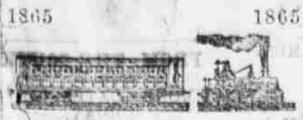


The Elk Advocate.

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VOL. 5. RIDGWAY ELK COUNTY PENNA., SATURDAY JANUARY 7th 1864. NO. 29



PHILADELPHIA & ERIE RAILROAD.

—This great line traverses the Northern and Northwest counties of Pennsylvania to the city of Erie, on Lake Erie.

It has been leased by the *Fennellian Road Company*, and is operated by them.

Its entire length was opened for passenger and freight business, October 17th, 1864.

TIME OF PASSENGER TRAINS AT RIDGWAY.

Leave Eastward:

Through Mail Train 1 53 p.m.

Accommodation a.m.

Leave Westward:

Through Mail Train 12 33 p.m.

Accommodation p.m.

Passenger cars run through without change both ways between Philadelphia and Erie.

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In the room formerly occupied by Doct. Blakely.

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P. W. Hays, Ridgway.

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District Attorney,

J. C. Chapin, Ridgway.

Treasurer,

Charles Lahr, St. Mary's.

County Surveyor,

George Wahusley, St. Mary's.

Commissioners,

Charles Weis, St. Mary's

Julius Jones, Benezett

Joshua Keefer, Jones

Auditors,

R. T. Kyles, Fox

Henry Warner, Jones

H. D. Derr, Benezett

NOTICE.—It is hereby given that there will be a meeting of the Stockholders of the Clarion River Navigation Company, at the House of Wm. H. Schram, Brockwayville on Saturday the 12th of December next, for the purpose of organizing the company and electing a President and four members of the Board of Directors, in pursuance of the act of incorporation.

NAT'S WIFE.

BY GRACE GARDNER.

"Shure, where's this piano to go?"

"Here, in this room," answered a hearty, cheery voice. "A little further. Beg that's right."

"But, Squire, who's going to play on it? It doesn't go itself, does it?" with a sly twinkle in his little gray eyes.

Nat's manly sunburnt face took a deeper tinge, and he answered, with an embarrassed laugh:

"A piano first, and then a player."

"Well, I guess the player's engaged. They say there's nobody in town pays so well as Mary Snyder. She's a beauty anyway if ever I saw one; isn't she, Tom?"

There was an expression of pride and perfect happiness in the depths of Nat's dark eyes, but he turned away shyly from the intelligent glances of the men.

"Take away all those packing cases, Ben, and other rubbish, and store them in the old barn, and to-morrow fetch that fence."

The men turned away. Nat looked after them, then softly shut and locked the door.

It was all done now. The new house was completely and nearly furnished, except a few old bedrooms, from garret to cellar.

It stood two stories and a half high, painted white, with green blinds and a piazza, a little way back from the street, in one of the pleasantest spots in the town, surrounded by broad fields stretching prettily—almost luxuriously, for a farm house. He had gone fifty miles, and selected with the greatest care every article of furniture with an eye to somebody's taste. Nothing within his means could be too good for that somebody; and so Squire Nat, his broad forehead corrugated with frowns of anxiety, threaded his way among countless rolls of carpeting, and bewildering arrays of parlor-seats and chamber-seats, mirrors, and etagères, and then stopped in helpless dismay at the task before him.

After a while, with the assistance of the courteous upholsterer, he made his selection, paid the bills, gave the directions for their being sent, and, not a little tired with this unwonted brain and eye work, took the next train home.

For whom was all this trouble taken? Who was this cherished somebody of whom even now Nat was thinking as he stood, we are sorry to say, in the unromantic attitude of both hands in his pockets and softly whistling, while he strolled in and out, from room to room, up stairs and down, his face radiant with happiness, his thoughts busy with an unclouded future—only—Nat's wife.

This is, his wife to be that day week—pretty Mary Snyder, the belle of the village—his Nat's wife. How his great loving heart thrilled at the thought! Would she be pleased with this? Would she want that altered? What would she say when she saw the piano? She played on a miserable cracked thing at home, and this was the finest instrument money could purchase. There must have been a little romance in Nat's composition, or he would never have thought of keeping all his arrangements a secret, to give her a pleasant surprise. It was past his power to keep the new house a secret, else it is certain he would; and Mary had been over in different stages of its completion from the time Nat's strong arm had been necessary to help her over the strutting timber and half-laid floor, take a peep into all the parts she could till she stood in it painted and plastered and it was pronounced finished.

