msa_sc3415_scm3600-0101 ©Maryland State Archives

The Planters' Advocate.

By THOMAS J. TURNER. "TRUTH ALONE IS KNOWLEDGE—KNOWLEDGE IS POWER." TWO DOLLARS PER ANNUM.

Vol. 6. UPPER MARLBOROUGH, MARYLAND, WEDNESDAY MORNING, JUNE 17, 1857. No. 43.

A Thrilling Narrative.

THE LAIRD'S SEAM.

Chapter 1.

An old tumble-down house, which had been white, but was now relieved by sundry grass green patches, stood seventy years ago, at the end of a short, straight avenue running through a belt of Scotchfirs; beyound which all around stretched as bleak and rushy moorland as ever clad the poor wards of Lanark. The house was not without pretensions; it aimed at being a small place—a laird's mansion; but it had no air of prosperity, from the name of Watery Butts (and the winter rain lay weeks in the furrows of its sour, stiff clay soil,) to the grey stones rent and shattered upon its steep roof, the lintels of the small battered windows defaced and worn, the wooden work crumbled down, and the battered door opening with two leaves like a cupboard. Within there was the same evidence of narrow means or waning fortunes; the sitting-room, originally panelled, was destitute of all more modern pretensions to elegance, or even comfort; the bare carpet of thick, grey woolen stuff, was not superior to what might be met with in the best room of the one story farm house built on the first arable farm beyond these moors; the table was of wainscot and in the light of the hearth a young woman, with homely striped skirts, and keys at her side as the mistress of the house, sat spining yarn from a dark polished wheel.

The mansion might have fallen into the hands of tenant owners of the humbler class—moorland farmers only raised a step above their cottars—but for the central figure, a man of sixty, poring with keen eyes, whose lashes were white as snow, over the cobwebbed yellow papers of the pigeon holes in an ancient escretoire mounted on spindle legs and planted by the window, occasionally laying them down to handle with his big, bony hands a few dull chipped stones contained in the drawer of the same repository, and compare them with a rough basket at his feet filled with the same smutty material. The coarse plaiden coat, the weighty peasant shoes, the tangled grey hair, no more degraded their owner than the ponderous, clumsy, dim frame can overshadow a work of the painter's art.

The October sun, now setting behind these dreary tracks, shot its rays through the dispersed, erect, black piues, and piercing the lozenged panes, fell upon the Laird of Watery Butts, dreaming his phantasy; and a broad, furrowed brow of genius was Ringan Cockburn's, with sharp features, and eyes of wonderful fire looking out beneath their silvery brows. There was nobleness about Ringan Cockburn that no poverty could clog, youth that no old age could quench. He was musing earnestly, with a flush rising upon his sunken cheek; suddenly he threw down stones and papers, sat erect in his leather covered elbow chair, and called "Thrift," in tones of cherry command.

Thrift Cockburn—twice Thrift Cockburn, the old Laird's daughter and only child, and at five-and-twenty the composed wife of the laird's nephew and heir, a Cockburn of a younger branch of the same gnarled tree—obeyed the summons; and there side by side, as if for comparison, were the starry light of science—all the purer that it was less a thing of facts than of conviction, that it was idealized in its life-long struggle against groping ignorance and cumbersome difficulties—and the lowlier, commoner, more blessed beam of household love, lifting as an angel's wings the simple, unreasoning, instinctive nature to the higher. stronger spirit within whose circle it had flourished—as if the little social moorland lark had fluttered fearlessly to the plumed breast of the lonely, royal eagles. Thrift Cockburn was no exemplification of the somewhat hard-fisted, homely virtue, once so esteemed on Scotch lips that it crept into a Christian appellation, pronounced with a benediction over tiny, unconscious faces in many a heathery nook, from the Solway to the highland born Forth and Tay.—Thrift Cockburn was tall and shapely, with a round, dimpled face, like a scarlet streaked apple in the Bothwell orchards, and eyes bluer than the "flower of the flax," which she bade her Wat sow. It was a kindly, blithe face, with its own peculiar bloom, that neither mildew nor rust could wear away—that would survive the carle time and care with the best, and whose little lines of wilfulness never for a moment combated with the great reverence that nestled under her curch as beneath her maiden snood. Thrift Cockburn could dare her domestic, long-legged, red-headed Jean; or ban the dark vagabond gipsy that would fascinate her with his evil eye, while his tattered comrade lifted her griddle cakes or her "grey cock;" and soundly shake her little urchin when he meddled with his grand-father's treasures, his dried weeds, or his stones and rude wooden models. But she had faith that never doubted her manly Wat—faith that could lift mountains and cast them into the sea for her grey-haired father, the beggared Laird of Watery Butts.

