the crisis of his life had come; he must know his fate then or die. He toyed nervously with his watch-chain, and thought in vain for some words in which to tell the high-born girl beside him his hopes and fears.

Maud's eyes fell upon a tiny blue locket suspended from his watch-chain, and, with some curiosity, she bent to examine it. He would have hid it from view, but it was too late. He saw that she had recognized it, and as he took both her hands in his, her pretty face grew red and white by turns.

"Do you remember the locket little 'Maudie' gave me years ago? I have cherished it ever since, and remembered those wonderful eyes of hers upon our first meeting."

"And you are the little boy who saved

my life," murmured Maud, between laughing and tears. "No wonder that I have liked you so well from the first." She paused, not knowing how to express her gratitude, and an embarrassed silence ensued.

John suddenly took her in his arms and pressed a kiss upon her golden hair.

"I know I ought not to, Maud, but I can bear this suspense no longer. As a poor, lonely boy, I have loved you for years; as a man, I love you ten thousand times better to-night. O Maud, Maud! tell me you have not been flirting with me all these days! Tell me that I may love you, and that you care a little for me."

She lifted her head at his passionate entreaty, but her long lashes hid the eyes she did not dare to raise to his.—Her heart beat fast, and she could not tell him the truth. She could not bear to see those grave, honest eyes she loved turn from her with scorn. She clenched her hands spasmodically, and John began to take courage from her silence.

"Perhaps I have taken an unwarrantable liberty? If I have displeased, I beg for forgiveness. I can bear anything but suspense, darling. Let me look in your eyes and read the truth there."

She lifted those eyes, swimming in tears, to his. Then in a hesitating, trembling voice, whose every utterance seemed to choke her:

"You have mistaken my manner, Mr. Fielding. I am engaged to Verne Landersdale, and can be nothing to you in the future. Let me go."

Her voice ended in a sob, but she need not have added the last words. He made no effort to hold her, but almost pushed her from him, and dropped his arms to his side.

"You have acted a falsehood, Maud Pelham! Your woman's tender pity, must have told you ere this that my very life and soul were yours. Well, let it go. You are no better and no worse than the rest of your sex. I cherished a dream that one true girl could be found in your artificial high society, but I have awakened. Go, boast of your flirtation, and when you recount your conquests add John Fielding's name to your list of victims if you like.

Maud heard him through with dumb agony. She stood with bowed head, and did not try to arrest his scorn, but his words stung her.

"O John, John! take back your cruel words, or you will kill me!"

She clung to his arms, and the hard lines about his mouth softened a little. Her bowed head and trembling voice betrayed her love, and a supreme pity for her weakness filled his heart. This girl was his by the divine right of love. She had allowed the brother who had scorned and triumphed over him all these years to triumph over him now, and rob him of the one woman he could ever love?

There was a terrible struggle as Maud, forgetful of her promise, clung to him. Then honor triumphed, and with bitter self-renunciation he bent and loosened her clasp from his arm.

"I forgive you, Maud, and take back my hasty words. They were spoken in anger. Farewell, and God bless you. We may meet again, but only as strangers."

They had neared the hotel now. He bent, pressed one last kiss upon her brow, and Maud was left alone.

"Who is that fine-looking cadet?" inquired Mrs. Landersdale of a soldierly-looking old gentleman bending over her chair. John Fielding had entered the parlor, and stood for a moment near the doorway.

There had never dawned upon Mrs. Landersdale a suspicion of the truth, and her companion's answer was as much of a shock to her as the explosion of a shell could have been.

"His name is John Fielding, madam. He is a fine fellow from New York City and your State has reason to be proud of her cadet. I am glad to see that in our republic brains are being sent to West Point, and that even money cannot always buy a commission here."

Mrs. Landersdale face became fairly livid.

"What! John Fielding! Is it possible? And my Maud has been flying around with him here as if he was the

biggest noble in the land. Dear, dear! how humiliating! What will dear Verne say?"

She communicated the news to Verne a few moments later. His pale face grew a trifle paler, and he fixed upon John anything but a friendly glance.

"Well, I knew his name was Fielding, but never dreamed he could be a relative of mine. The fellow must have some pluck, or he'd have claimed us before this. I don't want to be mortified before all these people as to my birth at this late day, so I don't care how soon we pull up stakes at leave West Point."

"Of course, a very proper pride to show, my son. Maud's flirtation with him mortified me most to death. If she has a fancy for him though, we could cure her by telling her the truth."

"Tell her the truth! Never!" exclaimed Verne, biting his pale lip till the blood came. "Maud Pelham would break with me at once if she knew that my mother was a common washer-woman. Her pride is worse than ours, and she has a deuced high family to back her, and lots of cash besides."

"That is true," acquiesced Mrs. Landersdale quietly. "Well, do not get heated over it, Verne. Landersdale and Maud both think you my nephew, and they know I have adopted you and love you as my own son. There is no need to undecieve them, for, as you say, Landersdale and his family are as proud as Lucifer, if he hasn't one red cent to scratch against another."

The next afternoon Mrs. Landersdale and party drove over from Cozzen's to witness the parade. Verne was seated in his dog-cart, endeavoring to manage a high-spirited span, with an indifference and nonchalance he was far from feeling.

