

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 " " 90

To Subscribers in this County
Who pay in ADVANCE a Discount of 25 Cents will
be made from the above terms, making
subscription within the County.

When Paid in Advance, \$1.25 Per Year.

Advertising rates furnished upon appli-
cation.

THE SECRET MARRIAGE.

THE county of Kent has many objects of interest to one who will take the trouble to look for them, and nowhere in England can a person pass a more agreeable time than in this fine old maritime place. If I were asked the reason why I preferred to loiter in Kent, I should find it difficult to answer, for there were so many attractions there. The land-owners throughout the country are an independent race of people, more so than I found anywhere else in England.

Perhaps the fact that the lands are generally held by the tenure of *gavelkind* may have something to do with the character of the Kentish people.

In the southern part of the county there is a flat woody tract of fertile land, called the Weald. It abounds in fine cherries, madder and an inexhaustible supply of birch, which is manufactured into brooms.

In passing through this strip of country one's attention would have been attracted by a quaint old brick house with many gables rising above the trees which surrounded it.

Squire Everleigh lived here, and so had his ancestors for many generations. Some of them had been saints and some sinners. The saints had built churches, endowed hospitals, and aided the worthy poor; the sinners had ridden at a hard pace the broad road that leads to—well, you know where. Many sturdy yeomen had their hopes wrecked when they looked upon the comely lasses whom these wicked Everleighs of Everleigh Grange had wrought ill.

The present occupant of the mansion was Miles Everleigh. It will be sufficient to say that he followed not after the evil ways of his immediate predecessors, but he did that which was right in the sight of all men. Therefore his days had been lengthened (when I met him) to three score and ten, and at that time he could hold his own with the best of them when the hounds were in full cry.

But if Miles Everleigh was to be found in his pew regularly each succeeding Sunday, his handsome son Boyce was as true a scion of the sinners as his father was of the saints. If he occasionally showed his face at the parish church, it was more to keep up a feeble attempt at respectability than aught else.

Miles Everleigh passed many anxious days contemplating the characteristics of his eldest hope. To be sure there was some good qualities about him; he was brave, generous and not at all vindictive. He even at time declared himself repentant for his bad works, and there were some who thought the day of regeneration had not passed away from him altogether.

A couple of miles in a southeasterly direction from Everleigh Grange, in a snugly built cottage dwelt David Strachan, a broom-maker. A daughter of eighteen years, uncommonly pretty, his wife and himself composed his household. David was a Methodist of the austere type, and his co-religionists made his cottage very frequently the place to hold prayer and compare their spiritual experiences.

Bessie Strachan did not give her father the satisfaction he desired in regard to her religious duties. With great difficulty she could be induced to attend the edifying exhortations at her father's cot, and many were the domestic broils which followed therefrom. Whether an adverse influence had been exerted over her mind by Boyce Everleigh, whom she met at the last Maying party, or whether it was her own perverse and obstinate will that rendered

her intractable, I cannot say, but she was a thorn in the side of that Heaven-bound family, who endeavored to subdue her flinty heart by every expedient save that recommended by the Psalmist.

It was a clear, beautiful morning, and Squire Everleigh sat in his breakfast-room gazing out of the window at the extent of country before him, when a knock at the door admitted David Strachan.

"Good morning, squire," he said, as he cast his eyes quickly about the apartment; "I am glad to find you alone, for I've made bold to call and speak with you on a subject which presses hard upon my mind."

"Sit down, David," said the squire, "and let me hear what it is which disturbs you. I hope that the fire has not got among the birches again, eh?"

"No, no—it is nothing of that kind. That's bad enough, I'll own, but there may be matters worse; and I've held my peace so long, that I fear I have wandered from the path of righteousness by yielding to the weakness that sometimes will come over my nature. If Satan buffets me, it is because my loins are not always girded. We must keep our armor bright, Squire Everleigh."

"You have not come to convert me to dissenting doctrines?" said the squire with a smile.

"It is not for the likes of me to say," replied Strachan, "whether the heart shall worship in conformity with the 'thirty-nine articles,' or by the Scriptural rule of the simple doctrine of what you term dissenters. But the peace, if not the honor, of a man's household is something too serious for a gibe."