"Thrift," the Laird addressed her with confident congratulation, "I see my way as clear as day. When the pit's down, your fortune's won."

"Do you say so, father!" replied Thrift, with answering gladness, as if she had not heard the same story fifty times; "I'm blithe to hear it; not but I can bear puirtith, but your's growing auld, and Wat will lay aside the plough and ride with his marrows, and wee Wat will grow up to a grand inheritance; and you shall be honored as the deer of all and the benefactor of the country side, never to be lichtlied more. I'm glad that you've fand the seam."

"It's no found, lassie," interrupted the Laird, hastily; "only sure to be; the metals are the same, and they take the vey dip, and I cannot be baffled by another hitch. No!" said Ringan Cockburn, striking the table with his broad hand, and speaking with a prophet's glowing certainty; "the victory's won. I see the hill head, with the blocks of hard, clean coal—it's parrot, Thrift, as I'm a living man—binged house high, and the train of carts with their Clydesmale mares, and the stout carters bending beneath their load, and whistling and cracking their whips as they drive away to their ten miles' distant homes, and the black-a-viced, souple miners swinging in the tubs, and receiving their bright silver groats at the week's end. My word, the Laird of Briary Wood, with its waving holms of wheat and barley, wad fain niffer with the Laird of Watery Butts; such a hairst he will reap from his peathags, as Briary Wood and all his generation saw. We'll rebuild the old house, Thrift; well have policies and herb gardens and pleasure gardens. Young Wat will get College learning, and sit in the London Parliament, and maintain the rights of Scotland, and counsel King George; and, lassie I'll lay down my weary banes and dee in peace."

"Dinna speak o' dee'in, father," cried Thrift, "with fortune at the door; gin Wat were but in to hear the news."

"They have termed me a fule and a madman, Thrift," continued Ringan Cockburn, unheeding her; "gentle and simple have charged me with wasting your means; they have said I would bring you to want and misery, and now, with the Lord's will, their children's children will owe me their bread."

"The Lord has blessed you, father," exclaimed Thrift, devoutly, "he has given to you to return gude for evil."

"He gave me a gude bairn, Thrift," responded her father, affectionately, "that never failed me in my troubles, and that can now rejoice wi' me when my jewel's found."

"Father," pleaded Thrift, wistfully, "Wat never said you nay."

The Laird patted her comely cheek and smiled. "Wat's a long-sighted chap, and has a wife and a wean to protect; and he's been patient, forby eydent; I'm content."

"But when will the coal be howkit, and the country side tell'd and the crowns in place of bodles in our purse?" demanded Thrift.

The Laird looked down reprovingly. "Bairn, Rome wasna built in ae day—it's a far cry to Lochawe—yet it's yonder, Thrift, ayont the blu hills; I saw it since, and its wild swans and kilted clans, when I was a laddie, and Rob Roy yet brattled ower the vale of Menteith, and there was word of axes and claymores instead of picks and shools. The pit is not sunk to its last fathom, there maun be gude hire to transform mair hedges and ditches into miners and banksmen, and but a cauld coal to blow at in the meantime." The Laird reflected, "Ay, it's never darker than afore dawn."

Thrift's gleeful face fell, though she strove not to be daunted, and would cling to the bright certainty that had been presented to her, for one moment, to be wrested the next from her grasp.

"It will be but a few shifts mair, father, and when Wat is convinced that success is so nigh—"

The Laird's brow contracted.

"Wat's honest, but he is dull, and he grows thrawn, and it is ill to stoop to my younger brither's orphan son."

"Oh! father, dinna blame Wat; he wad work or want for you, ony day; bet he's ower anxious and he's ill-advised," pleaded Thrift, faithfully.

"And my arms are stiff, and the day's gone by, when there was no want o' hands to maw the hay, and cut the oats, and big the peats for the Maister of Watery Butts; and my fellows look askant on me at kirk and at market, and hold puir Wat no better than a grieve or a ploughman, and wonder at his puir spirit that jowks to my maggots. That's the way o't, Thrift, and sirs, its high time it were ended."

A new impulse swayed Thrift; she threw her arms round her father's neck: "How daur they, father, how daur they?" she sobbed, "you that were aye ower gude and wise, and never waured a plack on ae sin, and labored for the weal o' ane and all. Oh, how can they?"

The Laird clasped his hands and looked straight before him with frank pride. "Ay, Thrift, I showed them how to bore the well at the Pends; I bade Willie Lumsden straw lime on his barren rigs and this day they bear twofold. I planted scores o' elms and beeches that will grow when we are sleeping," and wave their green tops when Wat and you are threescore; I have built a mill, though my red land's no great; I've had neep seed and grass seed frae foreign lands; the best is but little, but I've done my best, though I impoverished myself to enrich the beechen bog that's a slough of despond to this hour; and the yellow sandstones of my quarry were mauverish as snuff ere they had been months exposed to sea and wind.

