

# The North Branch Democrat.

HARVEY SICKLER, Proprietor.

"TO SPEAK HIS THOUGHTS IS EVERY FREEMAN'S RIGHT."—Thomas Jefferson.

TERMS: \$2.00 PER ANNUM

NEW SERIES,

TUNKHANNOCK, PA., WEDNESDAY, NOV. 30 1864.

VOL. 4 NO. 17

weekly Democratic paper, devoted to Politics, News, the Arts and Sciences &c. Published every Wednesday, at Tunkhannock, Wyoming County, Pa. BY HARVEY SICKLER.

Terms—1 copy 1 year, (in advance) \$2.00. not paid within six months, \$2.50 will be charged.

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## THE MASON'S WIDOW.

### OR THE MASONIC TALISMAN.

BY AN OFFICER OF THE U. S. A.

During the late Mexican war a lad of sixteen, a daring young Virginian, leaped a fence and climbed a parapet some hundred yards ahead of his company, and was taken prisoner; but not before he had killed three Mexicans, and mortally wounded a Colonel. His mother, a poor widow, but, though poor, a lady, (and why not?) heard of his fate, and as he was an only son, her heart yearned for his release. She wept at the thought, but while the tears were streaming down her cheeks, suddenly she recollected that she was a Mason's widow. Hope lighted up in her bosom at the thought—she dried her tears and exclaimed:

"I will go and test the talismanic power of the order my husband loved and rendered so much."

In her dusty attire she entered the department of the Secretary of War, and with some difficulty obtained an interview. As she entered the apartment in which he was seated, and he saw how dusty she appeared—"Well ma'am," was the salutation he gave her; but when she removed her veil, and saw the visage of the lady in her face, he half raised himself in his chair and pointed to a seat—She told him of her son's capture and wished to go to him.

"I can't help you, ma'am," he replied, "a very expensive journey to the city of Mexico. Your son will be released by and by on exchange of prisoners."

"Sir," said the widow, as the tears of we rolled down her cheek, "can you not help me to a passport?"

"Of course, he replied, that will be granted to you at the Secretary of the State office, but you are poor, how do you expect to pay the expenses of such a journey? It is a visionary scheme. Good morning ma'am."

"Sir," said the lady, will you be so kind as to recommend me to the officer in command of the regiment that will sail from Baltimore in a few days?"

"Impossible, ma'am, impossible," he replied. Then turning to the page, he said, "who did you say was waiting for an audience? Tell them I am at leisure, now."

"Sir," said the lady, I have one more question to ask you before I leave your office, and I pray you answer it—are you a Mason?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then, sir," permit me to say I am a Mason's widow—with this declaration I leave your office.

That moment the Secretary's manner was changed to that of the most courteous interest.

He entreated her to be seated until he could write a few lines to the Secretary of State. In a few moments he presented her with a note to the Secretary, recommending her to his sympathy and friendship. The Secretary of State received her most kindly, and gave her a letter to the commandant at New Orleans directing him to procure her a free pass to Vera Cruz by the first steamer. Through the agency of the two Secretaries the Ladies placed in her hands three hundred dollars, with a talismanic card from the Grand Master at Washington, and the widow left the city.

When she reached Pittsburg, the stage agent seeing the letter she bore from the Grand Master would receive nothing for her passage—the Captain of the steamer on which she embarked for New Orleans, no sooner deciphered it than he gave her the best state room he had, and when she reached the Present City, she had two hundred and ninety dollars left of her three hundred.—She there waited on the general in command of the station, with the letter of the Secretary of State, who immediately instructed the Colonel in command of the forwarding troops to see that she had a free passage to Vera Cruz by the first steamer. By all the officers she was treated with the greatest politeness and delicacy, for they were all Masons and felt bound to her by ties as strong and delicate as those which bind a brother to a sister and rejoiced in the opportunity offered them of evincing the benign and noble principles of the craft.

After a passage of five days she reached Vera Cruz, and having a letter from the commandant at New Orleans to the American Governor she sent it to him, enclosing the talismanic card she received from the Grand Master at Washington. The Governor immediately waited on her at the hotel and offered her a transportation to the city of Mexico by a train that would start the next morning. The Colonel who commanded the train, kindly took her in charge and offered her every facility and comfort on her journey provided her with a carriage where the country was level, and with mules and palanquins over the mountains.

