

The Elk County Advocate.

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ELK COUNTY—THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.

TWO DOLLARS PER ANNUM.

VOL. I.

RIDGWAY, PA., THURSDAY, MAY 4, 1871.

NO. 10.

THE RETURN OF THE BIRDS.

I hear, from many a little throat, A warble interrupted long; I hear the robin's flute-like note, The bluebird's slender song.

Brown meadows and the russet hill, Not yet the haunt of grazing herds, And tinkles with the glimmering rill Are all alive with birds.

WHAT IS WOMAN WITHOUT CRIMOLINE?

Aunt Jerusha—the heroine of this "over true tale"—was a fatalist, for she firmly believed herself predestined to unhappiness from the cradle. But on the 17th day of July, A. D. 1864 (she had good cause never to forget this particular date), a transient gleam of happiness nevertheless illuminated her dreary existence.

The fact is, she had just completed her toilette for an early tea-party in the small New England town which was her home, and now stood before the mirror to review what she had done, and, verily, she saw that "it was well done."

And yet, the crowning glory of the toilette, an old-fashioned gold watch, also set with diamonds—a marriage gift of the late Obediah—was wanting.

Left to herself, Aunt Jerusha sat down and gave the reins to sombre thoughts. What had become of the exultant feelings which had only a few moments before swelled her bosom?

She folded her hands, and gazed with a wistful expression on her face out of the open window on the deserted street basking below in the hot July sun. All the blinds of the opposite houses were closed; not a step, not a sound, broke the brooding silence of the scene.

To be candid, our little man, whose name was Peleg Brent—or as his friends flippantly called him, "Little Peleg"—had already performed that wonderful feat while still an humble clerk behind the counter of Jerusha's store, a highly respected and prosperous grocer. After he had married, he still continued to carry her in his heart of hearts; and when an unexpected legacy enabled him

to set up as a gentleman of leisure, he became an avowed aspirant for the hand of her early love, who laid in the meantime a willow-bow. And what, and what is still more to the purpose, Aunt Jerusha herself came by degrees to acknowledge that they were kindred spirits and sympathetic souls.

But at this stage, Jerusha's malignant star again interfered. She had, it is true, found a "spirit mate," but why was he so very diminutive? This was a difficulty which she could not get over. Had heaven really destined them for each other here below, it would most assuredly have made him of a more corresponding stature—six feet something, instead of five feet and two inches. She recoiled from the idea of contracting once more a marriage which had not been predestined in heaven, and as often as poor Peleg pressed his suit—a subject to which he returned with a pertinacity rare in these degenerate days—she always declined committing herself, with the stereotyped formula: "No, Peleg, it can't be the will of heaven, or we should have been better matched in the flesh."

Ann Jerusha had for the ten thousandth time arrived again at this sad conclusion, when Tabitha returned with the watch, whose diamonds sparkled just as brightly as ever, although the careless watchmaker had not repaired its works. Somewhat cheered by the sight of her treasure, Aunt Jerusha now took her departure, but not without first having strictly admonished her maid on no account whatever to leave the premises. But, as might have been expected, no sooner had Jerusha's stately form turned the corner of the street, than Tabitha ran down the front steps and dived into the basement next door, for a cosy chat with a fellow servant.

While Tabitha was gossiping with her maid in the basement of the adjoining house, and Aunt Jerusha was engaged in the same congenial occupation in a higher social sphere, the hours rapidly winged their flight. The afternoon had thus nearly passed away, when two strangers of suspicious appearance approached the deserted dwelling. Mounted on the front steps, one of them pulled the bell, once, twice, three times. No one responding to the summons, they tried the door, pushed it open, entered the hall, peeped into the parlors, ascended the stairs to the upper story, all without finding a living soul about the premises. They searched the entire house, and speedily ascertained that they were its sole occupants.

Then the fellows chuckled, looked at each other with a kind of savage joy, and eagerly proceeded to examine the contents of the different closets and drawers. There was much in them they appeared to like—silver-ware, linen, jewelry—all but the money which had evidently expected to find, but which he did not turn up.

Suddenly voices and steps resounded below. The ruffians, who happened at that moment to be in Aunt Jerusha's bed-room, stood for a single moment undecided; then they nodded to each other, chuckled again, grasped their cudgels, and crept under the bed.

Poor Aunt Jerusha! It may be quite romantic to have been predestined to unhappiness from the cradle, but it is decidedly unpleasant!