And you have dealt aumouses, father, to the sick and infirm; and you gave your barn to the tramping preacher, that Briary Wood and Clay Gates drove off their lands.

Chapter 2.

"The Laird had donned his grey cloak and blue bonnet, and was out in the tempestuous October twilight, plodding, with bent head, but unrelaxing foot, to the ruddy fire that, like a beacon at sea, burned night and day on one spot on the waste, there to hold his visit."

The summer had been cold and wet,
And stuff was unco green.

And on the moorlands of Watery Butts the hardy reapers were yet cutting down the crop that, in spite of the Laird's experiments, the winter snow might surprise a field, Wat Cockburn was superintending their laborers.

Thrift's satellite, Jean, was an out-worker.—Thrift was alone at her warm hearth, the windows rattling and the cloud drifting without—alone, save for little Wat, who sat in his corner marshalling flocks and herds of the dry, brown, enty husks of field-peas, and knobbed fir-tops. Thrift span and pondered, rose to set the great pot on the kitchen fire, and to mingle and stir its warm wholesome mess; but it was not of the tired harvest hands she thought, or even of Wat's coming in cold and hungry from his day's toil. Thrift dwelt upon her father's words with the pertinacity of a temper early imbued with a portion of the Laird's ardor, and an affection made up of respect and protecting fondness. The Laird had been an abstracted, singular, scheming man all his life; and, in spite of the unselfishness of his motives and actions, and the occasional flashes of good fortune which he caught, he was demurred at his contemporaries, as men, like water, will love a dead level and an old channel. Thrift knew better. Thrift honored him far more than if he had been proven worldly-wise, instead of crack-brained. Thrift was fond of him as one is fond of an object peculiarly his own, with wants and weaknesses to be softly covered with a holy mantle. In many respects (whisper it not in the ears of sultans,) Thrift was more engrossed with her father than her husband, although she had married Wat from true love, and was a faithful, tender wife, because Wat was independent of her—Wat was strong, she but his weakner helpmate.

Thrift studied and re-studied her household resources; she would fain aid her father in his strait, contribute to the remotest chance of his fulfilling his long proclaimed feat. The peril and precariousness of his undertaking had his own hold on her women's imagination; she felt (but probably in a keener degree) like Royl Isabella when she pledged her crown jewels and bestowed the monies on the voyager Columbus. Blessing on woman's faith! It may have stranded many a deluded bark, but it has also landed many a good ship—the ruder gone, the hold sprung a leak.—But Thrift was sorely puzzled, her means were so very small, and there were gaps innumerable for the price of the first sold grain; there were servant's wages, and needful repairs and groceries, and wearing apparel, besides old accounts to be looked to. Wat, too, had long disapproved of the Laird's proceedings, and now it was scarcely to be hoped that, in order to promote them in their extremity, he should again relinquish the better part of his particular earnings and the capital on which the family depended for all foreign aid during the long winter. Wat was so twitted for facility of temper and weakness of will by his thoughtless, complacent acquaitances, that he might be driven to assert his prerogative to the utmost.

At last a project occurred to her though it was humble—so humble that the little bit of pride in Thrifts warm heart cried out against it, and had to be silenced by the brave doctrine to which she had listened from childhood—that honest means, however, plain and poor, are dignified and graced the moment they are applied to a high end.

"My father and Wat, though Watery Butts and its title deeds have belonged to our forbears sin' the memory of man, have not thought shame to cast their coat mony a day, and slave for me. I will put on my red mantle, and fill my basket with butter, and eggs, and young chickens, and hanks of yarn, and maybe some napery, and carry it into the merchants of Ravenston. I haena' mony acquaintances to forgather wi', and what need I heed though they say there's the Leddy o' Watery Butts forced, puir woman, to bode away her own gear like ony cadger's wife trampin' wi' her creel? Jean canna be spared, and wad mak no bargain. I see na, though I were a warlock, how else I could earn a penny."