Within ninety miles of the city, they were overtaken by a detachment of dragoons escorting a government official to the general in command. Anxious to get on faster, she asked permission of the Colonel to join the detachment, and, though informed of the danger and fatigue of riding all day on horseback, she was willing to brave all, that she

might sooner see her son. The Colonel then provided her with a fleet and gentle Mexican pony and she assumed her place with the troops, escorted by the officers, and never fatigued till the towers of Mexico were in sight.

She reached the city on the second day's battle, and in the heat of the battle attempted to enter the gates. An officer instantly seized the bridle and told her she must wait until the city was taken.

"O! sir," she exclaimed, "I cannot wait one hour in sight of the city that holds my son a prisoner—I must see him, sir."

"The city must first be taken, madame," he again replied, with much emphasis, becoming excited.

"I cannot wait, sir," she replied, "my son may be ill—dying—in chains—in a dungeon—one hour's delay may remove him from me—Oh! I must go to him—I will enter the city."

"Madame," said the officer, "you cannot reach it by crossing the Battlefield—you will surely be killed."

"Sir," said the lady, "I have not traveled from Virginia to the gates of the city to fear to enter them—thanks for your kindness—a thousand heartfelt thanks for you and the officers who have been so kind to me. I shall always remember these officers with the most grateful feelings of my heart—but don't detain me longer. Yonder is a gate that leads to the city. I will enter it in search of my dear boy."

And on she sped, but ere she reached the gate another officer rode up by her side and admonished her of danger and imprudence.

"Sir," this is no time to talk of prudence and fear—my son, my only son, is a prisoner in chains. I am told that Santa Anna is in the midst of your glittering group. I will seek him and in his hand place the talismanic card which I bear—he is a Mason, and will certainly heed me."

"War destroys all brotherhood," said the officer who was not a Mason. She made him no reply, but watching her moment, struck her pony and darted across the field of death. At that moment the masked battery that moved down one-half of the Palmetto regiment, opened—yet right across the gory field she was seen galloping on her white pony, avoiding the retreating platoons by a semi-circle around their flank—the next moment she was seen coursing over the ground in the rear, the battery in full play. Hundreds seeing her, stopped, forgetful of the storm of iron balls that howled around them an apparition. All expected her to fall every moment, but on she went with fearless air.

"That woman's love for her son has made her wild," said the officer who attempted to arrest her flight.

"She will surely be killed," exclaimed another.

"A mother's love is stronger than the pains of death," exclaimed a soldier.

"The God of battles will protect her," said a Tennesseean. "She will reach Santa Anna safe and sound as a roach."

She soldier was right—she went over the field of death and reached Santa Anna unhurt. He received her politely, and when she told him her errand and presented her talismanic card.

"Madame," said he, "I am a mason, and know the obligation of the Order in peace and war. When your son was taken prisoner he mortally wounded my maternal nephew, who is now dead, but he shall be restored, for I will not refuse your request in the face of the letters you bear."

He immediately gave her an escort to the city, with an order to restore her son to her arms. The order was promptly obeyed, and that very day, as he promised, she embraced her long lost son.

So much for a mother's love; and so much for the protecting arm and noble sympathetic heart which Masons ever extend to lovely, helpless woman. Oh! if widowhood be the doom of woman, who would not be a Mason's widow? Who would not be a Mason's wife, mother, daughter or sister in the hour of peril and need?

**Fourteen Great Mistakes.**

It is a great mistake to set up our own standard of right and wrong, and judge people accordingly.

To measure the enjoyments of others by our own.

To expect uniformity of opinion in this world.

To look for judgment and experience in youth.

To endeavor to mould all dispositions alike.

Not to yield in immaterial trifles.

To look for perfection in our actions.

To worry ourselves and others with what cannot be remedied.

Not to alleviate all that needs alleviation as far as lies in our power.