Squire Everleigh's face assumed a grave expression as the shaft of the broom-maker went home, and he said: "Proceed at once to the subject, David, and if I can serve you I will do so cheerfully."

"Last May came a year," said the man, "my daughter, Bessie, showed the first symptoms of disobedience in her life. I don't mind much these merry-makings, and yet I'm not prepared to say there is evil in them. She attended the May party, although I was strongly opposed to her doing so. Your son escorted her home. Bessie is counted a pretty lass, and she is a giddy one. I fear her ears have heard too much flattery for the good of her soul. I've got good reason for believing that she meets your son in her walks oftener than is proper for a maiden who would keep her name bright. Excuse me, squire, I must speak plainly. Now, I wish this intimacy stopped; it bodes no good. My daughter cannot be mistress of Everleigh Grange, and before she shall be anything else I will slay her with my own hand."

He paused; he had been speaking under a great excitement, and though he endeavored to appear calm, Miles Everleigh saw in the fanatical gleam of his eyes and stern words of his lips that he meant all he uttered, aye, and more too. So he replied, "I will have a talk with my son, this day, David. It grieves me sore to hear this, especially from your mouth, but I don't think the matter is so bad that we cannot find a remedy for it. In the course of a day or two I will come over to your place myself, and perhaps I may be able to make your mind easier, at least I hope so."

Squire Everleigh was for two good hours that day closeted with his son. What passed between them the world never exactly knew, but it was bruited about the house that the squire had quarreled with his son, and the latter had gone to London with the intention of entering the army. There were not wanting those who said Bessie Strachan always knew where a letter would reach Boyce Everleigh, but then it might have been a slander, for rumor is sometimes a foul-mouthed jade.

The day following Strachan's visit to Everleigh Grange, the squire mounted his horse and took his way to the broom-maker's cottage. He appeared to be depressed in spirits, and more than once heaved a long sigh, as if to ease his troubled mind. He had passed over more than half the distance he had to ride, when he came so suddenly to a sharp turn in the road that Bessie Strachan, who was walking there intently occupied in reading a letter, had not time to avoid him. Neither was

she quick enough in crushing the letter into her pocket without Miles Everleigh observing the act. In her confusion she forgot she was sporting an expensive ring upon her finger, and some unpleasant thoughts passed through the squire's mind as his eye fell upon the jewel. In her home Bessie Strachan would not have ventured upon this temerity, and it was only in her solitary walks she dared bring forth the ring in the full light of day.

"Good-day, Bessie," said the squire, dismounting and throwing the reins over his arm as he commenced to walk beside her. "I was just on my way to your father's cottage. I am glad to have company, for I'm a very lonely man to-day. My son has gone to London, and it will be long ere he returns."

He watched her face to note the effect his words produced, but the features of Bessie Strachan were as impassive as if they had been cut in stone.

"You have an expensive ring upon your hand," the squire remarked.

A short quick gasp and a death-like paleness overspread her face. She raised her eyes with an imploring appeal, and Miles Everleigh could not help admitting she was superbly beautiful.

"Where did you obtain that ring?" said the squire, taking her by the hand and closely examining the jewel. "I did not suppose your father could make you such expensive presents."

"Nor can he," returned the girl, "it came from one whom my father does not like, and I therefore will be obliged to you if you do not mention seeing it on my finger."

"Bessie," replied the squire gravely, "I fear my poor girl, you are being deceived by one very near connected with me. In short, my child, I may as well tell you that I am fully aware of the attentions my son has been paying you. Bessie, they tell me you are an intelligent girl, more so than is common to find about these parts, therefore I entreat you not to rely upon the fair promises my son has made you; take my advice and return him every present he has ever given you."

She shook her head, but vouchsafed him no reply.

"Answer me one question, child, and I will swear to you on the honor of a Christian man, I will never repeat your reply. Is it too late?" He gazed into her eyes meaningly as he waited her answer.

Springing a few paces from his side as if she had encountered a peril in her path, she regarded him with distended eyes.

