

**THE TIMES.**  
An Independent Family Newspaper,  
IS PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY BY  
**F. MORTIMER & CO.**

**TERMS:**  
INVARIABLY IN ADVANCE.

One year (Postage Free) \$1 50  
Six Months " " 80

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Advertising rates furnished upon appli-  
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### Taking a Second Thought.

THERE comes a time in some men's lives, when they must make a decision with regard to the arrangements of their property, even while they live, because age has come upon them, almost like a thief in the night; and their limbs have become stiffened, and refuse to do the work which in their youth was pleasant. Even to think of bodily toil wears them. Perhaps their fingers are not so stiff but that they can milk two or three cows, but their knees are not supple enough to bend easily to the level of the milking stool. They can sit in the barn and husk corn, on a pleasant autumn morning, and can feed the stock, and even work the hay cutter; they must do some few "chores," or they cannot feel contented, as they were not born or educated to be drones in the great bee-hive of the world. At four-years of age, wee toddling babies as they were, they delighted to follow in their father's foot-steps, and pick up potatoes, and throw the seed into the furrows, and to feel that they worked and "helped father." But all this is changed now, and morning and evening they loiter by the fireside, dreading to rise from the old arm chair, and go out to see what John or Patrick is doing in the barn or wood house, and give orders for the day's work.

Perhaps my old friend Mr. Lamson's experience will point the moral I desire to enforce. He outlived his wife and daughters, and his son brought his wife and family to fill their places and make the old man comfortable. He reached the age when the grasshopper became a burden, and his heart was no longer engrossed with buying and selling and making the farm productive. So arrangements were made whereby the son should feel well paid for his labors, but the father should hold the reins, even if he did not drive, and do what work he pleased. For two years this plan worked well, and they seemed a united, happy family; "grandpa" was well cared for and respected by all, and could go wherever he pleased. Almost daily he took a drive to the village and visited the store, whose owner was his friend and adviser. But one day he came down earlier than usual and asked to see Mr. Monroe in private, and told him he was on his way to the lawyer's office to convey his farm to his son.

Mr. Monroe shook his head slowly at this information and said: "Don't do it! Hold the reins and let Jim drive. Human nature is too weak to trust. Don't tempt Jim."

"Tempt him! what do you mean? I give him the farm and he boards me, and gives me \$25 every three months, and I give him the stock and farming tools and a thousand dollars in bank stock. See, here's the agreement all written down, can't be no mistake, and I needn't worry about the crops, the stock or anything, but sit by the fire and doze and read the newspapers and see how the politicians fight, and drive down the hill and see you every day."

Mr. Monroe read the agreement in his slow quiet way. "Hum. Nothing about a horse to drive here. When the old mare isn't yours, how'll you come down the hill? You can't foot it very spry."

"Foot it!" cried Mr. Lamson, "Land o' Goshens! Who's a going to foot it? Haven't I got the old mare and that fine team besides, and three as likely colts as this country ever saw? What are you thinking about?"

"None on 'em yours after you have signed that deed," said his friend. "My advice is, hold on to your farm till

you're dead. I've been in this town over thirty years; I've seen such cases afore."

But Mr. Lamson had a strong leaven of obstinacy in his composition, and the more his friend urged him not to convey the farm, the more he was bound to do it.

So the lawyer's office was visited, and the deed made out, but as the son was not there, he concluded to carry it home to have it signed, and asked two neighbors to witness it. When he returned home, the deed was shown to him and wife, and the eldest boy, and they all rejoiced at last "grandpa" had been made to do what was for the good of the whole family. At night, Jim laid his plans for the next spring's work, intending to make radical changes in everything, while his wife planned a famous dairy, and laid schemes which equaled those of the milkmaid of story-book fame.