It was rather late when Aunt Jerusha returned from the tea-party. Tabitha, warned in time, had managed to reach the house first, and met her mistress with the most serene composure. The usual cross-examination as to the manner in which she had employed the long afternoon, and for what time the girl was fully prepared, was, however, omitted on the present occasion. Aunt Jerusha felt too tired to play the role of an inquisitor—tired from sheer mental exhaustion, for it is no trifle to hold one's own at an early evening tea in a New England town. She proceeded, therefore, almost immediately up-stairs, to her own bed-room, and, feeling depressed in spirits, she signified to her maid that she would dispense with her services and undress herself. While slowly divesting herself of her clothes, article after article, she cast an uncomplaining glance upon her, and plaintively uttered the following memorable remark:

"Where is the other moneey?" he demanded, with a ferocious air, which froze the blood in Aunt Jerusha's veins. As the gag in her mouth made an answer to this question a physical impossibility, the terrible cudgel was once raised in a threatening manner.

The unfortunate woman had already closed her eyes with a mental prayer recommending her soul to Him that gave it. Then the other ruffian seized his comrade's arm, and said:

"Let her alone!" said he. "We have no time to waste on her. It may even be too late for the early train."

With a growl and a deep curse, the fellow suffered himself to be led away. Aunt Jerusha's eyes mechanically followed the pair as they passed close to the window on their way to the chamber door; but though it was a clear, bright summer's night, she failed to distinguish their features. The lower part of their faces was concealed by a bristly beard, while forehead and nose were shaded by slouched hats so completely that there seemed no possibility of identifying the scoundrels hereafter, all the less strange when she recalled that Aunt Jerusha was born to unhappiness.

What mortal man could do under these perplexing circumstances, little Peleg Brent most certainly did. Without stopping to take breakfast, he started for the nearest railroad depot; for the reader will recollect that the ruffians had alluded to the early train. He telegraphed in every direction; sent full descriptions of the stolen articles, and especially of the watch, to the police authorities; offered large rewards; and had the story published, not only in the local papers, but in all the larger city dailies of the country. All this trouble and expense secured, however, thrown away, as a large number of suspicious-looking individuals, with bristly beards, slouched hats and shabby clothes, were discovered and arrested, but to none of them could be brought home the theft of the treasure on whose discovery depended the happiness of two loving souls.

It will thus be readily seen that it still remained an open question whether or not heaven had really predestined Aunt Jerusha and little Peleg for one another.

"Perhaps this question may never be solved on earth," Aunt Jerusha often said to herself with a sigh. Fortunately she possessed an elastic nature,—and here Peleg, who never ceased to hope that all would be right yet, was always at hand to console his friend when disposed to despond.

This consolation and support had now become doubly necessary to her, for while suffering all the tortures of suspense, her position had in other respects grown very embarrassing and delicate. The fact is,—nor can we, in spite of our partiality for Aunt Jerusha, deny it,—she had been guilty of a very grave indiscretion: that is, she had actually admitted Peleg Brent into her house as a lodger.

The arrangement had been brought about in a perfectly natural manner. When Peleg reported the ill success of his efforts to trace the robbers, Aunt Jerusha's present nervous state, and the recollection of the events which that terrible night had brought with it, that she was hardly in her right mind.

"The ruffians are sure to return," she repeated again and again, with tears, "and then I shall be murdered!" The mere thought of living through such another night was more than she could bear; she set to sweeping the parlor to protect her, adding, "You are the only person on whose devotion I can rely."

Peleg had thereupon proposed to ask old James, a superannuated constable, to take up his quarters in the basement story. But old James happened to wear a bristly beard, and this sufficed to disqualify him for the position in Aunt Jerusha's present nervous state. Finally, after several fruitless consultations, the difficulty was settled. When the sun went down, Peleg himself moved, bag and baggage, into the back parlor.

Our pen falters to describe the sensation to which this event gave rise in the town—how Aunt Jerusha's friends and neighbors put their heads together, snickered, and talked scandal!

"What happiness, what joy to find that the adored of his youth and the hope of his maturer years still lived! What ecstasy to think that it should have been reserved for him to free her numbed limbs, to whisper words of sympathy and cheer into her ear, and to carry the first draught of cooling water to her parched lips!"

We drop here the curtain for a few minutes, leaving the pair to their feelings, until the arrival of the neighbors interrupted their *le-to-le-to*.

