

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, FEB. 21, 1866.

VOL. 5 NO. 28

Weekly Democratic paper, devoted to Political 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. All papers will be discontinued, until all arrearages are paid; unless at the option of publisher.

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Select Story.

LOVE ON THE ICE.

Lake Austrice, the skating pond of Whitestown, was a perfect flower garden; scarlet, and purple, and amber and divest shades of azure flitting about hither and thither, shading curls and flax and brightest ebony. Silvery laughs rang out high above the sharp click of skater's steel, and soft eyes grew tenderly lustrous beneath the fire of others held all too dangerously near.

Remington Ashe looked on with admiration in his dark, bright eyes.

Suddenly a little figure shot out from the shore, and sped down the lake like an arrow. Now keeping close to the wooded shore, then gliding like a submarine through the very midst of the skaters.

The scarlet feather in her cap floated back behind her, mingled with the black hair, which cascading from her net, tumbled into masses of glittering ringlets on her shoulders.

Asia touched the arm of a gentleman near him.

"Who is she, Churchill?"

Vernie Churchill's dark cheek showed a touch of crimson.

"Which one?"

"As if there was more than one! She with the scarlet feather and velvet sacque. The queen of them all!"

"Oh; that's Asia Vance?"

"Asia! What a name! How came she by it?"

"A conceit of her father's. I have been told."

"Hum! An odd fancy! Do you know her?"

"Yes."

"Introduce me, please. I cannot return to Boston without hearing her voice. It ought to be sweet as silver bells to accord with her face and figure."

"I see no opportunity, at present, to gratify your desire," said Churchill, rather coldly.

"We will seek the opportunity. Buckle on your skates. We will overtake her."

"That is easier said than done. Miss Vance is a swift skater."

"At least there is no harm in trying," Ashe said and presently the two gentlemen set forth in pursuit of her.

Both skated well—Ashe a little more spiritedly perhaps; but Churchill his superior in endurance.

Asia saw them coming, and divined their motive. It pleased her to allow them to overtake her.

Her brilliant eyes softened slightly, as they met the expression in Churchill's, and a little conscious rose-color flushed her cheek. He touched lightly the dainty hand in his soft-furred gauntlet.

"This is Mr. Ashe, of Boston, Miss Vance."

She acknowledged the introduction with a gay courtesy. Ashe was fully a match for her in small talk, and the acquaintance progressed rapidly.

The two so lately strangers whirled off together, leaving Churchill to return or to follow them at leisure.

He hesitated a moment, and then joined Maud Eastford.

Maud was unusually brilliant that day. The keen air had colored pale cheeks scarlet, and her blue eyes flashed like sapphires.

Maud and Ashe were rival beauties. Maud's had become loosened. She seated herself on a fallen log, while Churchill arranged them.

Just then Asia and Mr. Ashe swept by. Churchill saw the bright flush on Asia's face, and caught something of the subtle fascination in Ashe's dark grey eyes.

And he, who had loved with his whole soul Asia Vance for three years, had never been able to win from her a smile-half so tender as that which now wreathed her face for this stranger.

Churchill's thoughts were bitter. Perhaps his countenance expressed something of what was passing within. Maud bent towards him, one curl of perfumed gold touched his cheek. What a sweet voice she had.

"What troubles you, Mr. Churchill?"

For a moment the man was tempted.—He looked up into her beautiful face, so near his own that he could have touched the scarlet lip with his. Maud loved him and Asia was a cold-hearted coquette.

He took the hand Maud laid on his shoulder, and half encircled her waist with his arm, but his native truth conquered. Because one woman fluted, he would not be false himself. So he answered Maud quietly:

"Thank you. Nothing troubles me.—Shall we join the company?"

And piqued and disappointed, Maud reluctantly assented.

Asia little coquette that she was, could not be unmindful of the attractions of Mr. Ashe. His blonde face with its golden, brown beard and hair, would have won the heart of almost any young lady. Asia liked the courteous deference of his manner, and she was not averse to reading the admiration expressed in his eyes; besides, the marked attention made the other belles spiteful towards her, and Asia liked that, she did not care how hard the girls felt against her; she knew her bright eye would set all right with the other sex.

