

THE TIMES

NEW BLOOMFIELD, PA.

THE TIMES

VOL. XIII.

NEW BLOOMFIELD, PA., TUESDAY, AUGUST 26, 1879.

NO. 35.

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.)
One Year, (Postage Included), \$1 50
Six Months, (Postage Included), 85
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Select Poetry.

LIKE HIS DAD.

I hear his mother's chiding voice:
How came your trousers torn?
And black as ink, sir, is that shirt
You put on clean this morn.

"Your feet are wet, too, I declare;
You're muddy to your knees;
It is too bad; you only care
Your mother, sir, to tease.

"And those nice shoes—your Sunday best,
That but three times you've worn,
Are scratched and scraped and all run down,
The heel of one is gone.

"Your hair is twisted in a snarl,
And just look at that hand!
It looks as though 'twere never washed—
How dare you say 'tis tanned?"

"You've been a-fishing, sir, I guess—
What? been to see the match?
You'll have a fit of sickness, sir;
A pretty cold you'll catch."

And thus she talks for half an hour,
And only stops to say,
"Your father'll hear of this to-night;
I wonder what he'll say?"

My friends in complimentary way
Declare to me they see
A close resemblance—very marked—
Between the boy and me.

But nothing that they see in him
In either form or face
Bespeaks my son as do his pranks—
In these my own I trace.

And why should I at tattered clothes
Or dirty ones repine?
In him I'll live my life again—
God bless the boy! he's mine!

NO STEP-MOTHER WANTED;

—OR—

How the Match was Broken.

THERE was not a sound in the cottage that drowsy midsummer afternoon; although the walls were thin, not even the squeak of a mouse could be heard. Open doors and windows, however, told of occupants, camp-stools were on the piazzas, newspapers and reviews were scattered about as if hastily abandoned.

A light footfall broke the stillness; a lady appeared, who with graceful, easy motion passed and seated herself on a shady balcony overlooking the sea. The little waves rippled softly up, and broke away again on the beach, white sails shone in the distance, and fleecy clouds floated overhead in the exquisite blue of the sky. The spectator noted all this, and drank in the wonderful beauty of the day. Although interested in her book, she could not forbear constant glances at the scene about her.

As her eyes rested on a jutting rock she saw some one taking observations. He put up an eye-glass to assure himself that it was indeed she; then clambered over the intervening obstacles and hastened toward her.

She looked at first annoyed, and as if meditating an escape; then relinquished the idea, and composed herself with a polite smile to greet the intruder. He also smiled as he lifted his hat, and displayed very handsome teeth, quite at variance with his evidently advanced years. His features were regular, his gray hair was cut as short as possible, and he had a decidedly distinguished air.

He seated himself with a deferential expression beside her:
"How fortunate I am! Really, I had no idea, when I strayed out this afternoon, that anything so pleasant was to befall me."

This was rather hypocritical, as he strayed out, as he called it, for the very purpose of this encounter.

The lady smiled graciously upon him.

"Mrs. Page," he exclaimed suddenly, "permit me to resume the conversation which was interrupted so unhappily the other evening."

"Ah, Mr. Lee," with a deprecating air, "why not confine ourselves to ordinary topics? I like you so much, and am so eager to retain your friendship, that I have not the courage to oppose you; yet—"

She had charming, pretty, graceful ways, not wholly free from coquetry. She glanced at him shyly, and blushed a little, in spite of the awful disparity in their ages.

"And yet—" he repeated eagerly; "what does 'yet' imply?"

"I prefer friends to lovers," she answered, quite decidedly.

"But, my dear Mrs. Page, the world is censorious, and will not permit friendship between men and women."

His tone was somewhat sarcastic.—Mr. Lee evidently did not like opposition.

Mrs. Page looked out on the sea, then up at her companion.

"If I could only be your daughter!" she whispered softly.

"That's an awful hit at my years, and I ought to be excessively angry. Such an arrangement could not be carried into effect; some young fellows would steal you from me. Besides, my real daughter might not like it, you know."

"How would she like your having a young wife? Tell me frankly, Mr. Lee, what would your children say to such an arrangement?"