## THE PENNA OIL REGIONS.

To most of our readers the coal oil region of Pennsylvania is almost as much of a mystery as Otaheite, or the paradisaical islands of the South Sea, so charmingly pictured by Herman Melville. They have heard of big fortunes being made there, and have some vague idea of a region all filled with spouting wells of inflammable oil; but few have any realizing sense of the true state of things and many look upon it as a humbug of the "Morsis Multicaulis" sort. Yet there it is right in the upper and Western part of the old Keystone State, along the Allegheny and its tributaries—as real as the gold mines of California and a great deal more tempting to the seeker after sudden wealth. For here are fortunes made almost literally in a day; and here, too, are the gulls and the flats cheated out of their money, every day and every hour, as in other parts of this wicked world.

Petroleum, or rock oil, in its crude state exists far down in the bowels of the earth, in strata of sand rock, at a depth of from 400 to 500 feet. There are no natural spouting wells—the oil is only obtained by laborious boring; and for this business capital is required. Those who have acquired the greatest wealth in the shortest time in the oil regions, are persons who had the luck to possess or inherit lands beneath which the evidence of rich oil deposits were found, and which consequently sold, after the old mania, had fairly set in for almost fabulous sums.

Two thousand dollars was considered a large sum, four years ago, for a farm of from three to four hundred dollars each, and parties who now own them, principally joint stock companies, of course hold them at a higher figure. There are parties, also, who hold individual fractional interests, such as one-eighth, one sixteenth, one thirtieth, &c., and the value of their proportions can only be correctly ascertained by the books kept at the wells. But in some instances, if these values were considered, the property would be held at the almost incredible sum for a farm, of from two to three millions of dollars.

The value of the soil alone bordering on Oil Creek, say two miles on each side, and extending from its Mouth to Titusville, about twenty-one miles, is estimated at two hundred and fifty millions of dollars. This small area has yielded, since 1860, about six million dollars' worth of oil. And this is but a part of the oil region. All coal fields of Pennsylvania, yielding an annual value of more than \$50,000,000, produces less wealth than her wells of rock oil.

It is produced in absolutely inexhaustible quantities, and at such a comparatively trifling expense, (after the machinery has paid for itself,) that the article ought to be sold in our grocery stores for one-half its present price, which is about \$1.50 per gallon.—Four distinct and separate profits are made on it before it reaches the consumer; and with all these it ought to be cheaper than it is—allowing fair profits to the company, the middle men, the freight-carriers and the store-keeper. It is second only to gas for illuminating purposes, and it has already driven whale oil pretty much out of the market.

### HOW OIL IS OBTAINED.

Parties going there either buy or lease the land; if leased, giving usually one half the oil as a royalty to the land owner. After getting an engine and the machinery necessary to put down the well, consisting of driving wheels connecting the engine with a walking-beam, said beam having about thirty-inch stroke, the process of drilling is commenced. An iron pipe, six inches in diameter inside, and one inch thick of metal, is driven into the earth from forty to sixty feet, with a ram, like a spile driver, until the solid rock is reached. This being cleaned out by means of a pump about six feet long, with a valve in the bottom, the tools, weighing some eight hundred pounds, and some thirty-five feet in length, are attached to an inch and a half cable, and the process of drilling in the solid rock commenced. A centre-bit, about three and a half inches wide, and very sharp is first used; and after running this from three to six feet, a rammer, four and a half inches across the face, nearly round, is used to make the hole round and smooth, the sand pump being used to draw out the drillings as the work progresses.

After a depth of one hundred and sixty feet, after passing through a slate rock, the first sand rock is found. This is about thirty feet thick. After passing through a soap rock some one hundred and twenty feet, the second sand rock is reached. This varies from ten to twenty five feet in thickness.—Passing through another soap and slate rock comes the third sand rock, at a depth of about four hundred and thirty feet. In this rock the oil is found in the largest quantities. Some small wells have been obtained in the second sand rock. After the well is down to the depth of four hundred and sixty feet, it is tubed with two inch gas pipe, and if it does not flow spontaneously, pumped to see if there be oil in it.