"Whoso accuses Boyce Everleigh of dishonor is a slanderer. What I am, I am; but know you, Squire Everleigh, that I am as worthy this day to sit at your board as any of the gentry you so frequently entertain. And perhaps I've as good a right, too."

She spoke so quickly she had not time to arrest the last sentence, nor had she fact enough to correct it. The squire looked at her with a curious expression. "What do you mean by 'as good a right'?" he asked.

"Suppose Boyce Everleigh makes me his wife!" she said.

"Oh, is that it?" replied the squire; "then all I have to say is he would do a very foolish thing for himself as well as you."

By this time they had come within sight of David Strachan's cottage, and Bessie requested him to proceed alone as she did not intend going home just then.

Miles Everleigh had a long interview with David Strachan, and when he started on his return he remarked, "Deal gently with the lass, David, and perhaps all things will come right in the end. My son will probably be gone a long time, and ere he returns, the matter will have cooled down, and Bessie may have an industrious husband."

Whatever the thoughts of Squire Everleigh were on his homeward ride, they certainly were of a nature to disturb his equanimity. He fledged uneasily in the saddle, and otherwise betrayed tokens of unrest. He was a shrewd man, and, as the world went, was just; but he could not divest himself of a certain pride of life wherein his birth and station had cast his lot, and those incautious words of Bessie Strachan gave him food for unpleasant reflection, "and perhaps I have as good a right too." He never would believe his son

would stoop to an unworthy connection, and he was ready to quarrel with himself for the thought. Neither did he like to admit that Boyce had purposely wrought shame to one who, if she was beneath him in station, had been more than his equal in honor until he had met her. It was in no enviable state of mind that Squire Everleigh alighted at his door.

Boyce Everleigh reached London, and with remarkable expedition purchased his commission and joined his regiment. England was then arming in hot haste to defend the Sultan against the Czar. Within two months Boyce Everleigh had left England to join the army in the Crimea; but before he departed he found time to make a hurried visit to Kent, and meet the broom-maker's daughter. When he parted from her he placed a letter in her hand, saying:

"Bessie my own, if I should never live to return, you will take this to my father, and ask him to open it in your presence. Now good-by, darling," and he kissed her, and jumping upon his horse, was gone.

"What ails the girl?" said David Strachan one day to his wife, "she does not mope, nor does she complain, but she is ready to attend prayer as the best of us, and she seems so, earnest, too, 'tis a strange thing for her who used to be so wilful."

"Harken, husband," said his sponse, "if she has found grace we ought rather to rejoice."

"And so we do," replied the broom-maker, "but yet I can't help feeling surprise, notwithstanding my gladness. But the point which puzzles me is, if she really has had a change of heart, why don't she talk of religion? That's what I don't understand."

His wife did not or could not answer his question, so the conversation was dropped. 'Tis true David did give up the theme, and he endeavored from time to time to engage his daughter in religious conversation without any success. She did not rudely repulse him, but she evinced no inclination to listen to the exhortations he proffered. She now rarely left the house, and passed much of her time in reading the newspapers and in writing.

England and her allies were thundering at the walls of Sebastopol, and Bessie's heart beat painfully when she ran her eyes over the list of casualties which frequently appeared in the papers. Thus time wore on, and many a heart ached and sighed for the hour that should restore the loved ones again to their accustomed places. But there was to be heavy and untold grief ere England's soldiers should march home again, and Bessie was to have her hour of sorrow.

When the "Six Hundred" rode out from under the Russian guns, Boyce Everleigh's steed came back riderless, and the newspapers, giving an account of that mad charge, paid a glowing tribute to Captain Everleigh, who was numbered among the slain.

Before Boyce Everleigh left England he provided Bessie with an ample sum of money, and she had never used a penny of it yet. Now she immediately formed a resolution as daring as it was perilous. She would not and could not believe Boyce Everleigh dead. She would proceed to the Crimea herself, and if her darling was really slain, she would recover his body and bring it to England, if prayers and supplication and patient search could accomplish it.