"Frankly, my dear Mrs. Page, I think they will not like it at all; but I shall reason calmly and diplomatically with them, and prove very clearly that it is their duty to—" and he hesitated.

"Make the best of it."

"Well, yes; and very soon they will be as much in love with you as I am."

Mrs. Page had a mocking, incredulous air, which Mr. Lee ignored.

"I shall say to them, 'Although the day I marry her I propose to settle a million on my future wife—'"

"Oh, Mr. Lee!"—her face crimsoned—"how can you propose—to—bribe me in that open way?"

"By no manner of means. This is what I am to say to my children: I am not saying it to you, only rehearsing. Don't interrupt me for a moment, please. 'This million which I settle on the charming person who consents to become my wife I should otherwise give to a hospital; therefore, how does it affect you, my dears?'"

"I am very impertinent, but do you love your children much?"

"Yes, I am very fond of them, but I give them all they ask let them do what they please. Why should I not do what I please? I have an idea that they will oppose me here," in a frank tone, "which I confess irritates me somewhat against them. However—" and his voice became tender again—"only give me permission to make the announcement, and all difficulties will be removed."

Mrs. Page looked distressed and perplexed:

"How many children have you, Mr. Lee?"

"I have four."

"Are you sure they will dislike it? Four of them! How can I endure four enemies in my own household?"

"You will have one friend, I am sure, among them. There is my son William; he is a magnificent fellow—noble, good, superior. He certainly disdains all mercenary considerations; the others may too, but I am sure of William. William, you and I against, Gertrude, Archie and Jack; we certainly can hold our own."

Mrs. Page with downcast eyes had passed through every phase of blushing and agitation while he spoke.

Mr. Lee, who was shrewd, marked these signs and took courage:

"My dear, cannot you comfort me a little?"

"There are so many objections!" she sighed.

"Name them," he exclaimed eagerly.

"Your children—" in a faltering tone.

"Oh, we have disposed of them."

"Your money and the disparity in our years," almost in a whisper. "All the world will think—Dear Mr. Lee, let me say no, and like me always in spite of it."

"I can't consent to anything of the kind. My money an objection! Why, the money is good; it bridges over the chasm between—eighteen, is it?—and fifty. The million I propose to settle on you—"

"Very well," she interrupted, "if you propose to buy me, there's an end to our—negotiation."

"On the other hand, I am perfectly willing that my sixty-five years—I am really seventy—should offset with money yours—"

"Thirty," she replied.

There was a brief silence. Mr. Lee was evidently taking counsel with himself. "Mrs. Page, I am going to confide in you. I am not sure that it is quite right or kind in me to say this; but I have had a very unhappy life, although the world considers me a fortunate man. My wife was a great invalid. I indulged her in every possible way; her least whims were respected; but all that made existence worth having was sacrificed in the effort. Our beautiful home was a scene of darkness and gloom, noise maddened her, all guests and gayety were excluded. The natural affection which one would have supposed she would have had for her children seemed extinguished by her maladies, and they and I were really victims. I have known of cheerful, angelic invalids, but my poor Eleanor certainly made us all suffer with her. I managed, in some degree, to spare my children; my sons went abroad; my daughter, with a chaperon, entertained at our country-house while we were in town; as for myself, she wanted me always with her."

"After her death, our physician, who was an old friend, acknowledged that perhaps it would have been better for her health of body and mind if she had been forced to regard us more and herself less. This was a great blow, for I am inclined to believe the assertion true. However, the result has been that I have now an intention to enjoy the brief remainder of life that is left me. I have an unnatural longing for gayety, happiness, society. I have had no life for forty years, either literary, social or religious. She positively did not like me to go to church! I am shocked myself at making these revelations, but you are the only living being who has a suspicion as to my feelings: I never, to my children or brothers, suggested these ideas. How could I enrich and adorn my life more effectively than my begging you to share it with me?" and he put forth a manly, sunburnt hand to seize her little white palm, when there was a scrambling of ponies around the house, a clatter of many feet on the piazza, and shrieks of "Cousin Alice! where are you? Oh, Mr. Lee! is that you?" cried Peggy, the head romp.—"How glad I am! Now we can have our champion game of tennis you promised us the other day. Come, Alice."