Then, they lay, the poor martyr, chastely covered with the bed-clothes, up to the tip of her chin, giving detailed accounts of the preceding night's experiences to successive detachments of wondering neighbors and friends. The exclamations of the auditors, the lamentations of Tabitha, the running commentaries of Peleg, were quite melodramatic in their way. But the most harrowing feature in the drama was the despairing expression with which Aunt Jerusha persisted in reiterating the words: "I would resign myself to the loss of all, if I had only saved my precious watch!"

The heart of Peleg fairly bled, and he registered a solemn vow. Availing himself of a temporary lull in the prevailing babel of tongues, he approached closely to his friend's bedside, and gravely said: "Mrs. Wiggins!—Jerusha!—I pledge you the word of a man who has all his life been true to you, that I shall never rest until the treasure which you mourn so much is restored."

Aunt Jerusha felt in her inmost heart that the crisis had arrived when she would have to surrender. She held out her hand to the faithful friend and looked at him with eyes so overflowing with affection that Peleg's pulse rose to a fever-heat. "I accept your pledge, Peleg," she replied, solemnly, yet so softly that he alone heard her words.

"I will regard your success in this matter as the will of Providence. That is, all my former scruples about your going if you recover my watch. You take my meaning?"

"I do," rejoined the little man, in an equally solemn but subdued tone; and almost beside himself with joy, he raised the blushing Jerusha's hand respectfully to his lips.

As half the gossips of the neighborhood were watching the scene, they could not see so innocent a concealment of the reader.

nothing save "withered leaves and withered hopes." Even Peleg's society appeared to lose its wonted effect, and his reading its interest. Her eye grew dimmer and dimmer, her walk more listless, and even her once so upright form seemed to bend under the burden of her grief. Whether it was the lost watch for which she pined away, or a yearning for the ruy chains of Hymen, he probably never to remain forever hidden from human ken; for who is capable of fathoming the depths of a woman's heart?

Poor Peleg was fairly at his wits' ends. He vainly taxed his ingenuity to discover some means to dissipate his friend's melancholy. The weather was still too cold for a visit to the Springs. At last a happy thought inspired him.

He pretended that urgent business demanded his presence in New York, and proposed to Aunt Jerusha to accompany him. There were a thousand things worth seeing in the huge metropolis. She would be able—she cunningly urged—to shop to her heart's desire, and thus find a rare opportunity to put her great gift at making good bargains to practical and profitable use. At any rate, the trip would cheer her up!

After a few scruples and some persuasion, she consented to the plan. To avoid, however, all additional scandal, she decided to take Tabitha with her, who received the news with the most extravagant demonstrations of joy.

The main objection to the journey having thus been happily removed, the preparations for it immediately began; the house was put in order, and confided to the charge of James, the private constable. The trio set out in the best of spirits, and arrived in due time, safe and sound, in the great city, trunks, traveling-bags, and boxes all safe and sound.

It was a bright sunny April day, when Aunt Jerusha, escorted by her friend and protector, ventured to plunge into the human tide which surges up and down Broadway. She looked very grand and stately in her new bonnet, the masterpiece of a fashionable milliner on Fifteenth street, which she wore with the air of a queen. In perfect keeping with the bonnet were her costly cashmere shawl and ample silk dress, which was advantageously displayed over a voluminous crinoline. Whether it was the change of air, or the whisper of a secret premonition which already began to exert a magical influence, she certainly looked with a long unknown joy of life upon the stirring scene before her.

Her interest was keenly excited in all she saw and all that surrounded her. She would have liked to purchase something in almost every other store; but this being impossible, she contented herself with simply stopping to ask the prices.

At the corner of Canal and Broadway, a broken-down omnibus obstructed the crossing, and compelled our friends to stand still. While thus brought to a standstill, and while little Peleg Brent endeavored with more zeal than success to prevent her being jostled by the constantly increasing crowd, two rough-looking fellows elbowed their way close up to Jerusha. Their clothes were ragged and dirty, a bristly beard covered the lower part of their faces, and forehead and eyes were obscured by slouched hats. Suddenly they paused. Pointing to the tall lady in rustling silk before them, one of the men punched his comrade in the side, and muttered with a hideous chuckle:

"What is woman without crinoline?" Turning round with a ghastly face to look at the speaker, a faint moan, and the words—"the men who took my watch!"—escaped her lips.