Next day the winds blew loud and shrill, and the snow fell ceaselessly, so that the neighbors could not be summoned and the deed signed. But Jim and his wife cared not for the wind or storm, and discussed their new plans before the old man until his few white hairs almost stood on end at the changes that were to be made. The pine grove near the house, which sheltered it from the north wind, must come down, Jim said—"It ought to have been cut long ago, father, and plowed up for potatoes. I shall have the trees felled at once. And the back lot must be drained and sowed to corn. I shall make the farm produce twice as much as you did, but to do this I must keep twice as much stock, and Eliza thinks she would like a large dairy; and perhaps you wouldn't mind going up stairs to sleep, and let us have a milk-room made out of your bed-room. In summer time you wouldn't mind it, and in winter we'll fix you some way."

The father made no reply, but he thought of Mr. Monroe's advice; and while he seemed to doze, he was thinking of his wife and little children, and of the pine grove he had seen grow up to tall, stately trees, from tiny seedlings—and of the associations that made the old bed-room, with its quaint chest of drawers, its curtained bedstead and old table and chairs and desk, so dear to him. Another day passed, and still the storm raged; the plans for changes were continued, and the old man was made to feel that not a foot of the land belonged to him, and hardly the chair he sat in.

Not that Jim and Eliza were unkind to him, or the children disrespectful, but the very atmosphere of the place seemed changed to him, and he went to bed at least an hour earlier than usual. Jim said to Eliza: "Father don't seem as chipr as usual; hope he hasn't taken cold. But he is an old man and it can't be expected that he'll last much longer. I saw him looking at mother's and sister Mary's pictures this afternoon. He'll join 'em soon."

And the good wife looked as if she would say "Amen!" but like a wise woman she kept silence, answering only by an affirmative nod.

On the third day, however, the sun shone out bright and clear, and the snow had fallen in just sufficient quantities to make good sleighing. Jim was early astir and the paths all broken out and arrangements made for cutting the pine woods that day, and the household were jubilant over the return of sunshine. But "grandpa" sat silent in his arm-chair and thought: "Shall I let things remain as they are? Shall I give up my bed-room, let my woods—my pride—be cut down? Yes, yes, I am an old man, I shall soon go. I'd better let the young ones have their way, even to giving up my dear old bed-room. Only a little while shall I remain; give me peace while I do."

Dinner came in good season, and then Mr. Lamson thought it would do him good to take a sleigh ride to the store and see his old friend. So he walked out to the barn where Patrick was feeding the cattle, and told him to harness the old mare.

"Mr. Jim just told me to harness her for him; he and his wife are going to the corner," said Patrick.

"Well, let Jim take Dick or Tom. I want my old mare, and you bring her round," said the old man as he turned

away and went to his bed-room to put on his outer garments. As he struggled into his coat he heard Patrick bring up the sleigh, and tell Jim what he had said about going to the store.

"Hey! what's that?" asked Jim. "Wanted to go to the store? Well, he'll have to wait till another afternoon. Come along, Eliza; bring the children; tumble in there, Jimmie. I guess 'grandpa' will wait this time. He drives altogether too much for his health, any way."

And away they went, leaving the old man a prey to disturbing thoughts. Could it be that his son Jim could treat him like that?

For an hour or two he sat in silent thought; then took up the newspaper to entertain himself. But it had lost its power, he could not read, and was at last, forced to go to the barn and look at the stock, and talk to Patrick, who was very ready to tell him of all the work that had been already laid out for the coming spring. Mr. Lamson heard him in silence and asked no questions, for his heart was weary with heaviness, and he could not rouse himself to take any interest in the conversation, and soon returned to the house.

Before the family returned, however, he had determined upon the course he would take. Jim had commenced altogether too strong, and had evidently forgotten that the deed was unsigned. In truth it would have been signed and recorded at once if Mr. Monroe had not urged him so strongly to keep the reins in his own hands. Although over eighty years of age, he was shrewd and thoughtful still, and he felt that a little trial of the change would not come amiss. He would have seen the pine trees cut down without a murmur, and perhaps have given up his bed-room for the good of the farm; but when his old Maggie that he had driven for fifteen years was taken from him in such a heartless manner, he rebelled, and had now come to the conclusion that he would destroy the deed, but in order to do it without the appearance of anger, he must sleep upon it.

When the sleigh bells announced Jim's return, the old man lifted his head looked out of the window, and saw the family enter the door without moving from the chair; and seemed quietly asleep until tea was ready.

