



THE TIMES.

An Independent Family Newspaper,

IS PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY BY

F. MORTIMER & CO.

TERMS:

INVARIABLY IN ADVANCE.

\$1.50 PER YEAR, POSTAGE FREE.
50 CTS. FOR 6 MONTHS.

To subscribers residing in this county, where we have no postage to pay, a discount of 25 cents from the above terms will be made if payment is made in advance.

Advertising rates furnished upon application.

Pretty Jane and the Pedlar.

CONTINUED.

AND how buoy was the happy girl with her preparations. What gaily dyed woolen coverlets; what soft, fleecy blankets, what elaborate patch-work quilts, were packed in the capacious walnut chest that had been provided for their reception! what well bleached and nicely sewed bed-linen, what delicately fringed table-cloths and napkins, cunningly marked with her initials in red and blue cotton, or, when their texture was something to be proud of, with her name in full, what dainty wearing apparel lay, in snow-white and glossy piles, in the case of drawers which towered to the ceiling of her little chamber! In this apartment, one afternoon of a sweet summer day, she sat near the window which opened upon a porch, running along the front of the cottage, tambouring, with fine flaxen thread of her own spinning, the transparent muslin that was to be her wedding-robe. Her mind was so thronged with pleasant thoughts that though a step sounded upon the porch she did not hear it, but when a shadow from without fell upon her work, she started in trepidation from her seat, for with a modest reserve, which, in those days, was neither ridiculed nor condemned, her bridal outfit was kept sacred from any but some rarely privileged eye. She turned toward the window, and saw before it a stranger, a tall, powerfully made man, with a high flush of health glowing upon his cheek through the olive tint which otherwise would have seemed to shade too darkly his bold, but well formed features. His dress was rich and showy, and of a style quite new in that remote settlement, while the heavy whiskers and slight mustache, then not naturalized among us, gave him more the aspect of a foreigner than a denizen of any section of the country. The manner of easy assurance with which he gazed in upon her, was not less novel to Jane, and it was with some effort that she composed herself to await his commands.

"This house had once an occupant named Slade, the Widow Slade," said he, slightly raising his fine beaver from his thick, black hair; "can you tell me if she is alive? and if so, is she still here?" Jane gave a brief affirmative, and hurried out to call her mother from the kitchen, a new apartment which had been added to the main building, while the stranger sauntered familiarly into the sitting-room. In a few moments the widow joined him, and courteously invited him to a seat.

He threw himself into a high-backed chair, of which the narrow seat was constructed of interwoven strips of cloth, and, fixing his dark eyes on her face, remarked, "You live in a flourishing country, Mistress Slade; I did not expect to see such heavy crops in your fields, nor so much of this pretty trumpery about your house;" and he carelessly blew upon the floor some of the broad petals of a damask rose which he had snapped from a bush on his way through the garden.

"We think more of beautifying the outsides of our habitations now, than when the settlement was new," she replied, quietly; "as to the land, hard labor and long experience in tilling it have made most of it yield well. I have had good crops on my little farm for several years, but not any equal to what is now in prospect."

"And the world seems to have gone especially well with yourself," rejoined the stranger.

"Yes, thanks to Providence! and the widow stopped her knitting for a moment with her accustomed devoutness;

"the world has indeed gone well with me, far beyond my deserts."

"That may be, though no doubt, you would rather say it yourself than hear it from others," said he, "but you should not let your prosperity spoil your memory for old friends."

"I am not one to forget those that I have once called friends," she returned, with some asperity at the want of respect implied by the smile which curled his lip.

The visitor rose from his seat, and drawing his hand from the vest, in which he had held it with seeming carelessness, he extended it toward her. She glanced alternately upon it and his face, and then growing quite pale, exclaimed, "I cannot be mistaken in that hand!—you must, indeed, be my own lost boy, George Slade!"

"Indeed it is, mother, your own boy, in flesh and blood, and nothing else, that you should look so bewildered," he returned, without any change of manner; "now, if I had come back lean and ragged, looking as if I had lived upon husks, and slept as well as fed among swine, like the prodigal you used to preach to me about, you'd have known me well enough, but it seems almost too much for you to believe that I should have returned like a gentleman."

