

# PENNSYLVANIA IDYL

BY JOSEPHINE HERBST & JOHN HERRMANN

LYDIA and Karl jumped into their Ford and drove over to the Hendersons' as soon as they heard that two big beer trucks had broken through the bridge over the canal at two that morning. It was nine when Karl found out about it and there was a big crowd standing around already. Karl had one look and saw that he needed another man to help haul out a keg. There was a good deal of hauling out already going on, and Karl stepped on the gas so that they could get Steve before the beer was gone. The Hendersons were sitting outside in the sun; Steve was cleaning an old lantern and Rose was shelling some beans.

"Two big beer trucks broke through the bridge at Lower Blue Eddy; come on and bring some rope," Karl said.

"We can take the clothes-line," Steve said.

He got up, knocking the lantern over, and started toward the apple-trees where the clothes line hung. Rose rushed into the house. She remembered seeing some old line in the attic. Her head knocked against the beams and the line was covered with a pile of old shoes. She ran downstairs, turning out the fire under the oil-stove as she ran. When they saw her coming with the rope, the three under the apple-trees stopped wrestling with the clothes-line and hurried toward the Ford. The Ford had a tire with a slow leak, and now there was a little argument as to whether Steve should pump it up or ride on in Karl's car with Lydia and get things started. Everyone looked to Steve to get things started when they got to where the beer was.

Andrew, the brother-in-law of Steve,

now came on the scene and offered to pump the tire. All three men took a hand at pumping, each one yelling at the others to hurry and to let Steve go ahead and get things started with the beer. Karl finally led off with Lydia and Rose in his car and Steve and Andrew came behind with old '97.

Both cars steamed over the roads. The roads were very bad and the cars jolted and lurched. When they got along the Delaware they were on a county road and it was better. Karl stepped on it and Lydia said she hoped they would get there before all those Hoover cars had swiped the beer. She said that there was a crowd of cars with Hoover labels gathered around the bridge and that the owners were rolling home the booze.

When they got near to Lower Blue Eddy they had to slow down because the road was lined on both sides with cars. Some of them were swell. There were some New York licenses and a few from New Jersey, but most of the cars were from Pennsylvania. The road turned just where the bridge had been and there was a fairly steep rise. A car would have to slow down a little to make the turn, whether it was coming from Easton or headed that way. The trucks had been going toward Philadelphia.

The five young people parked the two Fords, and, carrying the coiled rope, headed toward the canal. There was a big crowd on each bank, staring at the trucks in the water. Both trucks had fallen on the side and stood a third out of the water. The water in the canal was about eight feet deep and the trucks lay jammed in the

wrecked timbers of the bridge. They were painted a nice blue with large lettering, "Puritan Fruit and Produce Co." They looked as if they had just fallen in without smashing anything.

Steve and Karl pushed toward the front carrying the rope. Rose and Lydia stood on the bank trying to hear if anyone had been killed. Some said two men were pinned under the trucks, some said only one. Some newspaper fellow from Easton said it wasn't much of a story unless one of the guys had been killed. A kid piped up and said his brother had been out on the truck and had just about stepped on the dead guy's face. The women all shivered and pressed closer to the canal. They wanted a good view of whatever was going to happen. Steve was already balancing on the timbers of the bridge and edging toward the truck that was farthest out of water.

A group of fellows was working at this truck. They had knocked a hole in the side and one of the men was inside, heaving out the kegs. They fastened a rope to a keg and pulled, and then the guys outside took hold of it and rolled it along a couple of planks from the wrecked bridge to the shore. A number of kegs had been taken out already. Cars with kegs tied up in gunny-sacks on the running boards shot off down the highway. The three newcomers went right out on the big blue truck. Steve knew one of the guys working with the kegs.

"Hello Bud," he said. He stood smiling at Bud, who smiled back. Bud was the son of the lock-keeper and he was always in on everything. Luke was there too.

Luke said, "Hello Steve, you got yours?"

"Not yet," Steve said.