But since then, Nat had invented sorts of reasons and excuses for keeping her out, which, I suppose, he answered to his conscience some way. He knew that it was being furnished, and had all a woman's curiosity; but he had got the impression that everything was to be very plain, and you may be sure Nat did not contradict this idea.

His Mary! Would anything ever come between them to lessen their love and happiness? She was fragile. How tenderly he would cherish her! She must not be burdened with care and toil, as many farmers' wives were. Efficient help was already secured, and must be returned—he could afford it. The storms of life must not come near his darling. Her blue eyes should never weep one bitter tear through blunder heart never for an instant heavy through any neglect of his. The indifference, the unkind words, the unchappiness of other homes must never be in his. Men were said to be selfish. He promised his own heart that he would ever consider Mary before himself. They would, God permitting, grow old together, lying each other more entirely as they neared the grave.

It grew twilight while he loitered and mused. He awoke to the gathering shadows. He went out, trying the door after he had locked it, through gate, and down the road till he

came to a brown cottage.

The figures of two persons (a lady and gentleman) were visible through the parlor-windows; but when he entered only one was there—his Mary. She met him near the door.

"You were not alone a moment ago?" he asked, smiling.

"Yes—no. Mr. Lyon came in for Fred, but not finding him went out."

There was constraint and embarrassment in her manner. A shadow came over her lover's face.

"I thought Mr. Lyon was to have gone home yesterday."

"He had intended to, but Fred had teased him to say a day or two longer, promising to accompany him to the city."

Mary was distraught all the evening. She avoided the subject of their future.

There was a strange lack of interest when he referred to the new house, and he left her with a heavy, foreboding heart, for the first time.

The matter was explained the next day, by a letter he received from her, short, but to the purpose.

"That she hoped Mr. Verner would not blame her because she had changed her mind. She didn't believe she would be happy to marry a farmer, and settle down where she had always lived. She had begun to, lately, to think that they were not congenial. Mr. Lyon had remarked, it also. His said 'she was never meant to be buried in the country, but ought to live in the city with nothing to do but visit, dress, and play the piano.' She thought herself that a city-life would suit her better. She hoped he would release her from her engagement, and not mind if she did not marry him. She knew he would like as well, and who would be stronger to help him in the farm work."

Nat Verner did not curse the faithless girl as he read; or, if curses were in his heart, his lips did not utter them. He suffered silently, with chasty contentance, the agony an honest loving heart like his must always suffer, when its happiness is struck down, its faith destroyed at one blow.

Perhaps a moment's temptation assailed him, when he remembered her beauty and fascinations, and felt that he could win her now with a promise of city life and luxury—possibly a visit to the house, might cause her to relent. For the first time he regretted his secrecy.

He started up at the idea. Do not think him weak. He could not break from the chains she, his almost bride, had cast around him all at once, even though she had proved herself weak and faithless. She was young, too; he could forgive something to her youth.

But this manhood returned. It was a true woman's heart he wanted. What would this purchased thing be worth in the discipline of life?

A rumor came to him the next day that Mary Snyder was engaged to Mr. Lyon, and was to be married soon.

Nat moved into his new house. He would have done it had it killed him. Not only his heart but his pride suffered keenly. The whole village knew for whom he had built his house, for whom he furnished it, and following him with pitying looks; but he carried himself bravely.

She was young, not over seventeen, short and slight, and a well-shaped head, and wealth of black hair, and soft, dark, intelligent eyes, shaded with black heavy lashes, which seldom, from their shy, averted, looked fully at you.

"Either,"

A vivid color came into her face at his voice. She drew near the table, holding the candle.

"Either," he repeated holding out his hand and taking one of hers, which she was too shy to offer, "you know, do you not, that this was to have been my wedding-day, and that tonight I am a deceived—almost heart-broken man?"

Her face flushed more deeply from sympathy and agitation.