Squire Everleigh had received the news of his son's death with feelings of the deepest anguish. His only child, who had prattled so lovingly upon his knee, was stricken down, and he was left alone in his old age, with no heir to his house. No wonder the poor old squire wept. But when he saw the broom-maker's daughter enter his house habited in the deepest mourning, and present him a package in the handwriting of the son whose death he mourned, the scalding tears coursed down his cheeks, and his grief was too strong for silence.

"And you, my child, what do you do here?" he said. "Do you come to mingle your tears with a lonely old man?"

There was a preternatural light in the girl's eyes that rendered her strangely beautiful.

"Read," she said.
The old Squire with trembling hands,

tore open the letter and saw with unfeigned astonishment the marriage certificate of Boyce Everleigh and Bessie Strachan. It was duly authenticated, and regular in all particulars.

"And so you were his wife?" he said.

"I come to crave nothing at your hands," replied Bessie, "save a small boon. If my husband be really dead, all I ask his father is to accompany me to London and secure my passage to Sebastopol."

"Squire Everleigh gazed at her with surprise. "You surely do not mean this?" he said.

"Be quick," she replied, "let me have your answer. Will you go with me or not?"

"It is madness to attempt it; don't think of such a thing," he said.

"It is enough," she replied hoarsely. "I will go alone. Give me that certificate, and now good-by."

She was about turning away, when Squire Everleigh laid his hand upon her shoulder. Her heroism so increased her beauty that he thought he had never before gazed upon a woman so lovely.

"Forgive me," he said, "if I ask you again if you have calculated the difficulties which will attend this journey?"

"All—all," she replied. "Do you still hesitate?"

"No," he answered; "I will go with you. When shall we set out?"

"Now—this moment," she replied.

"Sit down, then," he said, as he left the room. Directly he returned and said, "The carriage will be ready in a few moments; have you money for your journey?"

"More than sufficient," she replied "only let's be quick."

"Patience, patience, Bessie," he said "this seems like a dream to me."

"Here they come," she said, and running out she sprang into the carriage, followed by the half bewildered old Squire, and were soon rolling away to London.

It was a clear, cold day when Bessie Everleigh landed in the Crimea. She had been treated with marked courtesy on board the steamer in which she had taken passage, and she was properly supplied with letters to certain British officers who were expected to aid her in her enterprise. But she found great difficulty after her arrival, in obtaining information of the whereabouts of those she was seeking. The answers to her inquiries were sometimes very contradictory. Some officers whom she expected to see were reported to be at a distance, while they were actually on the spot; others were said to be present who were far away. In great perplexity Bessie spent nearly two days of fruitless inquiry. Everything appeared to be in confusion, and her anxiety was great.—At last she found an officer to whom she had a letter.

"Be calm, madam," he said, "when you hear what I have to relate. Many mistakes often occur in summing up a list of killing and wounded, and I am happy to be the medium of communicating to you that your husband is alive, but he is badly wounded."

Poor Bessie until this moment had acted the part of a heroic woman; but when she heard her husband was living the fortitude that had hitherto sustained her failed, and she wept frantically.

"When can I see him—when can I see him?" she asked eagerly.

"Soon, very soon, my dear lady," was the reply; "I will go to the hospital and you shall accompany me. Of course the surgeon's authority is necessary in this case; but he is an old school fellow of Captain Everleigh's, and you will have no difficulty, I apprehend."

The meeting between Captain Everleigh and his wife was too sacred for pen of mine to describe. There are some things too holy for description. How faithfully she nursed him many knew, and when he was well enough to rise from his bed, many of his fellow-sufferers shared her ministering attentions.—Scores of brave fellows, this day recall the kind attentions of the splendid Mrs. Everleigh.

There are lights to-night in every room at Everleigh Grange. There is music too, and every face wears a smile as the gallant Captain Everleigh is welcomed home by the old Squire. There are plenty of handsome women in the old halls, and as the Squire moves about with his daughter-in-law upon his arm he confesses with a conscious pride that, the exceeding beauty and quiet dignity of the broom-maker's daughter will not suffer by comparison with the best-born of Kentish dames.