

# The Carbon Advocate.

H. V. MORTIMER,  
Editor and Proprietor.

INDEPENDENT--"LIVE AND LET LIVE."

TERMS:  
One Dollar a Year in Advance

VOL. II, No. 12

LEHIGHTON, CARBON COUNTY, PENN'A, SATURDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 7, 1874

SINGLE COPIES, THREE CENTS

## Lehighton Directory

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W. C. Wright, Lehigh Valley Machine and Iron Works, next to E. R. S. on Broad street.

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E. H. WIDDMAN, Barber, Hair Dressing and Shampooing, at the corner of H. B. and Bank streets.

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Canal bridge. Nov. 28

## A WOMAN'S COURAGE.

The blood-red light of sunset was mirroring itself in crimson splashes in the turbid tides of the great Western river; the blackbird was sounding its sweet whistle through the old primeval forests, and Jonathan Beers, sitting by his cabin door, smoked his solitary evening pipe, and thought vaguely of the church bells that used to ring at evening time in the far off Eastern village where he had been born and brought up, with the roar of the Peenobest in his ears.

"I'd like to hear them bells once again afore I die," mused old Jonathan. "But it ain't likely I'll ever go back now."

Even while these disjointed meditations passed through his mind, there was a light step on the cabin threshold, and the rattle of stifflly starched pink calico, and his niece Dorothy came to the door.

"Ten's ready, uncle dear," said she, "and I've baked a real New England corn bread, and some ginger snaps, such as grandma used to make. And see, uncle, I've sliced up the little red pencils from the tree you planted yourself on the south side of the hill. Israel Esmayne said it wouldn't grow, but it has, and I mean to keep a saucerful and a little cream for Israel to night just to show him."

Old Jonathan laid down his knife and fork. "Do you mean that Israel Esmayne is coming here to-night?"

"Yes, uncle," said Dorothy, stooping to recover a teaspoon she had dropped, "a slim teaspoon with an antique silver shell carved on the handle—and coming up very rosy from the search."

"Why not?"

"Take care, Doty. That's all."

"Uncle, what do you mean?"

"I mean, child, that I'd rather lay you in your grave in the new burying ground, where there's only one mound yet in the shadow of the church spire, than to see you married to a man who drinks. That's what I mean, Doty."

Dorothy's head drooped over her plate.

"Uncle, that's hardly fair. Because a man had a bad habit once—"

"And has it now?"

The soft eyes glittered in a defiant flash. "You are mistaken, uncle. Israel Esmayne has not touched a drop of ardent spirits in a year. He has promised me never to touch it again."

"I hope he never will, my girl," said Jonathan Beers, although his tone betrayed no very sanguine feeling. "But it ain't a safe thing fode. It's madness, love of liquor is, and nothing short. It's liable to break out at any time. Israel Esmayne's a good fellow enough. I ain't anything against him—but it ain't safe."

Dorothy was silent. Why was it, she asked herself, that men were so severe in judging one another? Why did they always look at the blackest and least promising side of everything? Israel had promised her, she believed him, and that was enough.

And while she tripped lightly back and forth about her household duties, her mind was full of the undefined future. She could see herself, shadowy and undefined as in a mirror, moving about a little light home, where flowers bloomed in the emerald, and birds sang, and the clock ticked: "He is coming! He is coming!"

"One of these days!" said Dorothy to herself, as she put away the saucer of peaches and the little pitcher of thick cream on a whitey saucer of pink shell—"one of these days."

She was thinking of the future. And old Jonathan, stoking his pipe, was living in the past.

"You've something to do with the railway, stranger, hav'n't you?"

"I reckon I have," said Israel Esmayne, indifferently. "I'm a switchman."

"It don't take much of your time, I guess."

"It's got to be looked after just the same, though," said the tall Westerner, as he lifted the last monster log from the cart he was unloading to the thirteenth pile at the north end of the house.

"Well, you might," said he, "but it would be a pretty tight squeeze."

"I'm a good walker," said the stranger, and as he spoke he drew a flat flask from his pocket, unclipped it with his teeth, and drank a copious draught. Israel Esmayne watched him with eager, glistening eyes, like those of some famished wild animal that scents blood.

"Have a drink, friend?" said the stranger, proffering the flask. Israel Esmayne shook his head with set teeth and vividly pale cheeks.

"I never drink," said he hoarsely.

"You would, I guess, if you could get such stuff as this," said the man; "soft as oil and strong as fire. My father imported it. There is not much like it in the country. Taste, if you don't believe me."

Israel stood for a moment hesitating. Then he cast an eager glance to the right and to the left, as if half fearful that some one should see him, and grasping the bottle—drank!

The fevered blood mounted to his cheeks; a strange sparkle came into his eyes.

"Have you got more like that?" he whispered, hoarsely, approaching his burning lips so closely to the man's ear that he involuntarily started. "More?"

"I've got another flask, but—"

"Will you leave it behind? I'll pay you a good price for it!"

"What for?"

Israel's eyes fell guiltily. "In—in case of sickness, you know. We can't buy such liquor here—and it's a lonely spot."

"You're right enough there," said the man, laughing, as he drew out another flask, the mate to the first. "Here, take it. Pshaw, friend, put up your purse. You're welcome to it as a gift."

And he was gone, plunging through the high grass and bushes, all fringed with scarlet cardinal flowers and nodding marigolds, before Israel could stay him.

Israel Esmayne crept back to his house, or rather the rude log cabin that was a sort of hostage that one day a real home should rise on its foundations, holding the flat bottle close to him, and glancing around with furtive, wandering eyes.