"Either, everybody is pitying me. I cannot bear it. I think you like me. I will be kind to you. Will you marry me? To-night? now?"

She burst into tears—strange, not happy tears; but she loved him with a wild, idolatrous love. She would have

been glad to have faced him one

passionately, "Whatever you please," she sobbed.

Nat rose, went into the adjoining room, and gave an order to Ben.

An hour later and Esther was his wife.

Meanwhile, Mary Snyder had been regretting her precipitation in discharging Mr. Verner, especially as Mr. Lyon, notwithstanding all the love he had managed to express by manner and look, had departed without proposing, and she could have pinched herself with vexation when she heard of the luxury with which the Squire's new house was furnished; and when she learned of the piano she fairly cried. Her father and another scolded her for letting such a good chance go; her sister taunted her, and her brother ended with the agreeable prediction that "Mary would be an old maid, after all."

Mary was weak, and silly, and vixenly; but she could make a resolution, and she did.

The minister had departed. Esther, in her new and strange position, was hesitating whether to vanish to the kitchen of ruin, feeling that the first was scarcely fitting, yet desiring that her presence was not agreeable to her silent husband; and between the two, she stood in the shadow of the room, pretending to put to rights some books and ornaments.

The door opened. Something glided in, threw off some wrappings, and knelt at Nat's feet in all the splendor of beauty and excitement.

"O Nat! I sobbed, 'I have done wrong; but oh, I have suffered!'"

Nat's strong frame shook with surprise and agitation.

"Mary!"

He attempted to raise her; but she clung to his knees.

"No, Nat! let me be at your feet. This is a fitting place. 'I, who have wronged you so cruelly! but O Nat! I love you; I have loved you all the time. Forgive me!'"

His face was luminous with rapture and tenderness.

"Not there, my Mary. Come to my heart!" and he raised her forcibly and clasped her passionately to him. "O God! what am I saying! what have I done!" And he thrust her from him.

"O Nat! are you so hardhearted? I thought but a minute ago you had forgiven me. Can't you forgive me?" And she raised her beautiful face bathed in tears, to him, and folded her fair white arms in deep grief and humility.

"No, Nat! I don't deserve to be forgiven; but I love you!"

He was in terrible excitement—the veins in his forehead swollen out like cords.

"Fool! fool that I have been! Mary, stop! Hear me! My own cursed folly has put a bar between us forever. Mary, I am married!"

"Married!" she shrieked. "To whom?"

"Esther Arden."

"Esther Arden! the girl your mother brought up? She, your domestic, to be mistress of all these beautiful things? Oh, say it isn't so, Nat!"

"Yes, yes; it is true! Wretch that I am!" he said, almost beside himself.

Pale, quiet, seemingly turned to stone, Esther had remained amid all this excitement.

The worm will turn. Every feeling of womanhood outraged, she came forward, her usually shy downcast eyes bent large, and dark, and steadily on the excited Mary.

"Yes, I am mistress! What do you wish here?"

"Mistress?" Mary shrieked scornfully; "you claim him for your husband!"

Esther saw Nat's shudder of loathing, heard his words of authority, "Go into the other room, woman!" but, strong in her indignation, quailed not.

"Not while she remains," she answered, steadily.

He took no further notice of her. He raised the now almost insensible Mary, called her by every endearing name—proceeding himself in every other breath for his mad folly. When she revived and wanted to go home, he tenderly put on her wrappings and supported her from the room.

Esther stood where they had left her, gazing mechanically at a piece of white paper on the floor near where Mary had knelt; but she did not pick it up. She raised her hand to her head, as if bewildered. She felt a score of years older than when the evening shadows had begun to fall—a score of years older through suffering. She had known she had not Mr. Verner's love; but she had looked for honor in him, for consideration for herself.

"Poor Esther! unloved—loathed, even yet bound and keeping him bound. She had been stung and tortured into saying what she had; but the flash of passion had passed, and she reproached herself for her words. One thing only remained for her to do.