Faint as the voice was in which these words were uttered, Peleg nevertheless caught them up, and in an instant he elung to the men, shouting at the top of his shrill voice for the police!

Brain Weight.

An eminent German Professor once assumed that, as a certain size and mass of brain is essential to the exercise of the mental faculties, therefore, all the human race must be furnished with an equal amount of brains. This truly Teutonic theory has since, however, been effectually dissipated. An elaborate paper was read, not very long ago, before the Royal Society, in which the existing evidence as to the weight of brain among different nations was analyzed. The average brain-weight for the English is stated to be 47.50 ounces; for the French, 44.58; for the Germans, 42.83; but there are discrepancies in the results of different observers, some giving a greater average than this to the Germans. The Italians, Lapys, Swedes, Frisians, and Dutch, come into the same category with the English. Among the Asiatic races, the Vedas of Ceylon and the Hindus give a mean of over 42.11 ounces. The skulls of Mussulmans afford a slightly increased average of brain-weight over those of the Hindus.

Two skulls of male Khonds—one of the unquestioned aboriginal races of India—show a brain weight of only 37.87 ounces. The general average of the Asiatic table shows a diminution of more than two ounces when compared with the Europeans. The general mean of African races is less than that of European races, although there are great differences; the Caffre rising high, and the Bushman sinking low, in the scale. The average of the whole of the aboriginal American races reaches 44.79 ounces, which is 2.14 ounces less than that of the European races. The Australian races show a brain-weight one-ninth less than that of the general average of Europeans. The Malays and others of the Oceanic races, who migrated boldly, for commercial purposes, over the North and South Pacific Ocean, and occupy the islands and coast lands of high average of brain-weight; and, on arriving at this section, we return in some measure to the large brain-weight of Europeans.—Once a Week.

An Unpleasant Picture.

The New York correspondent of the Boston Courier writes: There are hundreds, if not thousands, of well-to-do families in this city who are complete strangers to "home" and all that the word signifies. It is by these families that many fashionable boarding-houses and a certain class of quiet and somewhat aristocratic hotels are supported. They pay more for board and the extras which people living in this way always need than comfortable house-keeping would cost, and, of course, they are deprived of many pleasures and comforts which good house-holds afford. It is not uncommon for a small family to pay a hundred dollars a week in a hotel or first-class boarding-house, and some pay as much as a hundred and fifty dollars all the year round. Husbands do not generally like this life, but in most cases the wives prefer it because it relieves them of home responsibilities and gives them plenty of time to gad about among acquaintances, and see every new thing in dry goods. When bad weather prevents their going out they kill time by reading novels and story papers, or gossiping with "dear friends," whom they have known perhaps a week. The number of women who pass their lives in this way in New York is increasing every day. Almost in every case they are the wives of men who are engaged down town all day, and, of course, having opportunities for flirtation, they frequently go too far in that direction, and involve themselves and husbands in hot water and many scandals. There is no need of our going to Paris to find plenty of fashionable families without homes.

A Touching and Romantic Incident.

A recent sketch of the loves of the great lawyers contains this touching incident in the life of William Wirt: In his younger days he was a victim to that passion for intoxicating drinks which has been the bane of so many distinguished in the legal profession. Afflicted to a beautiful and accomplished young woman, he had made and broken repeated pledges of amendment, and, after patiently and kindly enduring his disgraceful habit, had at length dismissed him, deeming him incorrigible. Their next meeting, after his dismissal, was in a public street in the city of Richmond. William Wirt lay drunk and asleep on the sidewalk, on a hot summer day, the rays of the sun pouring down on his uncovered head, and the flies crawling over his swollen features. As the young lady approached in her walk, her attention was attracted by the spectacle strange to her eyes, but, alas! so common to others who know the victim, as to attract little remark. She did not at first recognize the sleeper, and was about to hasten on, when she was led by one of those impulses which form the turning points in human lives, to scrutinize his features. What was her emotion when she recognized in him her forsaken lover! She drew forth her handkerchief, and carefully spread it over his face, and hurried away. When Wirt came to himself, he found the handkerchief, and in one corner the initials of the beloved name. With a heart almost breaking with grief and remorse, he made a new vow of reformation. He kept that vow and he married the owner of the handkerchief.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS.

Sir Edward Thornton's salary at Washington is as large as the President's.

Maples large enough to make three ten-foot rails each, with 4,000 trees to the acre, have been raised from the seed in seven years in Monroe county, Iowa.