The mother had extended her arms to give vent to her feelings upon the neck of her son, but a pang, such as she had not known since the years of his boyish transgressions, smote her heart at the light, mocking tones with which he sought to evade her welcome, and a gush of tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Tut—tut, mother!—where's the use of crying?" said he, "you are not sorry to see me, I suppose, and as to crying for joy, though I have heard that you women could do that, it seemed so ridiculous that I never believed it. Wipe your eyes, and, to change the subject, tell me who that pretty girl is, that stared at me as if I had been an alligator—she that called you mother?"

"My adopted daughter, George, a dear, blessed child, who is the greatest comfort of my life."

"Adopted!—hah—is that all?—the thought struck me that you might have provided yourself with another husband, and me with a new stock of brothers and sisters, and I felt almost sure of it when you spoke of the old place as your own."

"No, George, the place is, indeed, mine, but it was purchased by my own earnings, and has been embellished, chiefly, by the labors of my Pretty Jane," returned the widow, gravely.

"Jane—Jane," he repeated, as if trying to refresh his memory.

"Have you, indeed, then forgotten her—the child of poor Margaret Wilmot?" and believing that the reminiscence would be a painful one, with her usual delicacy she avoided his eye, that she might not seem to be watching its effect.

"Wilmot—Jane Wilmot," said George, and for the first time he spoke as if not altogether at ease; "I think I have a recollection of her—a puny, cowardly little thing; but, of course, she remembers nothing of me?"

"She indistinctly remembers her mother's death, and you were with me some months after it. She has, at all events, often heard of you."

"And no good of me, I suppose you would say, if you were not too civil to speak your mind. Well, there will be time enough to make it all up yet. But I am glad to hear that there are no other interlopers to put my nose out of joint, for as you are a woman of property, I may have a chance to become a man of consequence in these parts."

Their dialogue was interrupted by the re-appearance of Jane, who, when her first surprise was over, vainly endeavored to force a feeling of sympathy with what she presumed must be the happiness of her foster mother. There had always been a gloomy association in her mind with the name of George Slade.

She now saw nothing in his countenance, nor in the bold familiarity of his address, to remove the unpropitious impression. As to his mother, there was too much in the restless flashing of his eye, and in the reckless scoffing of his tongue, not to remind her of his early temper and habits, and her thankfulness for his return was alloyed with fear.

George Slade assiduously sought to revive the acquaintances of his boyhood;

but he made no friends either among those who remembered him, or others to whom he was an entire stranger. His companionship was not, indeed, avoided, for his conversation abounded with entertaining and not improbable narratives of adventure in various foreign lands; but the objects of his wandering were never named, and it was not strange that, among a sober and unsophisticated people, the pursuits which seemed to preclude revelation should have been suspected as contraband.

Thrown constantly into his society, Jane felt not only the distrust of him communicated by others, but the involuntary repulsion of a pure spirit against one of evil. Though he was comparatively guarded in his expressions while in her presence, yet she knew that he was sensual, rapacious, unfeeling and unprincipled. A more private reason soon added to her dislike. At first he had assumed toward her an unskillful semblance of brotherly prudence and fondness, but before long he changed it for the bearing if not the language of passion, and in this there was no counterfeiting, for it must have been a callous nature that could have resisted the power of her extreme beauty and loveliness. His mother perceived it, and attempted to warn him from any decisive purpose, by informing him of the projected marriage, but she was heard without effect.

"That is a dainty, lily-faced spark of yours, Jane," said George, with an insolent sneer, when the young pastor had left the house, after his first visit to his intended bride; "he looks as if he had been laid on a book-shelf all his days, for the preservation of his complexion. How he must tremble at the thoughts of wind and weather!"

"His profession does not subject him to much exposure," replied Jane, without seeming to have noticed the sarcasm of his language; "but though he looks delicate, his health is sound."