Ashe walked home with Asia, and obtained permission to call.

He went there frequently.

His stay in Whitestown was prolonged for three days to a week, and to a fortnight. His business had taken more time than he thought, he said, by way of excuse.

But he could stay no longer. His partner was becoming impatient at his delay, and had pteptorily recalled him.

The last day of his stay he went down to the lake. It was the first of April, but the ice had not yet broken up.

The old people said it was unsafe to venture on it, but old folks are prone to croak, and the young people gave little heed to them.

There was quite a crowd on the ice, and among them Asia Vance.

Asia had never been gayer. She glided up to the gentlemen mentioned, and challenged them to a race.

Ashe's eyes glittered meaningly.

"What shall be the stakes we contend for, Miss Vance?"

"Whatever you please," she answered quite saucily.

"Very well. I accept the condition.—It shall be yourself, if you please."

She blushed, but was too high spirited to retract.

"So be it. But you must catch me fairly. I claim that."

"Right. We are both gentlemen, I think," bowing to Churchill, who stood a little apart.

"Alone," she said gaily; but in spite of her light tone, there was a sober tinge in her eye seldom seen there. She could see that by the way they looked at each other.

What if Ashe won? and again, what if Churchill won? She dared not think lest they should recede.

They started off fairly—all together.—Asia went straight up the lake toward the head waters. The gentlemen followed her. None of the party as yet exerted themselves. They glided on easily, saving their strength for the final contest. Swiftly and swifter flew the slight figure of the girl, the distance between her and her followers materially lengthened, and now the race began in earnest.

People called out that it was dangerous to go so near the mouth of the rocky River the principal tributary of Lake Austrice; but they did not heed the warning.

They were too much excited to think of peril.

On went Asia, the scarlet feather streaming out behind her like a war flag and her silvery voice of defiance now and then floating back to them.

The color and texture of the ice was different here. It was dark, and they could see the water gliding beneath. Still they would not hesitate to follow where she dared to lead them.

Asia swept around the last point of land into the broadest part of the lake, opposite the mouth of rocky River. The gentlemen followed. Ashe was ahead, Churchill was a little heavier, and not so agile.

Ashe's handsome face gleamed and his eyes sparkled as he sped on; the ice bending beneath his weight, and the water bubbling through the air holes with a hoarse sound.

He knew how insecure was his footing, he knew the risk he ran; but Asia a little before him was beckoning him on.

He made the attempt to advance; but the ice cracked beneath his feet; the water was ankle deep, and it was frightfully evident that the lake was breaking up.

"Good God!" he cried, "all is lost!"

To go on was death. He was not ready to sacrifice himself for the desperate chance of out skating Asia Vance.

He turned quickly, and like lightning glided back to where the ice was yet intact. Gathering his strength for an instant, he made for the shore.

Churchill's eagle eye took in the scene at a glance. His breath came quick, and his heart beat like billows of the sea. And his great strength served him. Over the yielding ice he glided on, gaining perceptibly on the scarlet feather. A moment more and he should be beside her.

Suddenly he stopped, transfixed with horror; at last she realized the deadly peril of her position.

Churchill strained every nerve, never for a second losing sight of the graceful figure standing so frigidly erect amid the roar and tumult all around.

Another instant—it seemed hours to him—and he had thrown his arms around her. "I have won you," cried he hoarsely.

She was white as death, and her stiff fingers clung to his arm with the grip of despair.

"O, Vernie, we are lost," she cried.

"We must trust to the water. See it is growing deeper."

Even as he spoke his feet were swept from under him; the whole mass of ice heaved and groaned; and then the large cakes drifted tumultuously around.

Churchill was a strong swimmer, and battled bravely for the victory. Sometimes it seemed as if he must go down; but his will was like iron, and his strength was indomitable.

He fought his way through the massive cakes of ice, torn and heaving, but never despairing.

At last he caught the pliant branch of a willow which swept far out over the water and by its aid drew himself and his burden to the shore.

Asia looked into his face with wide open eyes, and a glow of crimson stealing over the ghastly whiteness of her countenance.

"Have I won fairly, Asia?"

"Yes; you have won," she said, averting her eyes.