And Mrs. Page, with great relief, followed her discomfited admirer to the bowling-alley.

The scene changes to Mr. Lee's country-house. Mrs. Grant, his daughter, a pretty blonde with a fastidious, disdainful air, enters the breakfast-room attired in an exquisite white morning-dress and enveloped in a fleecy shawl.

There is a lovely picture through the open windows of a smooth lawn skirted by magnificent old trees. Delicious odors greet her from the flowers on the breakfast-table.

She seats herself, fills the daintiest of china cups with tea, takes a piece of toast and opens her letters.

"Have the gentlemen all breakfasted James? Shut the door; there is a draught."

Her languid affectations leave her, an angry flush rises on her cheeks, her eyes dilate, and, evidently too discomposed to continue her slight repast, she exclaims impatiently:

"Where are Mr. Archie and all of them? Say that I want to see them immediately—something of great importance—in the library. Now, James"—he was an old servant—"make them all come."

Mrs. Grant sank into an arm-chair in

the cool shaded room, and Archie, Jack, and lastly her husband, a fresh English-looking youth, came lounging in.

"What is it, Gerty?" cried Archie.

"Certainly uncommon must be to pay."

"What a low expression!" with a little air of disgust. "Shut the door; you will not laugh when you hear my news."

They clustered about her; her husband presented her gallantly with a bunch of violets.

"Oh, what nonsense, Harry—I will take them, though," catching them hastily and putting them in her belt—"when a sword is suspended over our heads. Papa is going to be married!"

Archie tumbled off his chair in a very evident and boisterous manner; Jack started up with a smothered, angry exclamation; and her husband looked crest-fallen. Yes, there is no other word to describe exactly his expression.

"How do you know? Has he written?" exclaimed Archie, recovering his equilibrium.

"Nina Montgomery has written me. She is staying at the same place, in the very house with papa's innamorata. I'll read you her letter:

"DEAREST GERTY:
"Doing precisely as I'd be done by, I write in the greatest hurry to tell you that, unless you can prevent it, your father will be married to a fascinating, intriguing kind of cousin of mine, who is doing all in her power to make him and every one else in love with her."

"What a scare for nothing!" interrupted Jack. "He is only in love; I thought it was all fixed."

"Wait until you hear more," solemnly replied his sister:

"She is a widow, and fatally, dangerously charming; I hate her, but am forced to acknowledge this. Every creature, except me, whom she looks at likes her. She has light hazel eyes, wonderful hair, an exquisite white skin, and, whether she walks or sits still, looks up or down, is irresistible. Her voice would charm the bird off the tree. I hate her because I am jealous of her, and, although she purrs over me, will not be friendly. Very well, I'll come to the point. I heard your father entreat, beseech her, to marry him. I listened; yes, I was so base even as that—sat near a window—they were on a piazza. He told her he'd settle a million on her, aluded to all of you, and seemed to think no one but William would like it."

"There is no use in my saying more. Come on in full force. She's a cowardly little thing—has scruples. I think you can prevent it."

"Yours, with much sympathy,
"NINA MONTGOMERY."

Mrs. Grant laid the letter gravely down on the library-table, gazed at the three with a questioning glance, and languidly inhaled the perfume of her blue violets.

"How can father be such a fool?" exclaimed Jack; "he is seventy years old."

"Poor father!" said Archie. "How devoted and kind he was to mamma!—Let him marry if he pleases."

"You little know what you are saying!" shrieked Gertrude. "Let him marry!" with a sarcastic air. "The woman is an artful, designing mix! Do you suppose she'll be content with her million? By no manner of means. She'll never rest until she has put us out of the house, and out of his heart, and out of his will. She'll take possession of him. I've heard too much of rich old fathers and young step-mothers. Mrs. Brooks made her husband leave her every bit of his property, cutting off his daughters with a shilling. When the poor man wanted to retract—make a new will or something—they said he had had an attack of paralysis in the mean time, and was incapable.—Actually, when he wanted to alter it, with death staring him in the face, he couldn't. I feel awfully sorry for papa," added Gerty. "He has had a very gloomy life, and if he were a younger man—But how long could he live with his pert young widow? Threescore years and ten, the Bible says, is the limit, and he has attained it."