Then Jim told the news that he had learned at the store, and Eliza told what her sister said about the dairy she had planned, and that Jim had been looking at some cows to add to his stock—and so on. The old man made no reply, but Jim did not notice it, so greatly was he interested in his own affairs.

After they were alone at night, Eliza said: "Jim, did you notice grandpa at the table? He did not speak one word—not even to the baby. My mind mis-gives me about him. He looks as if he might have a shock any moment. We ought not to have taken Maggie this afternoon. Something will come of it; I feel sure it is not all right. You know that deed is neither signed nor recorded."

Then Jim had a thorn planted in his pillow for the night, but he replied with a man's disdain of woman's wisdom. "No, I didn't notice him. You are always on the lookout for something ahead. If he is in danger of a shock, he mustn't go driving round the country alone. Then, the mare's mine anyway and he knows it too. When I go to the store he can go along."

The hours as they were tolled off upon the old, tall clock that night, crept very slowly, to both father and son. Little sleep closed their eyelids, Jim being thoroughly awakened to the fact that as yet the farm was not his, and that he ought to have attended to that needful business before he drove to the "corner" to tell his friends of the plans he had made for its tillage.

When Jim came down stairs next morning his father had just kindled a fire in the sitting room stove, and as soon as the fire blazed in the kitchen he called to him to come in. Jim came at once, and seeing a folded paper in the old man's hand, he said:

"What's that, father? Have you had the deed executed?"

"No," replied Mr. Lamson, "nor do I intend to do so." The same moment he stooped down, and thrust the folded

paper into the brightest flame, which shriveled it to ashes.

"There it goes," he continued, "and our bargain will remain as it was, or you may make other arrangements. While I live I intend to hold the reins, and drive when I please. When I am gone I hope you will do the same. Don't tempt little Jimmie as I have tempted you. It was wrong, all wrong; human nature is very weak, and the old must go to the wall if the young so will it. The Lord forgive us all. But shake hands and be friends, Jim. I'll give you some more cows; Eliza shall have the dairy, but not in my dear old room. The back lot shall be drained, but the pine trees must stand."

Jim gave him his hand, or rather the old man took it, and pressed it warmly; but he seemed like one dazed. The farm not his! The deed burned! Could it be possible?

Before he was fully awake to the situation Eliza came in, and the father told her of the destruction of the deed and his reasons for doing it. Already she knew that something was amiss, so the blow was not so crushing in its effects upon her, and she walked up to Mr. Lamson and kissed him on the cheek and said: "Of course, dear father, you will do as you please in the matter," and left the room to prepare the breakfast. Then Jim repeated her words parrot-like, and went to the barn to chew the cud of remorse.

Mr. Lamson lived five years longer, then died of an apoplectic shock, as his daughter-in-law had predicted. But he never had occasion to regret that he burned the deed. His heart softened more and more to his children, and he only held the reins, allowing them to manage the affairs of the farm and dairy as they pleased—but when he pleased he could be the master.

### BOSS FOR FIVE MINUTES.

THE other day a mild looking tramp called at the door of a resident and remarked:

"Sir, I am a tramp."

"Yes, I see you are."

"But I am not here to ask for either food, money or clothing. I have just had a bite, my clothes are good enough, and, if I had money, I should doubtless get inebriated and sent up."

"Well, what do you want?"

"There are four tramps down street and I know they'll call here. It is five years since I began traveling around. I suppose I've been called a loafer and a dead beat and a thief ten thousand times and I've been shot at, clubbed, broomed and scalded times without record. Now I want to change."

"How?"

"Well, all I ask is that you'll let me represent your house when those tramps come up."

This was agreed to. He sat down on the steps, removed his hat, lighted the stub of his cigar and was reading a circular when the four chaps slouched up and entered the yard.

"What in Arkansas do you fellows want in my yard?" exclaimed the tramp as he rose up.

"Suthin' to eat," was the meek and lowly reply.

"Something to eat! Why, you miserable, thick-ribbed cadavers, go and earn it, then. Do you suppose I have nothing to do but keep a free hotel for loafers?"