"I do not hold you to it unless you will it. Are you mine freely?"

"And what then?" she asked softly.

"Asia!" their eyes met.

She flung her arms around his neck, and

put her face up to his.

"I give myself, to you, oh, to free!—Vernie did you not know that I have loved you always."

Mr. Ashe returned to Boston the next day, without calling to bid Asia good-bye.

She did not think of the omission until Mr. Churchill asked her opinion of Boston breeding.

She answered him saucily:

"I am quite satisfied with Whitestown manners, sir."

ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE.

There was a fine old General once, who having spent most of his life in the field of Mars, knew a very little about the camp of Cupid. He was one of those rough and honest spirits often met with in his galactic profession; innocent as an infant of almost everything save high integrity and indomitable bravery. He was nearly fifty years old and his hair was over when master Dan brought him acquainted with a Widow Wadman, in whose eye he began to detect something that made him feel uneasy. Here was the result of leisure.

At length, however, the blunt honesty of his disposition rose uppermost among his conflicting plans, and his course was chosen. At school he had once studied "Othello's Defence" to recite at an exhibition, but made a failure; he now recollected there was something in this defence to recite, very much like he wanted to say. He got the book immediately, found the passage, clapped on his hat with a determined air, and posted off to the widow Wadman's with Shakspere under his arm.

"Madam," said General Uncle Toby, opening his book at the marked place, with the solemnity of a special pleader at the bar—"Madam—"

"Bude am I in my speech,

And little blessed with the set phrase of peace;

For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith

Till now some nine moons wasted, they have not

Their dearest action in the tented field;

And little of this great world can I speak

More than pertains to that of broil and battle;

And the story—"

Here the general closed the book, wiped his forehead, lo! up at the ceiling and said with a spasmodic gasp—"I want to get married!"

The widow laughed for ten minutes by the watch before she could utter a syllable, and then she said, with precious tears of humor rolling down her good-natured cheeks, "And who is it you want to marry, General?"

"You," said Uncle Toby, flourishing his sword arm in the air, and assuming a military attitude of defiance, as if he expected an assault from the widow immediately.

"Will you kill me if I marry you?" said the widow, with a merry twinkle in her eye.

"No, madam," replied Uncle Toby in a most serious and deprecating tone, as if to assure her that such an idea had never entered his head.

"Well, then, I guess I'll marry you," said the widow.

"Thank you, ma'am," said Uncle Toby, "but one thing I'm bound to tell you—I wear a wig!"

The widow started, remained silent a moment, and then went into a longer, louder and merrier laugh than she had indulged in before, at the end of which she drew her seat nearer the General, gravely laid her hand on his head, gently lifted his wig off and placed it on the table.

Uncle Toby had never known fear in battle, but he now felt a decided inclination to run away. The widow laughed again, as though she never would stop, and the General was about to lay his hat upon his denuded head and bolt, when the factious lady placed her hand upon his arm and detained him. She then deliberately raised her other hand to her own head, with a sort of military precision, executed a rapid maneuver with her five fingers, pulled off her whole head of five glossy hair, placed it upon the table by the side of the General's and remained seated with ludicrous gravity in front of her accepted lover, quite bald!

As may be expected Uncle Toby now laughed along with the widow, and they soon grew so merry over the affair that the maid servant peeped through the key-hole at the noise, and saw the old couple dancing a jig and bobbing their bald heads at each other like a pair of Chinese mandarines. So the two very shortly had their heads together upon the pillow of matrimony.

A man was brought into court on the charge of having stolen some ducks from a farmer.

"How do you know they are your ducks?" asked the defendant's counsel.

"I should have known them anywhere," replied the farmer, who proceeded to describe their peculiarities.

"Why," said the prisoner's counsel, "those ducks can't be such a very rare breed if I have some very much like them in my yard."

"That's not unlikely, sir," said the farmer, "they are not the only ducks I've had stolen lately."

Senator Cowan stated in his seat the other day, that the Abolitionists had presented in that body over seventy amendments to the Constitutions of the United States, all looking to the interest of the negro, but not one for the interest of the white race; and that the leaders did more to produce our late civil war, than Davis and his adherents. This is certainly a strange confession for a member of that party to make; but it is as true as Gospel.

