

William Espey (- 2 Oct 1861)

The Evening Star, September 11, 1855

Attempted Suicide

Yesterday afternoon about 3 o'clock, an individual named William Espey, a cabinet-maker, residing in the Seventh Ward, under the excitement of brain that follows excessive drinking, applied for strychnine at the drug store of Mr. Dyson, at the corner of Pennsylvania avenue and Twelfth street, with an intimation that his purpose was to destroy his life. On being refused he left the store with oaths and imprecations on the head of the druggist, and, proceeding down to the drug store of the young Messrs. Ford, on the corner below, he changed his manner entirely, asking calmly, and so as to create no suspicion of his purpose, for an ounce of laudanum, which he purchased.

On getting out of the store, he hastily drew the cork and swallowed the contents of the vial. Fortunately, one of the proprietors of the store observed him, and sprang out after him, following him into Mr. Adams' Restaurant nearby, where he had taken a seat in one of the boxes. He (the druggist) informed those present what Espey had done, and with their assistance, took him by main force back into the drug store, where Mr. Ford, instantly sending for medical aid, also attempted to force down his throat emetics, which Espey resisted, refusing to swallow them.

Drs. Berry and Force soon arrived, and made various efforts to compel him to take emetics, or to submit to the operation of the stomach pump, against which he struggled with a success truly remarkable, considering the physical force employed to save his life. Late in the afternoon the drowsiness consequent on the laudanum in him conquered his faculty of resistance, and the physicians applied the stomach pump, by means of which so much of the poison was extracted from him that he began to revive after they had given up almost all hope of saving him. Getting him on his feet again, they and their assistant bystanders next kept him in motion against his will, until all danger was passed. His case was managed with skill and perseverance, reflecting the highest credit on the physicians called in, as above described. Mr. Ford, too, by his presence of mind and energy, notwithstanding his youth, placed the case within the reach of the skill of those gentlemen. A delay of ten minutes on his part might have rendered Espey's recovery past hope.