### THE RESULTS OF BORING.

It sometimes happens that the boring proves unsuccessful, even after months of labor. Then these wells are abandoned and new ones sunk, and so on until oil is struck. When this is done the oil first flows slowly, or, in some instances, it rushes up with such force and volume as to send the stream as high as the derrick, some forty feet, and carrying with it all the heavy boring apparatus. A well like this produces sometimes as high as fourteen hundred barrels per day, when it will suddenly subside or cease flowing all together. Then the pump is resorted to and the oil pumped up at the rate, generally, of five to twenty barrels per day. In the meantime other wells are being sunk, and in producing flats or bluffs, will yield from forty to fifty barrels per day, and in other localities be entirely unproductive. It frequently happens that veins of salt water of the highest saline gravitation are hit, (as at Franklin,) from which the very best quality of salt could be produced by applying some of the apparatus in use at the salt works at Syracuse, N. Y. But people boring for oil think of nothing but oil, and if their wells should force up golden nuggets they would probably feel disappointed.

The Sewickley well, on French creek was sunk six hundred and ten feet, and flowed for four months one hundred barrels per day; but stopped, and has not been abandoned, with other, in that locality. But so confident are the owners of the land that oil is to be obtained there, that speculation has revived, and eighty wells are now going down on what is known as the Tall-man farm, between Meadville and Franklin. This farm has a front of one mile and a third on French creek. Although the oil produced here is in small quantities, the quantity is superior—equal to the celebrated "Mecca" oil of Ohio. The investigations on Oil Creek prove the supply to be large, and that the results of boring are almost as favorable as a year ago; and the fact that a well has been sunk at so great a distance as Erie, Pa., indicates that the process of boring over the whole intermediate region may be continued with results not dissimilar from the above.

## NEW ONSUNK, AND SO ON UNTIL OIL IS STRUCK.

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### OIL CITY.

Oil City is built on Oil creek at its confluence with the Allegheny river, at the base of a mountain, with nothing to spare for a flat—unless it be the victim of some bagus oil company. It has but one street and the grading of it has just commenced, and all the rocks, boards, boxes and debris generally, are thrown into the middle of it. The buildings upon one side of the street all rest upon stilts or spiles, and occasionally one caves in as the post-office did the other evening. On the other side a man begins to build with a depth of first floor of twelve feet, the next twenty, the next thirty, according to the "perpendicularity" of the mountain.

The population are all busy making money but they go to church and close their grog shops on Sunday. The town is all wealth and mud—the creek all scows and scowling boatmen. It is well a "pond fresher" does not occur every day. Like the one last May, when thousands of boats piled pell mell over each other, crashing and smashing, the oil bursting from barrels and casks, and waisting by millions of gallons, and the boatmen swearing and hallooing like so many Chock-taws.

Titusville, Meadville, Franklin, and Corry, the latter a howling wilderness when this war broke out, and still rough and full of stumps, but having three railroads, centering there—the Philadelphia and Erie, the Atlantic and Great Western, and the Oil Creek railroad. Land has risen from \$2 to \$9.50 an acre. Samuel Downer of Boston, owns the extensive oil factory located in Corry, and rents it to the company that now carries it on. It is valued at \$500,000. The works cost \$175,000, employs 175 men, and pays them \$1.75 to \$3 per day. Have refined 100 barrels per day for the last month, using 240 barrels crude. The products of distilling are—1, still gas; 2, gasoline, or naptia; 3, water separated; 4, burning oil; 5, lubricating oil, by chilling or pressing with ice similar to the process of making linseed oil. Fifteen tons of ice are daily consumed in this way. The product of the oil region, from data obtained at this refinery, has been about 4000 barrels per day for the past year.

### THE MILLIONAIRES.

Many of the richest oil princes were laborers three years ago, without a dollar; now they own millions. James Tarr, by sales of leases and shares has made out of his seemingly a poor farm a fortune like Croesus; say four millions. Mr. E. Olmstead, another very rich man, from Meadville, went two or three years ago into the oil region, and had to borrow fifty dollars to enable him to secure a lease for himself and sons. The wealthiest is a youth by the name of John Steele, not yet 21.—a very lucky fellow. An orphan and a poor lad held by adopted parents, he has fallen heir to a portion of the most valuable oil land in the region. His income is eight hundred thousand dollars per year, and continually increasing. C. V. Culver, another millionaire, was nominated by the Republican party for Congress with a view to the patriotic use of his wealth in the canvass. Dr. Egbert, of Rouseville, had not three yr's ago, funds enough to liquidate a three hundred dollar debt. His income is now estimated at three thousand dollars per day, or a million per year. He has refused to take

greenbacks, having a room in his house already nearly filled with them; and requires 7-30s, 10 40s, or other government securities for his oil land and leases. He is a careful and worthy man, and when he comes into the fashionable world his advent will not be unlike that of Monte Christo from his diamond cave in the Mediterranean.