He was glad he hadn't shaved for several days and that he had his old clothes on too. Then the fellows called him Steve. He liked that, and it made it easier to get a hand with the beer. Bud and Luke and a couple of other guys heaved out another keg and rolled it ashore. They let Andrew

and Karl get at the truck. Karl got right inside. The water came up above his knees as he stood on one row of beer kegs and reached toward another row. There were about forty kegs inside the truck. The kegs were heavy, and bound with three thick iron bands. The men got a rope looped around a keg and pulled. It bulged out of the truck and Steve and Andrew rolled it toward shore. Everyone was pretty quiet. The people on shore were quiet and the fellows hauling out the booze were quiet. There was a good view of the road to Easton and a lot of people kept looking up to see if the State troopers were coming. Someone said the troopers were coming now any minute.

"Funny thing why they ain't here yet. Been 'phoned for early this morning and it's going on eleven."

"Guess there's a good reason for that, if you ask me. They're paid, those fellows are, to keep away. When the evidence is all taken out, you'll see them fellows, not before."

"Ready to talk politics tonight, Elmer?"

"It's the poor man I'm thinking of, down under the water and not a soul has told his folks—"

"Hey—you out there—is a man under the truck?"

"My brother says he seen a man staring up at him —"

"Well, I don't keep up on politics, but Alma does and she argued until she was all a-shaking—"

"It ain't right to do that. Look at them fellows with cars. Now call it what you like, it's private property. Ought to be protected."

"What I want to know is, where's the sheriff?"

## II

Those that stood on the banks kept up a steady line of talk. There were a lot of women. Old women and a lot of young mothers with kids. Some of the kids had been hauled from their naps and their

bottles and were yelling. Nobody paid any attention to them. Two fancy women from a road-house up the Delaware joined the crowd. One of them had big earrings and black Summer furs and the other one was decked out in a red coat and white flannel skirt. You could tell what they were, all right, but everyone was so excited that even the decent town women didn't seem to care. The sun was hot and the old people got tired and red in the face. Steve and Karl got out a keg apiece and then Steve decided to get another. They went right ahead and the crowd kept getting bigger.

One of the canal barges was tied up, waiting for the wreck to be cleared. It was painted a bright orange color, and the bargeman got down and he and some farmers got a big rope and tackled the second truck. They began to get hold and they worked fast. They knocked a hole clean through the roof of the second truck. It was as good as new too. It was a Mack truck and the lamp that was half out of water was still burning. Folks said the dead man was right under that lamp.

The fellow from the barge was a big Swede and he got into the water with his shoes off. He climbed on top the wheel and looked down where they said the dead man was.

"Can you see him?"

"Ain't there now. Must have floated," the big Swede said.

"Is there a man under there?"

"Two, some say."

"Some guy saw his hand floating and another nearly stepped on his fingers."

"Funny where the troopers are—"

"Paid not to hurry, if you ask me."

"Nobody can touch anything until the coroner gets here. It's the law. I knew of a case. A boy drowned and they couldn't take him out until the coroner come. It's against the law to do anything without the coroner."

"Better hurry, you guys. Troopers may come any minute."

"Hey Joe, roll out a couple more and then beat it."

The big Swede's wife had come off the barge and called to Joe, who was swimming around getting kegs started toward the shore. She was big and strong and took a hand and helped heave the kegs up the bank. Then she rolled them herself along the tow-path to the barge. The town people and the Summer people and the crowd that got out of cars passing by looked on. They were all good-natured and having a swell time. Nothing so good had happened in a long while. A lot of fellows wanted to get a keg but didn't have the crust.

Steve and Andrew and Karl rolled their three kegs up the bank and Steve drove old '97 down to the edge of the canal and they hoisted the three kegs in. Then they drove to Karl's house. They decided the kegs were safer there. Some snooty person might have been spying and taken down all the numbers on the cars. Bud had whispered to Steve that he had heard there was a fellow spying and taking down numbers and they might all get arrested.