Nat came to his home. He was bowed

with grief. He came into the room and stood by the fireplace, where lately she, his idol, had knelt in all her beauty and humility; but oh! how vainly! The tumult of his feelings words cannot express! He had forgiven Mary all. O blessed words! She loved him—had loved him through all. The letter was only a moment's caprice or a moment's misgiving. His thoughts came back to the present obstacle to their happiness. He scorned himself for it; but he knew that he hated poor innocent Esther; but he hated himself most of all. Where Esther? He cared not; he wished he was never to see her again.

He saw the folded paper lying on the floor. He picked it up, opened it, recognized the handwriting with a thrill, and read:

"DEAREST, SWEETEST JULIA:—Are not your poor Mary's sorrows as romantic as any you ever read of in novels? Oh, if you were only here to comfort and advise me! To think that, after all, Mr. Lyon has gone off without proposing; and it has most killed your poor friend, for she gave up so much in expectation of it; and he was such a love, and had such dear little hands and feet. Don't you think it very queer, when he seemed to love me so—always complimenting my eyes and complexion, and telling me that such beauty ought not to be wasted on a country-farmer? I am sure I thought he was sincere."

"Dearest Julia, I am afraid I was not quite wise to reject Mr. Verner before I was sure of the other; and I understand that Mr. Verner has furnished the new house beautifully, and bought for me a splendid piano."

"Since I heard that—though I never liked any one so well as Mr. Lyon, but as I cannot have him—I have made up my mind to make up with Mr. Verner. I am sure you would advise it, Julia, dear. They say he has taken my rejection terribly hard; but he loves me to distraction, and I know he will forgive me at the first word."

"I shall leave him to live in the city after we are married. Mr. Lyon lives in the city, and I hope we shall always be friendly. I must close. Will tell you all the particulars in my next."

"Your loving MARY."

He folded this precious document slowly. He seemed destined to go through different phases of suffering this evening; but let him bear this last un-noticed.

The next morning it was discovered that Esther had disappeared. Search was made for her, but in vain. She left no traces.

The village was astonished at the news of Squire Nat's marriage, and the immediate disappearance of the bride. Mary's visit, too, to the master of the house, some way looked out. They had not recovered from the intense excitement this caused, when the report came that the new house was shut up and Squire Nat had entered the army.

Three years passed. Nat, now Colonel Nat Verner, was with his regiment in North Carolina. He had been in several battles, and was already conspicuous for his bravery.

He was one of a group of officers standing near the fort in conversation.

One of them was saying to a new-comer,

"So you don't believe that a negro can be made to be honest, can improve—in short, that he has a soul? Well, proof is better than argument. I will convince you of part by taking you into some of the schools established for negroes. Yes, yes; I know you think that is another quixotic scheme of the Government, but wait and see, you cautious critic! You'll be a convert yet."

Laughing gayly, he led the way to the nearest schoolhouse—a rude building, only a temporary affair.

A fair, stately girl was giving out words in spelling to a sable class, ranging in years all the way from five to fifty. She turned as they entered.

"Please excuse our intrusion, Miss Arnold, but I wished to convince a skeptic of our party of one or two facts that this visit will prove to him."

She bowed with dignified grace and motioned them to seats. As she did so, her glance fell Colonel Verner. She stood like a statue for an instant, and her face became ashy pale, but, recollecting herself, turned to her class.

Apparently the fair teacher was entirely absorbed in showing off the knowledge of her class; and Hercules, Alexander, and Scipio, Cleopatra, Joan, and Dorothea did credit to themselves and her; but had they lost their way from English into Greek, she would not have noticed it.

"Shoot me if I look at niggers when there's such a blamed pretty girl to look at!" whispered a ray captain to Colonel Verner. "What's the matter, Colonel? You look fierce enough to eat me. Do you know her? Is she anything to you?"

"Never heard her name before," replied the Colonel, trying to soften his features, but with little success.

"She's a blamed sight too pretty to be shut up here with these animals," continued the Captain. "I wonder if she's good at a flirtation. She seems mighty indifferent to the whole handsome lot of us."

The Colonel smiled grimly. The gallant captain stepped forward, asked her some questions concerning the school, but with very perceptible admiration in his eyes, to which she replied briefly, and in a very business-like way. The Captain could get no encouragement to continue the conversation; and soon drew back, disappointed and chagrined.

She noticed her visitors' departure with a slight inclination of the head; but only turning partially toward them.