### JOE VISITS A TEMPERANCE FAMILY.

Joe Harris was a whole souled, merry fellow, and fond of a glass. After living in New Orleans for many years, he came to the conclusion of visiting an old uncle, away up in Massachusetts, whom he had not seen for many years. Now there is a difference between New Orleans and Massachusetts, in regard to the use of ardent spirits, and when Joe arrived there, he found all the people around about temperance, he felt bad, thinking with the old song, that, "keeping the spirits up, by pouring the spirits down," was one of the best ways to make time pass, and began to fear indeed that he was in a pickle. But on the morning of his arrival, the old man and his sons being out at work, his aunt came to him and said:

"You have been living in the South, and no doubt are in the habit of taking a little something to drink about eleven o'clock. Now I keep a little here, for medicinal purposes, but let no one know it, as my husband wants to set the children a good example."

Joe promised, and thinking he would get no more that day, took, as he expressed it, a "buster." After he had walked out to the stable who should he meet but his uncle. "Well Joe," said he, "I expect you are accustomed to drink something in New Orleans, but you will find us all temperate here and for the sake of my sons, I don't let them know that I have brandy about; but I just keep a little out here for rheumatism. Will you accept a little?"

Joe signified his readiness, and took another big horn. Then continuing his walk, he came to where the boys were mauling rails. After conversing awhile, one of the cousins said:

"Joe, I expect you would like to have a brandy drink, and as the old folks are down on liquor we keep some out here to help us work."

Out came the bottle, and down they sat, and he says that by the time he went home to dinner he was as tight as he could well be, and all came from visiting a temperance family.

**MARRIED ON HORSEBACK.**—A wedding took place at Sherwood, in Illinois, recently, the contracting parties being Mr. Josiah W. Crandall and Miss Helen B. Hurst. The ceremony was performed in front of the officiating clergyman's residence, and the bride and three bridesmaids, dressed and mounted on carriages. The bride's costume consisted of a deep blue cloth dress coat, deep blue cassimere pants, buff cassimere vest, black dress hat, choker collar, black neck tie, ruffled shirt bosom, and buff kid gloves—plain flat fillet buttons of a rich quality on the coat and vest. The bridesmaids were dressed precisely like the bride, excepting only that they wore plain shirt bosoms and lavender colored gloves. The novelty of the ceremony attracted a large crowd of the neighbors.—After the ceremony was over, the bridal party rode to the residence of Mr. Crandall's mother, where the formal wedding feast took place. The bride and bridesmaids wore their riding suits throughout the whole day.

**An "Idea Modeller"** writes:—was teaching school in a quiet country village. The second morning of the season I found leisure to note my surroundings, and among the scanty furniture I espied a three legged stool. "Is that the dunce's block?" I said to a little girl of five. The eyes sparkled, and the curls nodded assent, and the lips rippled out, "I guess so—the teacher always sits on that."

**An escaped telegraph operator** from Richmond says Lee has been largely reinforced within a short time by the rebel conscription.

**How to have pure cisterns.**—This spring my cistern got quite filthy, and a great many anguloworms in it and could scarcely use the water. I procured a couple of live gsh and put them in the cistern, and since that time it has been free from worms and dirt and smell. The fish will live and grow finely.

**According to the Lincoln papers,** one half, or nearly on half, of the population of the north are traitors. This, united to the whole population of the south, in the Union, the Lincoln men profess to be anxious to restore, would make a country two thirds of whose inhabitants were traitors and one third loyal. How long could such a country as that endure?

**An Editor says sugar has gone up** so high as to produce a slight increase in the price of sand.

**Some esteem it sweet to die for one's country;** others regard it sweeter to live for the country; but many of our loyal men told it sweeter to live upon their country.