Bud and the big Swede and a couple of farmers and some painters at work on a house nearby all kept on getting out the beer. Now and then a couple of white-collar guys sneaked in and hauled out a keg. Everybody else stood on the banks and didn't seem to mind sun or heat. They didn't intend to budge until something happened. A serious looking man in good city clothes came up and offered the Swede five dollars to go down and haul up the body.

"Think I'm a sucker?" said the Swede. "I'm here for beer. What's five dollars?"

A lot of talk went around that the Big Boss himself had shown up and had offered five to have the dead man hauled out. They said it just showed how little those fellows valued human life. It went around that the trucks belonged to Boo Boo Hoff and that his man had been the one offering the five dollars. The fellows went right on hauling out the kegs and rolling them away, into the fields and back of a big barn down the canal.

As they worked a wrecking crew came up. They were from Easton. They got busy with ropes and got out on the wreckage and everybody thought that now there would be some action. Karl and Andrew and Steve came back and stood around waiting to see the dead man hauled up. The crew got busy, but instead of trying to hoist the trucks they went right after the beer. They had good stout ropes and as there were five of them, they were able to get a lot of good beer out of the water and rolled down the road. Some said they were selling this stuff at five dollars a keg to city guys in cars who didn't have the nerve to step in and get it for themselves. All the people on shore kept a sharp look-out on the road toward Easton and someone yelled,

"Beat it! The cops are coming!"

An old woman leaned down over the broken off bridge and shouted, "Hey, get your beer rolled out! The cops!"

The wrecking crew, Bud, the farmers and the painters, and the big Swede and his wife all fished out the kegs in sight and scrambled up the tow-path with them. Two State troopers came on leisurely. By the time they reached the bridge, the wreckers were fixing chains around the truck farthest down stream and the foreman was yelling orders.

"Where's the body?" the foreman asked, very businesslike.

"Down there," yelled everyone along the bank, pointing in a dozen different places.

"Well, we got to get him out before we haul up the truck," the foreman decided.

Those on shore were full of advice. Some thought the truck could be lifted with blocks, and a rope tied to the body to keep it from floating away. Others said the body would be cut to pieces if the truck was touched. The wrecking crew played at the job, throwing water at one another and now and then one guy would punch another with a timber. They acted like kids showing off.

Someone had told the news to the steam

canal-dredging crew working several miles away and the dredge now came puffing along toward the wreck. When the Easton wreckers saw it they quit fooling and began to work fast. It looked as if the canal-dredger would take the business away from them. People on shore began to bet the Easton crew wouldn't be able to do any hoisting without the powerful machinery on the dredge. It came puffing along and the Easton crew got a line on the truck farthest out of water and hauled away. Just as the big dredger got up to them, they righted the big truck and pulled it toward the left bank.

### III

It was almost noon. The men on the dredge, for all their hurry, got off their barge leisurely and didn't make a move to do anything toward hoisting the trucks in the water. They went along the tow-path to the meadow. A lot of fellows had been going over there. One of the troopers had gone over and when the crowd saw him coming they ducked and scattered through the tall grass. But he didn't do anything. He just grinned and walked back to the wreckage.

The twelve o'clock whistle blew. The sheriff hadn't shown up yet, nor the coroner. Crowds now came thick along the canal from the big crockery factories on the other side of the river. Workmen streamed across the canal, grinning and calling out to one another, "Got yours?" The Easton wrecking crew quit on the job and went down the tow path. Steve saw Bud and Luke trot along the other side of the canal toward the deep weeds. Plenty of beer kegs had been going in that direction all morning. He hustled up the embankment and called to Karl and Andrew, "They're tapping the kegs, sure as the devil! Let's go over."

Steve and Karl hurried across the canal, walked a plank out to a coal barge moored alongside, and then went down another plank to the shore. Andrew hung back. He

figured the beer would be warm in the sun and he wanted to be on hand if they fished the body out. Steve and Karl ran into the field and found Bud. There were about thirty men around two kegs, one of which was already empty. One man had a hammer in his hand to knock the bungs in. There were only two glasses in the crowd and one small quart bucket. The men got as close to the kegs as they could and said, "I'm next! Gimme the glass! Say, hand me the can, will you? Let me have it next, will you?" Steve and Karl stood in the background.