"His waist is as slim, and his hand is as soft as a lady's" pursued George; "it would go hard with him to be forced to any manly exertion. I suppose you have made up your mind, Jane, to be master as well as mistress, and to look after the out-door business yourself."

"I trust I shall be able and willing to do all that will be required of me," answered Jane, as placidly as before.

"It is very well that you have prepared yourself beforehand to be properly submissive," said he, lowering his brows still more darkly; "for there is no such tyrant as your bookish man. He thinks that humble service is his due from his wife for the honor he does her by yoking himself with so weak a creature. Has this young Walton made you sensible, Jane, of the honor in store for you, and taught you to act accordingly?"

"And is it not an honor, George Slade," said Jane, now coloring, and with an unwonted fire in her soft, blue eye; "is it not an honor to an humble girl like myself, without fortune, fine manners, or high connections, that a man like Lewis Walton, learned, accomplished and looked up to, should choose her to be his wife?"

"An honor to you, Jane, to be the wife of a poor milkop of a country parson!—why I have seen kings' daughters in my travels, and never one as fit to wear her gold and jewels as such as you would have been! It is a man who has lived among men, instead of books, that knows how to value a woman. He would glory in beauty like yours, and wear his life out, if that should be required, in struggling for the means to set it off, and show it to the world as it deserves. He would be your slave, Jane, and that gladly, and not make you his. You are inexperienced and unsuspecting, and don't understand the step you are taking. Let me advise you; choose a man of the world for a husband, and one who would worship you as if you were a queen or an angel. Let me find you your wedding ring, Pretty Jane!"

He threw his round her, and attempted to force upon her hand a ring of value, which he had drawn from his own. She flung it from her as if its pressure had stung her, and pale with indignation and abhorrence, broke from his clasp. Her expression of loathing was too much for the self-love of the repulsed sultor. For an instant he grew pale as herself, but, with an effort to control his irritation, he changed the

insinuating smile with which he had sought to persuade her, to one of mingled pity and disdain, and said, though in a husky and broken voice, "As you please, Jane, as you please. I have no notion to urge you. There are plenty, though, who would think the offer you have refused a greater honor than the one you have accepted;" and turning on his heel, he sauntered whistling away; yet the workings of his countenance betrayed a conflict of evil feelings.

"Are the clothes in order that I asked you to look after?" inquired George of his mother, the same evening of his unlucky interview with Jane; "I shall need them to-night," he added, "for I intend to pack up and be off early in the morning for N—."

"Why, what can take you there so soon again, George? you have been at N— already three or four times, and in as many weeks," said she.

"So I have, and now I intend to stay awhile. There would be little satisfaction for me here while men, women and children are sweating to death in the harvest fields. It is dull work enough to pass one's time among them when they can take liberty to amuse themselves."

He accordingly set off for the market-town the next day, and though his mother received no direct communication from him during the month that followed, few days passed in which she did not incidentally obtain intelligence of his pursuits. They were now undisguisedly those of a gambler.

During the absence of the young clergyman the officers of the congregation had held deliberations upon the selection of a parsonage, for the church was a new one, and, as yet, had not possessed that appendage; one which, on the marriage of the pastor, would become necessary. The result was conveyed to him on his return, that the old house which had been the last habitation of poor Margaret Wilmot, was to be purchased and fitted up for the purpose. Since her time it had been seldom tenanted, for it had neither ground nor out-buildings to render it a suitable place for a farmer, and was too secluded in its situation to be a desirable residence to a person engaged in any other than the business of agriculture.

But for the present object it appeared all that could be required. It was in convenient vicinity to the church, was pleasantly located, and was a substantial building, which could be made a comfortable and not inelegant abode. The requisite repairs and alterations were immediately commenced, and were carried on with so much vigor that it was anticipated they would be completed against the end of the approaching harvest. At that time it was decided that, if all things could be in readiness, the marriage should take place.

The harvest was nearly over. The interior work of the house was so far advanced that Mr. Walton had already moved into it many of the simple but numerous articles of furniture it required, when he was summoned to attend an ecclesiastical assembly in session at about a day's journey off.

