

**Chester F. Harling**, (1873 – 10 Jan 1891), Perry County Democrat, Saturday, January 17, 1891, Suicide of a Young School Teacher

On last Sunday morning the parents of **Chester F. Harling**, of this borough, discovered that their son had not occupied his bed the night before. Later in the day they found two or three letters in which he avowed his purpose to take his own life, saying that he intended to commit the act in such a manner as to render it useless for them to attempt to find his body.

When these facts became known much interest was manifested by our citizens and many called to make inquiries and extend sympathy to the almost distracted parents.

It occurred to a number that, as he had stated in his letter he would conceal his body, he would likely throw himself into one of the many iron ore pits, or shafts, which abound on the old Juniata Furnace lands, about two miles northeast of this borough.

**Ed** and **Harry Clouser**, sons of Ex-**Sheriff Clouser**, thus believing, set out to explore that region. In the old road that skirts the northern limits of this borough they found tracks in the snow which had been made the night before and which were about the size of the feet of the missing young man. They followed them and found that they led in the direction indicated. They had been made by one who had walked in the darkness of the night and by one who was not well acquainted with the road. These tracks approached one of the many sink holes near the vacated road, and then returned to the road. They were found on the edge of a limestone quarry and then passed around it and finally led out to the public road near the Samuel Brown property and were lost before they reached the intersection with the old Juniata Furnace road. The Messrs. Clouser then returned, but when they reached the place where they first noticed the tracks one of them crossed the field and found the father of the boy.

When their report had been made, it confirmed the opinion of those who held that, if he had carried out his avowed purpose, his body would be found in the neighborhood to which he had been traced: but it was evident that he had missed his way in the darkness and had not gone to the old shafts into one of which he had intended to throw himself. He had borne too much to the left and the Messrs. Clouser, to satisfy themselves, had circled around those old mines and did not find his tracks again.

After dark, on Sunday evening, it threatened a fall of snow. If it snowed the tracks would be obliterated and all hope of finding the body before Spring would have to be abandoned.

The young man had left behind him all his money, his overcoat and everything he owned excepting his razor. Taking this with him added to the apprehension of all that he really meant self destruction, and it was soon determined upon that the search must be prosecuted that night. Accordingly, lanterns and a rope were procured and two sleds, with a number of our citizens, started about 7:30 p.m. on another search for the missing youth. They drove out the road leading to Newport, turning off into the old road just beyond the farm house of Mr. **Oliver Rice**, passing the Airy View school house on the ridge. Someone then suggested that the lanterns should be lighted, as the one they sought for might have come thus far in that direction. This road and led up a lane in the direction of a lime kiln, which is situated a short distance from the public road. In

the opinion of Mr. **Ed Clouser** they had been made by the same person whose tracks he and his brother had followed earlier in the day. The second sled had not yet come up, but Messrs. **Minich, Clegg** and **Clouser** at once proceeded to the lime-kiln, to which the tracks led. They had been made by one who thought he could enter the kiln at its mouth, but which was closed. They then led up the steep bank to the top of the kiln, which was covered and enclosed on all sides excepting the side next the hill. The tracks went no farther. They looked down into the kiln. There the light of the lantern disclosed the body of young **Harling**.

They called to the party on the second sled that the object of the search had been found. At once Messrs. **A.P. Nickel, John Clouser, J.S. Whitmore, Thomas Kitner** and **James S. Magee** came up. The latter noticed close to the edge of the kiln and picked up an empty phial, labeled laudanum, from the drug store of **George S. Henry**, Duncannon. Near the bottle was the paper in which it had been wrapped and a spot of blood. Evidently young **Harling** had sat on the edge of the kiln, cut himself on the wrists and then sprang to the bottom of the kiln, a distance of about 15 feet.

A lantern was attached to a rope and lowered into the kiln. It was then seen how the deceased had died. His throat had been cut nearly from ear to ear, the windpipe and jugular vein severed and both wrists hacked in a frightful manner with the razor.

**Mr. Clegg** was then lowered by a rope, which he tied around the body of the dead youth and, after a rail had been placed across the mouth of the kiln, it was drawn up, carried to the sled, placed thereon, brought to town and taken to the Undertaker Nickel's rooms, where it was dressed for burial, and later the same night conveyed home. The funeral will take place on Wednesday at 11 o'clock and the interment will be in the Bloomfield Cemetery.

The young man was teaching the school near Sulphur Springs, in Wheatfield Township and before leaving for home on Friday evening arranged with one of his pupils to have the stove blacked and kindling prepared for Monday morning; but he must have had the bottle of laudanum on his possession at the time.

He was the victim of dyspepsia and had a complication of diseases, which evidently rendered life a burden and unsettled his mind. Intellectually he was very bright and had he been blessed with good health, would no doubt made his mark in the world. He was aged about 18 years. The sympathies of our whole community are with his bereaved parents in this hour of their great trouble.