Bud saw them and yelled out, "Hello Steve, got yours yet?"

"No," said Steve.

"Step right up," Bud said. He knew all the men and pushed his way to the keg. He took a glass out of one of the men's hands without saying a word. Then he said, "Lay over," to a guy hogging the keg. The fellow stood back and Bud filled the glass twice for Steve and Karl. The fellows crowded up and the glass was filled and refilled. Finally the second keg was empty. The party moved on its way to another keg in the tall grass. Karl went back to the wreck and Steve moved on with the crowd of boisterous and beery gents. The fellow with the hammer knocked in the bung and the glasses and can started doing service. With each glass poured, a glass or more went into the ground. The farmer who owned the land kept moving around with the gang of men, drinking his share, but he didn't like the way the ground soaked up the beer.

"Gosh, no corn won't grow there next year. That ground ain't no good no more," he said.

No one paid any attention to him. There were about six other keg parties going around in the big weedy field. Everybody was happy.

"Well, here's to Prohibition—"

"Good joke, ain't it?"

"Let's have some more beer."

"Drink her down, boys. It ain't going to last forever."

"Them Federal men will be along here. Keep your eyes peeled."

"They can't do nothing."

"Gimme more beer."

Bill Jackson passed, walking by in a wide circle and followed by about ten men from Jersey.

"Where you going, Bill?" Steve said.

"Have you got yours, Steve?" Bill said.

"Sure have. Have a drink," Steve said.

"We got a keg out here," Bill said, "Come on over."

Steve stayed there and took another swig out of the can. The beer was good and still cool from being so long in the canal. It was a rich heavy brew, good and heady like the Munich October brew or Pilsner, but nowhere near so smooth or easy on the palate. The kegs were charred and pieces of charcoal went into the glasses as they were filled up. This didn't bother the drinkers; beer and charcoal went down together. One fellow stumbled and fell backwards. This got a big laugh.

"Have some more," somebody said.

"Here come the Federals—"

"Where?"

"Right here!"

#### IV

"Stand still, you fellows! Everybody stand right where you are," shouted out the taller of the two Federal men. They looked like a couple of Kuppenheimer kids with their collegiate cut clothes, one with a cap and the other with a grey felt hat, bell bottom trousers and an Arrow collar mug. Their faces were set looking and serious and there was a frown on each of them. Two fellows in the party ducked low and started to run out of the circle into the weeds.

"Get them two guys!" said the tall agent.

"Pull your gun on 'em if they run like that. Give it to 'em."

One of the fellows in the circle spoke up, "Not in Pennsylvania, you birds. Not in Pennsylvania you don't go pulling no guns."

The two fellows who had tried to run away came walking back looking sheepish and stood in the circle.

"Take that smart fellow into custody," said the tall agent. "We'll take him along with us. You stand there where you are, you fellows."

The little agent who looked cocky went up to the fellow who had talked up when they threatened to pull their guns.

"You're under arrest," he said.

"What fer? All right, try it, only you don't go pulling no guns in this State. You must be a couple of Jersey guys. You can't pull that stuff here. You'll find there're other people as quick on the trigger as you are."

"You're under arrest. Shut your mouth. Nobody said they was pulling the guns, did they?" the big fellow said. He walked up close to the farmer who had spoken up. He doubled his fist. "You bastard, did anyone say they was pulling their guns? Did they? Speak up, damn you. Say they didn't or I'll sock you."

The farmer got a little scared. He didn't want to be socked.

"No, you didn't say it," he lied.

"You hear that, men?" the agent said. "Nothing was said about guns and we got these witnesses. Nobody said nothing about pulling a gun. You go along with us, buddy. Take down their names, Sam," he said to the little agent.

"Stay where you are, all of you. Your name?"

The first fellow said his name in a low voice. He was scared and thought he might disgrace his family. The next one felt the same and hesitated. Steve was third and he was a little nervous himself, but he spoke up with his name and smiled and turned to the farmer beside him.

"Doesn't mean anything. They won't do a thing," he said.