On the evening of his departure he called at the cottage to take leave of Jane and receive from Widow Slade a package which she requested him to deliver to a friend on his way through N—. He reproached her jestingly for her refusal to communicate, either to himself or Jane the nature of its contents, and then said to the latter—

"Supposing you walk with me as far as the parsonage, Jane?—the coach will not be along until dark, and I shall have time to be at the tavern to meet it even if I stop some minutes on the way. I should like before I go to have your opinion of some additions that I made to-day to our little household arrangements. Your mother will spare you, will you not, dear madam? I shall have so short a while to detain her, that she will be with you at the farthest, against dusk."

He gave his arm to Jane, and they strolled slowly down the lane, which had years since, been opened to join the one leading from the old stone house to the turnpike road. The widow stood on her little porch, looking fondly but thoughtfully after them, when, as they disappeared at the turn of the road, her son presented himself at the gate. His face was flushed with hasty walking,

and scarcely offering any greeting, he threw himself on a bench beside her and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

Much as she had heard of him to give her pain and displeasure, she addressed him with her usual mildness.

"You look tired and over-heated, George—would you not be the better of some supper to refresh you?"

"No—no I am in too great a hurry to think about eating; I must be at the road again when the coach comes along, for I want to get back to N— to-night."

"What hurries you?—what is your errand?" she asked with something of alarm.

"I is soon told—money—I must have some money, and that not a little. It is a long time since I asked any of you," he added, forcing a laugh, though his eye fell beneath hers; "and it is nothing but fair that you should make up for it by giving me what I am entitled to in a lump."

"You have, justly, no claim upon me for money, George—I grieve to say it," answered his mother; "for I never received a child's duty from you. And, besides, a few weeks ago you boasted of your heavy purse, and of the ease with which you could keep it filled; why do you so soon come to me?"

"Ask me no questions, mother, I am in no humor to answer them. Just supply me with what I want, and when I have more time, perhaps, I may give an account of myself."

"I have had accounts of you to my sorrow, George, and even if I had it to spare, my conscience would not allow me to furnish you with money while I have reason to fear that every dollar would sink you deeper in iniquity. Believe me, I would a thousand times rather have heard of you as filling a Christian's grave in the farthest corner of the earth, than to have you near me and living your present course of life."

"You are as good at preaching as ever, mother; but, to come to the point, do you say that you have no money? I know that you had several hundred dollars by you when I left you last."

"So I had, but it was laid up as a marriage portion, for Jane. I could not think of letting her leave me empty-handed, for she has always been as a daughter, and a dutiful one, to me, and it is right that I should do a mother's part toward her. For years I thought of you as among the dead, but when you returned to me most gladly I would have accorded to you a son's claim upon my little estate, had I found you worthy of it. You have not proven yourself so, and I cannot rob the child of my adoption even for the child of my blood. It goes very hard with me to decide against you, George, but it is my duty, and I must do it."

"So, then, I need not flatter myself that you are going to write a new will in my favor," said George, with a sneering smile; "I heard a whisper, within few days, that a year or two ago you had made one for the benefit of Jane. Is it true?"

"Yes, George."

"A complete, regular will, is it?—signed, witnessed and sealed? You have no doubt, also been prudent enough to place it where it can't be meddled with with?"

"It is in safe hands, those of my friend and old neighbor, Robert Merrill."

"What, Merrill the popular sheriff? why, you have chosen quite a great man to attend to your concerns, mother, I did not think you were so ambitious;" then, after a moment's pause, he added more seriously, "I don't intend to say anything against the claims of Jane.—Had you acted by me like a mother, and as I wished, they would not have interfered with mine. You must have seen—I know you did see—my love for the girl. If your influence had been used to recommend me to her regard; such influence as you possess, for she worships you; you might have made her your daughter in reality, and have been the means of settling me to the sober course of life that would have contented your wishes."

"I would not have desired Jane to be your wife, George, even if she had not been engaged to another, for one of your disposition, to say nothing of your habits, could not have made her happy."

"After all, this trig young parson is not quite disinterested in marrying your