Johnson, now grown gray in Mrs. Landersdale's service, had uttered a word of warning before harnessing up. "Haddn't you better be after taking the other span, Mr. Verne? These critters feel mighty ticklish to-day, and the music may rouse 'em up a bit."

Nonsense, Johnson! I am perfectly competent to manage them. The grays are only fit to draw the old lady around, and I want some spirit in a span I drive. You might as well harness up a couple of cows as those octogenarians."

Mr. Verne had a tendency towards jockeyism, and his eyes sparkled with a genuine love of the turf as the splendid creatures came from the stable tossing their heads and pawing the ground with impatience.

Their eyes flashed and the blood seemed fairly bursting through the large veins which coursed their way along their slender necks.

"Firefly seems a trifle uneasy. Is her foot all right?"

"Ah, sirrah, it's not the foot at all, at all, that ails the old gal. She's a devil of a temper for her own!"

Not very reassuring to Verne, who began to have doubts of his own ability. He was too proud to acknowledge his fears now, however, mounted the box and followed Mrs. Landersdale's carriage along the road as if no such thing as danger existed in the world.

They behaved quietly enough when they reached the parade ground, and only by the champing of Firefly's bit and her dilating nostrils could a spectator tell of the uneasy spirit within her.

Verne sat upon his high seat, with a long blue veil tied around his hat, and a feeling of conspicuous pride filled him as he saw that no horses on the ground could compare with his, and that several of his lady friends were gazing at him with evident admiration.

He pulled his sickly mustache, held the reins tightly, and enjoyed the triumph of the hour.

But, alas! it was short-lived! During the beating of the drums Firefly pricked up her ears and kept time to the music.

As the parade proceeded she became more frightened and restive, and, finally when the loud boom of the evening gun thundered through the air both horses burst from their driver's control and dashed through the crowd. There was a mad rushing and screaming as they flew by, and Verne was being hurried with horrible speed towards the high bluffs over the river.

"The precipice!" shrieked Mrs. Landersdale. "My God! Will no one save my boy! He will be killed!"

But the rest of the spectators saw what her fright had blinded her to. A single cadet, stationed as a sentinel near the river, had sprung from his post and stood calmly awaiting the coming of the now maddened animals. Regardless of the fearful risk to himself, he leaped for their mouths, turned their wild career aside, and finally stopped them with his giant strength. They stood still with drooping heads, trembling with fear and dripping with perspiration; and John Fielding patted their necks and soothed them by his touch. Verne, pale with fright and embarrassment, when he learned who his rescuer was, was stammering out his thanks.

"It was deuced brave of you, old boy, to go for me in that handsome style, and I appreciate it, by George, I do! We can't throw off all restraint here, though and appear as friendly as I should like, because it would make it deuced awkward for Mrs. Landersdale, you know, and we would both hate to hear the seven days' wonder the truth would create. But I thank you from the bottom of my heart, and I'll never forget it, never!"

"Enough said, Mr. Landersdale," with a mocking emphasis on the last word. "If our true relationship were published to the world the recital would be as humiliating to my pride as yours. I deserve no thanks for doing my duty, and wish none."

Both had failed to notice, in their heat, a woman, who, regardless of the stare of the spectators and the curiosity she excited, had left the crowd and was running toward the spot where they stood. Before Verne could prevent it, had he desired, she had clasped him about the neck and kissed him again and again.

"My darling boy, you are saved! Oh, I thought of you as a mangled corpse down on the rocks, and never hoped to hear your dear lips whisper 'mother' just once as they did in the happy old days. Isaac, my darling, darling son!"

Verne blushed scarlet with mortification as he saw some of his fashionable friends watching them from a distance. Almost involuntarily and without thought he pushed her from him; but that movement, slight though it was, was like a sword thrust through his mother's heart.

"I am all right, not a hair of my precious head hurt. Don't snivel so, old lady, all those people are watching us.—It's deuced hard for a fellow to know how to act, anyway," looking around wildly for some hope of escape. "Of course I love you as well as ever, but it won't do to let everybody know. It'll ruin my prospects. Oh, what will Maud say when she finds the whole miserable truth out?"

He broke down here and ended with a fretful whine.

"He is ashamed of me," wailed the poor, heart-broken woman, "ashamed of the mother that worked away her life for him and worshipped the very ground his baby feet trod. I see I have sinned; but, O God, my punishment is hard—hard!"

As she reeled and fell Verne started forward with tardy self-reproach, but John, with sparkling eyes and white face, pushed him away and with no gentle hand.

"Do not dare to pollute our mother by a touch of your finger, Verne Landersdale! May God deal with you as you have dealt with her this day!"

He crouched away from his brother's fierce wrath and covered his face with both hands as John bore his insensate burden up the path toward the hotel.

"Verne Landersdale," exclaimed a clear voice close by his side, "arouse yourself, if you can, and listen to the girl who denounces you now, as your brother did but a moment ago. I have heard all, and although I only partially comprehend the truth I know that the craven, who disowns his own mother, because of her poverty and humble origin, can never make such a woman as Maud Pelham happy! If you had boldly confessed the truth of your birth I could have loved you for your courage, now I despise and detest you! Take your ring and not for the wealth of the Indies will I ever renew our engagement in the future. It is over now and forever!"

She paused and walked hurriedly away