The next farmer spoke his name out loud when the agent asked him, and smiled, and everybody felt easier. Steve was a city fellow and if he wasn't scared they weren't going to be either. They all

looked at him and smiled and he had to carry it off that he didn't mind it. He walked over to the tall agent.

"Are you State or Federal men?"

The tall guy looked at him and wasn't going to answer. Then he figured he might as well. "Federal," he said.

"Federal, are you? Are you out of Doylestown? I'm covering this for one of the papers."

The agent looked at Steve quickly. He was impressed but a little doubtful. "What paper?"

"New York paper."

"Got your card?"

"No, it's across the canal."

"We'll go over there and take a look at it."

"All right," Steve said.

He didn't have a card and was no longer a newspaper man, but he knew reporters got some attention in a case like this. He didn't know why he pulled the newspaper line, but he felt good about it.

Some stragglers walked up and the little agent asked if he had all the names. One fellow said he didn't have his. He had just come up to the crowd and had had no beer. The agent took his name and the fellow smiled and felt that he was in on things.

"Have we got all the names?"

"You ain't got mine," said the farmer under arrest.

"Never mind, buddy, we got *you*," one agent said.

A State cop walked up and the agents turned the farmer boy over to him.

"Can we go now?" somebody piped up.

"All right. You can go now."

"What's the charge against these men?" Steve asked.

"Larceny and contempt of court. That beer was seized by the sheriff and it's State property."

"Oh, I see," Steve said. He smiled and walked away. Nobody had seen anything of the sheriff.

"Wait a minute. I'll take a look at that card," the agent said.

"All right," Steve said. "Come along."

Just then the little agent thought he saw someone moving in the bushes by the canal.

"Come on, Bill," he said and they crouched down like Nick Carter detectives and left Steve standing there. They sneaked through the weeds toward the canal. A fellow crouched down there on his heels and was just tearing a piece of newspaper into six inch squares. The agents stood up and walked back toward the scene of the accident. They forgot Steve and he went back to the other side of the canal where his friends were. He was excited now and felt pretty good about being in the raid.

## V

Lydia and Rose were waiting patiently by the canal to see the poor dead man hauled up. The coroner had arrived. He was a snappy little fellow in white-and-tan sport shoes and he was smoking a cigar. He kept grinning and wise cracking. He said he had a birth to attend to and couldn't waste time here. If they hauled up the corpse he would come back later; he might come back anyhow. News that the Federals had come and had taken names was going around and everybody felt excited. Those who had not been in the meadow were sore that they had not got in on it. Those that had their names taken went around grinning and saying that nothing would come of it. The road supervisor had had his name taken too. He lived a couple of hundred feet from the bridge and said he was the first to get to the scene of the accident.

"If it hadn't been for me another car with a man and woman and a kid would have gone down too. My son heard it. He yelled to me, 'Pop, there goes the bridge!' and I got up and put on some pants and I just got the red lantern fixed when along come a car full of people. If it hadn't been for me more lives would have been lost and I say I earned that beer. They took my name, but I say I earned it."

Even those who had done no drinking seemed to think the beer had been earned. But some of the older men said it was wrong to take something that didn't belong to you. Karl and Andrew and Steve and the girls decided to go home for a bite to eat and then come back. Nothing was happening to the wreckage and they wanted to see some action.

It was almost five o'clock when they came back. The big trucks were righted, by the aid of the Easton crew and the big dredge. There was no sign of a dead man. The coroner had come back, grinning. The place was full of Federal men, highway commissioners, bridge inspectors and officials of all kinds. The sheriff had at last put in an appearance. He was now doing his duty by a couple of kegs stranded near the canal. As he hammered in the bungs he groaned.

"Hurts me same as you," he said to a couple of fellows waiting for the beer to gush forth. As it rushed in a foam on the ground some of the fellows got right down and scooped it with their hands, guzzling it. Where it lay in little pools some lapped it up, right from the ground.