WINTER RULES.

Never go to bed with cold or damp feet. In going into a colder air, keep the mouth resolutely closed, that by compelling the air to pass circuitously through the nose and head, it may become warmed before it reaches the lungs, and thus prevent these shocks and sudden chills which frequently end in pleurisy, pneumonia and other serious forms of disease.

Never sleep with the head in the draft of an open door or window.

Let more covering be on the lower limbs than on the body. Have an extra covering within easy reach in case of a sudden and great change of weather during the night.

Never stand still a moment out of doors, especially at street corners after having walked even a short distance.

Never ride near the open window of a vehicle for a single half minute, especially if it has been preceded by a walk; valuable lives have thus been lost or good health permanently destroyed.

Never put on a new boot or shoe on beginning a journey.

Never wear India rubbers, cold, dry weather.

If compelled to face a bitter cold wind, throw a silk handkerchief over the face, its agency is wonderful in modifying the cold.

Those who are easily chilled on going out of doors, should have some cotton batting attached to the vest or other garments so as to protect the space between the shoulder-blades behind, the lungs being attached to the body at that point; a little there is worth five times the amount over the chest in front.

Never sit more than a minute at a time with the back against the fire or stove.

Avoid sitting against cushions in the backs of pews in churches; if the uncovered board feels cold, sit erect without touching it.

Never begin a journey until breakfast has been eaten.

After singing, speaking or preaching, in a warm room in winter, do not leave it for at least ten minutes, and even then close the mouth, put on the gloves, wrap up the neck, and put on cloak or overcoat before passing out of the door; the neglect of these has laid many a good and useful man in a premature grave.

Never speak under a hoarseness, especially if it requires an effort, or gives a burning or a painful feeling, for it often results in a permanent loss of voice, or long life invalidism.

A Literary Bitter Bit.

Mr. Fields, a London bookseller, is known for his very wonderful memory and knowledge of English literature. It is said that, when any author in the neighborhood is at a loss for a particular passage, he goes at once down to the "book store" for the desired information. One day at a dinner party, a would-be-wit, thinking to puzzle Mr. Fields and make some sport for the company, announced, prior to Mr. Fields' arrival, that he had himself written some poetry, and intended to submit it to Mr. Fields as Southey's. At the proper moment, therefore, after the guests were seated, he began:

"Friend Fields, I have been a good deal exercised of late, trying to find out in Southey's poems, his well-known lines running thus—repeating the lines he had composed—can you tell about what time he wrote them?"

"I do not remember to have met with them before," replied Mr. Fields; "and there were only two periods in Southey's life when such lines could possibly have been written by him."

"When were those?" gleefully asked the witty questioner.

"Somewhere," said Mr. Fields, "bout that early period of his existence when he was having the measles, and cutting his teeth; or near the close of his life when the brain had softened, and he had fallen into idioy. The versification belongs to the measles period; but the expression clearly betrays the idiotic one."

The questioner smiled faintly, but the company roared.

THE WIND AS A MUSICIAN.

The wind is a musician by birth. We extend a silken thread in a crevice of a window, and the wind finds it and sings over it and goes up and down the scale upon it, and Pagaminia don't go somewhere else for honor, for lo! the wind is performing upon a single string. It tries almost everything on earth to see if there is music in it—it persuades a tune out of the great bell in the tower, when the sexton is at home asleep; it makes a mournful harp of the giant pines, and it does not disdain to try what sort of a whistle can be made out of the humblest chimney in the world.—How it will play upon a tree until every leaf thrills with a note on it, whilst a river runs at its base in a sort of murmuring accompaniment. And what a melody it sings when it gives a concert with a full choir of the waves of the sea, and performs an anthem between the two worlds, that goes up perhaps to the stars, which love music most and sing it first. Then, how fondly it haunts old houses; mourning under the eaves, singing in the halls, opening door without fingers, and singing a measure of some sad, old song around the fireless and deserted hearths.

"I see him on his winding way," said Mrs. Jenkins, as she saw Mr. Jenkins creaking his way home just as the shades of twilight were creeping over the landscape.

MINING UNDER THE SEA.