"I needed it," he said to himself; "yes, I needed it. I didn't know how much until I tasted it. Just one more taste. It slips over one's palate like glass, so smooth, so rich, so full of strength. One more taste, and then—"

When the clock struck nine the whistle of the way train sounded faint and far off, and Israel Esmayne rose uncertainly to his feet. The subtle burning fume of the liquid flame had entered into his brain; the walls seemed to reel about him, the stars to swim in the great blue firmament overhead. Nothing was real—all was faint and far off and visionary. But the chains of habit are hard to shake off; and Israel had gone out at nine o'clock every night for a year. Groping his way, and walking with slow, unsteady steps, he went, still clasping the partially emptied flask to his breast in the inner pocket of his coat.

He could hear the gush of the river below; he could see the rails of the track glistening in the faint starlight, and mechanically feeling under a cluster of spice bushes for the switch key, he knew his own and stupidly fumbled there an instant.

"The way train," he muttered to himself. "It's all right. And then the freight train—half past nine—a quarter to ten; and—"

He stooped down by the river shore and wet his burning forehead with the cool drops he could scoop up in the hollow of his hand. He sat down on a fallen tree, and let his head fall on his palms.

"Am I—drunk?" he muttered, half aloud. "O God! have I come to this in spite of everything?"

And the memory of Dorothy Beers and his sacred promise to her rose up in his mind, as one sometimes remembers promises made to the dead. In all the wild, wild, reeling, rocking world of his brain there was but one certainty. He had lost Dorothy, his self-stepping, sweet-eyed redeeming angel—the one in all the world who loved and trusted him implicitly.

"I don't deserve her," he thought, scarce able to shape definite thought in his chaotic mind; "but—if I had only fallen down dead before—before I touched that accursed stuff! She would have believed in me then."

The fresh, cool night air on his brow was sobering him a little; the touch of the cold river water cleared the mists of his clouded brain in some degree. He rose up, steadying himself by the slender stem of a young white birch tree that grew close beside him, and looked around.

Hark! A clear whistle. Half a mile away, clearing the silence like the call of some sweet-throated bird.

It was the express, whose plume of lurid smoke spanned half a continent—those long, serpent-like train, glittering with lights, and carrying a great eye of fire in front, which might, but burst over the line of rails, and shot like a meteor out of sight into the hush and silence of the woods, westward bound. The way train passed at nine, making a brief stoppage at the Hurst station beyond, a mere wooden shed with a platform on either side. Half an hour afterward a slow and heavy freight train followed it, running off on a side track toward the river shore until the express should have safely passed. And it was the special business of Israel Esmayne to set the switch for the freight, and subsequently replace it for the hurrying express.

Had he done this?

With an awful doubt poisoning his heart, he pressed his hands to his temples and tried to think. He had been there—he could recall just how the dewy rails looked, wet and glistening in the starlight. He had the switch key in his hand—that he could also remember. But was that before or after the freight had switched off? He could not remember whether the freight had passed or not. He did not know whether he had locked the switch twice or once, or good Heavens! not at all. The past was a swaying vacuum, the future strange and dream-like. He closed his eyes, he pressed his temples as if either hand had been a vice of iron, in the wild, agonizing effort to recall the last half hour.

"O God!" he moaned aloud, as he threw himself on his face in the wet grass, "am I going mad?"

Something had struck against his breast bone as he flung himself down; it was the fatal flask. He tore it out, half full of dark red poison, and washed it passionately in the bushes. It was that—THAT had done all the mischief.

"Oh, Heavenly Father!" he cried aloud, in his great anguish, "what piety-Tier to avert from me this great calamity of murder done a thousand fold—and might but one of Thy miracles can avert it now—I swear before Thy judgement of stars to touch that devil's broth no more. O God, hear me! O-Christ, save me!"

The earth beneath his growling breast thrilled and quivered as the express train flew over the rails, and Israel Esmayne held his breath, momentarily expecting the awful crash which should stain his soul with the eternal brand of Cain.

Hush! An owl hooting slow off in the woods, the cry of some sad-souled high bird overhead, and again another whistle, clear and ringing. The express had passed through Hurst—passed through safe and sound. And Israel Esmayne staggered to his feet, gazed around him an instant, clutching vaguely at the air, and then fell unconscious.

"Uncle, he is coming to," an uncle, I knew—I knew that he was not dead."

And the waltzes of Dorothy Beers were the first thing that Israel Esmayne saw as his soul came out of the world of shadows and oblivion, with wily Jonathan leaning on his cane just beyond.

"Tell me, Doty," he gasped, "how was it? In—the switch?"

"It was my girl did it," said the old man. "She came by, and she heard the freight whistle, and she sees the switches wasn't right, nor no signal, nor nothing. 'Something's happened,' says she. 'And there lay the key in the middle of the track, and she unclips the switches—you showed her how to do it yourself, Esmayne, one summer afore now—and she hangs up her white ladder. And there she stands, with her heart a-boating! bit to choke her, till the freight gits off. And she says to one of the brakemen, 'Set these right for the express,' says she 'quick, or there may be a thousand lives lost.' 'Where's the switch tender?' says he. 'God only knows,' says my Doty. And so she comes back after me. 'Uncle,' says she, all white and trembling like, 'come with me.' 'What for?' says I. 'To look for Israel,' says she. 'I don't sleep this night,' says my Doty. 'What we're found him.'"

"God bless her!" cried out Esmayne in a choked voice. "God be thanked for all his mercies."

"Was it a fit?" said the old man, curiously. "How did it come on?"

But Israel Esmayne spoke no word on the subject, either then or ever. He married Dorothy Beers in the spring, and she has sacredly kept his vow. If he lives to be a hundred years old he will still keep it. And Doty, though she never knew it, had redeemed him.