There seemed to be as many people standing around as earlier in the day. Everybody was taking a holiday. They were happy and grinning and some of the men were pretty tight. One of the Federals said there never had been a body under the truck, but he guessed everybody was so crooked they thought they had seen one. The men whose names had been taken stood around, grinning at one another and feeling as if they belonged to a club. The coroner joked and the crowd joked with him. Someone said they guessed that baby had been born without much of doc's help.

The doc was feeling good-natured and the Federals important. The stream was now getting clear of timbers and the trucks were hauled almost out of water, enough to allow the waiting barges to go by. A lot of people felt sorry for the fellow on the orange-colored barge. When the Federals came, he got scared and threw

his kegs overboard. Then the men in the meadow found them and drank up the beer. He had worked hard for nothing. Those who had watched the kegs go overboard thought he had lost every keg. As the canal got clear the big Swede bargeman got his mules harnessed and started along the tow-path. The mules wore jaunty red hats and their bright brass bells tinkled. As they pulled, the orange barge swung into the middle of the canal. Slowly it came up to the scene of the wreck. A big crowd lined each bank. The bargeman

steered with care past the wrecked trucks. As the barge sailed by the crowd, two beer kegs were seen bobbing along, tied firmly to the rudder. The crowd pointed and began clapping. They clapped and cheered and laughed and everybody craned to see the kegs bumping along behind the barge.

But the bargeman pretended he didn't know what they were laughing and clapping about. He looked straight ahead very businesslike, and bore hard on the tiller, keeping the barge headed straight up stream.

# A LITTLE MORE ABOUT EVE

BY JAMES BRANCH CABELL

A SOUTHERNER is very often, and quite easily, shocked, especially in any matter which concerns chivalry. I, thus, am frequently upset to an unbelievable degree when people tell me, as they do over and over again with rather maddening unanimity, that women have not been fairly dealt with in that collection of my books which make up the Biography of Dom Manuel's perpetuated life upon earth. . . . Yet other persons, to be sure, profess that women are introduced into the Biography solely in order that men may deal fairly with them in Jurgen's personal application of this phrase. Either way, there seems a general feeling—peculiarly awkward for a Southern author to be encountering,—that, throughout my books, this half of the world's population has been neglected if not actually slandered.

After due confession that this is quite possibly true, I confess that I do not think it is true. I must point out that women, in common with all other non-human creatures such as gods and fiends and ghosts, appear in the Biography only as this one or the other of them seems to this or that human, and therefore, of course, to this or that very easily deceived, male person. I must point out that the point of view of the Biography is always masculine. I must remind you, in brief, that I have attempted no actual or complete portrait of any woman, but only a depiction of some man's notions about one or another woman.

To this rule there are but two exceptions, I believe, throughout the entire Biography,—in "Sweet Adalais" and "Porcelain Cups,"—wherein for technical reasons all is necessarily seen through a young

girl's lustrous and youth-blinded eyes. Elsewhere I have self-confessedly rendered the man's notion of the woman, whether the man's own all-tincturing nature be a medium so heavily or so slightly encoloring whatever it transmits as I have variously employed in Nicolas de Caen and in Richard Harrowby and in Gottfried Johannes Bülg and in Robert Etheridge Townsend and in Captain Francis Audaine and in the anonymous redactors of the legends of Poictesme. Everywhere I have but recorded one or another more or less individualized male's notion about an especial woman, as a notion for the correctness of which I could assume no responsibility.

I have preferred to err, where error appeared inevitable, upon the safer side. Reading any printed narrative by a woman wherein the authoress—for at this precise point all female writers become mildly quaint authoresses,—purports to render for you the interior being of any male character, then the male reader becomes, at happiest, puzzled and just vaguely perturbed. The teddied creatures are clever. They, whose empirical knowledge is complete, do understand us—almost. But, after all, nothing in the picture is really quite right. The most gifted woman writer, at her most excellent, seems but to give, in dealing with her ostensibly male characters from the inside, one of those "artistic" photographs in which not any especial feature but merely everything is slightly out of focus. I can recall no instance in which a woman writer has depicted a man even fairly credible, to any of her male readers, when once she had