"Can't get no work," mumbled the biggest of the lot.

"Oh, you can't? Been looking all over the country I s'pose. People got all the help they want eh? Want to be cashiers and confidential advisers, don't you?"

"Nobody don't give us a show," said the third man.

"That's it! That's your cue! No one will take you in with your old rags and dirt and sore heels, and weep over you, and ask you to please be good, and put you in the parlor bedroom and feed you on chicken broth! How awful it is that you can't be put on ice and laid away where you won't melt!"

"Will yer give us suthin'?" impudently demanded the fourth.

"Will I? You're just right, I will.—I'll give you five seconds to get outside of that gate, and I'll tell you in addition that if I ever see you in this neighborhood again, I'll tie you into hard knots

and hire a sore-eyed dog to bite you to death. Git up and git! Move on hurry out with you!"

They shuffled out as fast as they could and when they had turned the corner, the tramp put on his hat, put out his inch of elgar for another smoke, and said to the gentleman:

"You have done me a great favor, and I am grateful. I already feel better for the change, and I do solemnly believe if I could only have got an excuse to throw 'em over the fence, I should have been almost ready to reform and start out as a lecturer. Good-by. I shall never forget your kindness."

He had been boss for five minutes.

### Saved by His Skates.

AN old Lake Superior trapper named Thomas Judson, was once suddenly surrounded by a band of fierce Indians from whom he expected no good. While making free with his outfit, they found a pair of skates among his other trappings, and were immensely puzzled at them. A funny thought occurred to the hunter as he saw their curiosity, for his gray eye twinkled merrily.

"Ice moccasins," he said, putting a skate on his foot and then made gliding motion that the feet take in skating.

"Ugh!" grunted the Indian chief, pointing to the narrow blade of the skates and shaking his head. As they were near the ice, Thomas proposed to fasten them on a young brave for trial.

The Indians welcomed the plan with glee, for, though savages they were great lovers of sport. Selecting the bravest and swiftest young fellow, the chief bade him stick out his feet, which he did rather suspiciously. The skates were soon strapped on, and the young buck helped to his feet. The ice was like glass, and as he started to move, you know what followed. His feet flew out from under him and down he came with a crack. Such shouts of laughter as the rest set up! The young fellow was gritty, and scrambled up to try it again, but with the same result.

The chief now signaled the hunter to show them how these things worked.—Thomas fastened on the skates with great care, picked up his rifle and used it as a cane, pretending to support himself. He moved awkwardly, fell down, got up and stumbled around, the Indians all the time laughing and capering at the sport. Gradually Thomas stumbled a little further away, whirling about and making believe it was very hard work to keep his balance until he was near the point where the smooth lake ice stretched miles and miles away. Suddenly gathering himself up, he grasped his rifle firmly, gave a warwhoop as wild as the Indian's own, and dashed up the lake like an arrow, skating as he had never skated before. If he had disappeared in the air, the Indians couldn't have been more astonished. Of course they couldn't hope to catch him, over the glassy ice, and they stood gaping after him, wondering more and more at the magic "ice moccasins."

Nothing pleased old Thomas better in after years than to tell how he had "fooled the redskins."

### Bidding for a Church Pew.

A case of excessive caution developed some serious results the other day in Hartford in the purchase of a church pew. The auction was fixed for a certain day, but one of the prominent gentlemen of the church who for some years past has paid \$50 each year for his pew, was unable to attend. He requested a friend to bid for him. Later he met another friend, and accidentally mentioned that he would not be able to attend the auction, asked his friend also to see to it that he had his old pew as heretofore. The auction took place, and the pew was put up. "Fifty dollars," said friend number one. "Fifty-one," said number two. "Fifty-three," "Fifty-four," and on till there had been thirty-eight bids, when one friend, thinking he had gone as far as discretion permitted, stopped; and the other took it triumphantly at \$88. "Put it down for Dr. —," he said, and the astonishment of the other bidder knew no bounds. They had been bidding against each other in behalf of the same gentleman, who had forgotten to tell number two that he had also spoken to number one. It helps the receipts so much.