The good-natured San Francisco sheriff takes the jury to the theatre at night, when its members are not permitted to go home.

A very small island in Ossipee River constitutes a part of four towns, three counties, and the two States of Maine and New Hampshire.

Three years ago twenty-seven women destroyed a saloon in a small town of Iowa, and the other day sixteen of them held a reunion in commemoration of the event.

There are no medicines left in Paris. Drugs of the rarer sort have almost entirely disappeared, and the supply of even the commoner articles is wholly inadequate to the demand.

They talk of placing the Queen of Denmark, the most economical of female sovereigns, on the throne of fashion, in place of the Empress Eugenie, the most extravagant one.

At an election in Quincy, Ill., the other day, the prisoners in the county jail were taken to the polls by the Sheriff, and—upon his demand—permitted to vote. The affair has created intense excitement.

A philosopher hath said: He who is passionate and hasty is generally honest. It is your cold, dissembling hypocrite of whom you should beware. There's no deception in a bull-dog. It is only the cur that sneaks up and bites you when your back is turned.

A journalist with a statistical turn has found out that the London newspapers have contained in the last three years not less than 178 obituaries of Dr. Livingston, the African explorer, any of which, he adds, is good enough for a man really dead.

In Missouri a husband has sued another man for \$20,000 damages "for wickedly contriving and wrongfully depriving him of the comfort of the society of his wife, and alienating her affections for the space of 623 days." This makes the value of a wife's society a little over \$32 per day.

A fine mirage was seen from Rochester on the 16th of this month. Lake Ontario, and the mountains, hills, valleys, and rivers of Canada were seen clearly reflected in the sky. The coast was seen over a length of about fifty miles, and so clearly that the forests could be readily distinguished, as could also Rice Lake and Belvidere.

Wisconsin is looming up now as the great iron-producing State of the Union. Four ranges of hills, each twenty miles long, running parallel to the Menomonee River, have been found to contain immense quantities of almost solid iron, and are estimated to contain ten times more of that metal than all the Lake Superior ranges combined.

The recent explorations in Jerusalem have excited great interest among the fraternity of Free Masons throughout the world, on account of the discovery of what are believed to be "Masonic marks" on a considerable number of the immense foundation stones recently uncovered under the debris of one of the ancient temples of that city.

Tippoo Saib, the huge elephant belonging to Van Amburg & Co.'s Menagerie, died of disease of the heart at Connersville, Ind., a few days ago. He was about sixty years old, and was imported to this country from Asia about thirty years ago. He measured about ten feet in height, and weighed about two thousand lbs. His value was estimated at \$15,000.

Readers, according to Coleridge, are divided into four classes: those who allow their reading, like the sand in the hour-glass, to run in and out without leaving a vestige behind; those who, like the sponge, imbibe everything, and return it, like a little dirtier than before; those who, like a jelly-bag, allow all that is pure to pass away, and retain only the refuse; and those who, like slaves in the Galcombs diamond mines, cast away all that is worthless, and preserve only the pure gem.

One of the latest California crops is tarantulas. They are raised in Calaveras county, and sold, with their wonderful cells, to Eastern tourists at curiosities. The cells are from three to eighteen inches deep, with a water-proof lining, coated over with a substance looking like chamois skin, but as fine as velvet, with a clear, or lid which they close after their young have gone in. When rearing their young they latch it, bolt it, and then seal it perfectly water-tight. They increase about one hundred and fifty fold annually.

Quite a sensation was created a week or two ago, in the quiet town of Jefferson, Me., by the arrival of Mr. David Lane, formerly of Jefferson, who enlisted in one of the Maine regiments in 1862. He served until 1864, and was then reported killed in the battle of Chapin's Farm, but it appears from his account that he was taken prisoner, and has since been living in North Carolina. Supposing him dead, his wife applied for a pension, which was granted, and in the fall of 1870 she was married to one John Cunningham, with whom she is now living.

Fifteen years ago a young lady of Cincinnati, while visiting a friend in New York, left her finger rings upon her wristband, and not hearing from her friend relative thereto, inferred that the chambermaid had appropriated them. Last week the Cincinnati lady received a letter from an old bachelor uncle, enclosing a letter fifteen years old, written by her New York friend, containing the missing rings. The letter had been entrusted to the uncle, and he had put it in his pocket, and from that receptacle it passed into a mass of old papers, where it had slept quietly ever since.