"I wish William were here," exclaimed Archie; "he'd tell us what to do."

"He'd tell us just to make the best of it," cried Gerty. "William would let father cut his (William's) throat cheerfully if he were so inclined. He doats on papa. So do we all," she added with a sigh, "only we don't want him to be married. It is undignified, it is preposterous!" with rising indignation.

"We can prevent it. Nina says she's cowardly; let us use our utmost endeavors. I shall start to-day. Harry, telegraph papa to secure rooms for me; and Archie, and Jack, you come as soon as I send for you. In the meantime I'll write to William—he is at the White Mountains—and I'll lay the whole matter before him. If he chooses to evade the responsibility, he may; he cannot say he has not been warned."

"Dear papa, I could not live without you a moment longer," whispered Gertrude as she emerged, faint with fatigue, from the lumbering coach and kissed the old gentleman tenderly.

Her maid followed with bags and wraps.

"I rather thought you'd meet me with a carriage at the station," she continued, gently reproachful.

"I am sorry, my dear," replied Mr. Lee with some embarrassment, "but I had made up a party to go off in my yacht, and, in fact, had to shorten the sail to meet you at all."

"Dear papa!" ejaculated Gerty, pressing his arm tenderly.

Mr. Lee looked doubtfully on the fair little face nestling against his shoulder: he was evidently ill at ease. A look of relief passed over him when Mrs. Grant announced her intention of remaining in her room for the evening and having her tea sent to her. She summoned, however, secretly, Miss Nina Montgomery.

"I shall be perfectly frank with your cousin," she said to that young lady. "I mean to write to Mrs. Page and propose an interview. No skirmishing; I'll come to the point directly."

That astute young person looked doubtful:

"She is hesitating; may not opposition decide her—the wrong way?"

"No, it will frighten her; you said she is cowardly. No temporizings or hesitations for me; I hate masterly inactivity, I am going for her!—a common expression," she remarked.

They were playing croquet on a very poor croquet-ground, with a large party.

"Mr. Lee," whispered Mrs. Page, "will you walk on the beach after the game? I have something to tell you."

"I hope it is something agreeable," he replied, disturbed by her manner.

"No; it is something very disagreeable."

The new moon gleamed uncertainly on the water; delicious salt breezes blew upon them as they walked up and down upon the sands.

"Mr. Lee, I have had an interview with your daughter, Mrs. Grant—a very unpleasant interview. If I had made up my mind to be her step-mother, I think I should retract: as it is—"

"What did you say, my dear Mrs. Page?" asked Mr. Lee with a serenity he was far from feeling.

"I said very little. If she had coaxed, I should have told her how little she had to fear."

"Ah!" in a tone of dismay.

"As she did very much the reverse, I was cold, dignified and non-committal. She was very disagreeable"—and Mrs. Page wept at the remembrance of her wrongs—"accused me of entrapping and intriguing—talked of your money"—Mrs. Page actually sobbed—"In short, my dear Mr. Lee, I think I had better leave to-morrow morning."

"And if you go, what will be the result, so far as I am concerned?" he politely interrogated.

"If I go it will greatly inconvenience me, and of course my only object in going will be to end this matter, Mrs. Grant the immediate propelling cause."

An angry gleam shot from Mr. Lee's eye.

"I'll take care," he said, "that you'll not be annoyed in the future. Mrs. Grant shall humbly apologize, and she must leave, not you."

"My dear Mr. Lee, promise me that you will never speak to your daughter on the subject. I a cause of discord in your family! Promise me; I insist, I entreat, that you never allude to me. Promise me, dear Mr. Lee," continued the coaxing voice.

"On one condition"—Mr. Lee seized his advantage—"that you stay, and that what Mrs. Grant has said shall have no effect on your conduct or decision. I'll take no denial," he gently whispered.

"How does our little negotiation stand