Thrift would conceal her simple device from the Laird; she would start in the morning before he was astir, but over night she must confide it to Wat, and obtain his consent. She first settled the minutiæ of her plan, as she spun by her lamp, while Wat read his old newspaper and attended to the horse suppering. After her father had returned from "the sinking," and partaken of the frugal supper; when Jean, leading her male squad of ploughboy and herdboy, had entered, to profit by "the worship," which rose so quaintly and soothingly—Thrift's clear voice leading the psalm, Wat's deep notes chiming in, Ringan's impressive broken bass uttering lofty verse and reverent prayer; then, when servants were dismissed; and Ringan had retired to rest; and little Wat, with his brown cheek pressed against his pillow, and his chubby hand still grasping his fir-tops, slept the dreamless sleep of infancy; and Thrift and Wat sat beside their own ingle and talked in the fearless confidence of man and wife. heart knit to heart in the closest, kindest bonds—then Thrift unfolded her little secret, and pleaded her cause with her hand on Wat's knee, and her blue eyes on his face. But Wat's ear had been poisoned, and his heart steeled, his very love for the speaker hardening him the more against her enterprise.

Wat Cockburn was thoroughly frank, manly and true hearted, as he was a handsome fellow, with a warm Gothic tint of complexion and hair, but he had Gothic traits in mind as well as body; he was not bright, he was not deep, he was rather slow, poor fellow, in intellect, though excitable in temper; and like most people who acquire an idea by inches and frequently at second hand, he was exceedingly hard to dispossess of a notion once imbibed; he was apt to be stubborn. With all sincere regard for the Laird, he had allowed himself to be convinced that the Laird's perpetual draining, planting, building and boring was an infatuation which, with his declining finances and the nature of Water Butts, would land the household in ruins.

Now the Laird could do what he chose with his own, but with Wat lay what might be called the executive power exerted on the fields; besides, when he first came to Watery Butts from another county, to introduce himself to his relations, and to be won by and win Thrift, he had sunk his little patrimony on the family property—and Ringan Cockburn, with all his scheming, was simple and candid as a child in admitting another man's claims, however they might interfere with the consuming pursuit of the phantoms of his busy brain. For the last few months there had been a secret struggle at Watery Butts, almost harder to suffer than open contention, seeing that it was between those who had till now been kith and kin in heart as well as in blood; stolid opposition, grudging concessions, from Wat, met by impatience and half scorn and soreness of spirit from the Laird; Wat growing ever more dogged, the Laird more respectful, only Thrift, like a house pigeon, flying between.—Perhaps Wat, manly as he was, had his own unsuspected littleness in the matter of Thrift's enamorment of her father; at least, it was as his Thrift that he would not hear of her journey to Ravenston, a seller not a buyer; it should never be said that he could not support his wife by the sweat of his brow; that while Watery Butts was thers, or he retained the use of his stout hands, she was driven to such shifts.

It was in vain that Thrift reminded him that, according to country tradition, Sir Allan's daughter, who had wedded a Cockburn in their palmy days, on the temporary forfeiture of their esstate during historical reverses, a misfortune from which they never recoved—better the whole had done than the restoration of the mere haggs of Watery Butts—the widow and her daughters had for a time maintained themselves by platting rush mats in a neighboring cottage.

Wat would acknowledge no precedent; there was necessity in their case, but none in hers; she might be thankful while he was spared. For the Laird and his maggots, he was a good man, but he was flying in the face of Providence; it was time he listened to reason.

Thrift was keenly mortified and disappointed. She longed to abet her father in his need; she could not hear that Wat should secede to the side of his dectrators; she piqued herself on her influence with Wat, and this was the first time it had failed since he came among them, so strapping and sincere, so industrious and affectionate, since they held their trysts where the purple iris and the golden marsh marigold gave a July splendor to the lonely water stealing across the grey moor; and Thrift remembered sundry rash pledges and doting declarations into which even sober Wat Cockburn had plunged in the height of his malady, and felt a very ill used and indignant woman sitting with her arms tightly crossed, and her eyes smarting in the fire light, with Wat at her side, one great block of cold, cruel apposition, yet glancing slily down at her, and inwardly groaning under the smiting of his conscience—for the vanquished do not always bear away the only or the severest wound in the conflict.

Chapter 3.

Thrift, whose humors were wont to be passing vapors, under this provocation both lay down and rose up in bitterness. Wat was off ere she awoke, while there was yet a star in the bleak morning sky, to marshal his troop, and to see them whet their sickles before he returned for breakfast. The Laird was abroad, too, striding, early as it was, to his Will-o'-the-wisp on the the moor—so completely the centre of his aspirations, that if it should be quenched, Thrift felt as if the very lamp of life, that still burned so brightly in the old student of nature's making, would leap up and sink in premature darkness.

Thrift went sullenly about her household duties, was listless and careless about her usual brisk business, soundly rebuffed little Wat when he was attacked with a refractory desire to continue dabbling in the water from which he had emerged, in order to proceed with the next stages of his toilette, sending him shaking, with defiant litte sobs, to stand with his smeared face turned to the chamber wall. At length breakfast was ready; and catcking little Wat by the had, to drag him from the demon fire, Thrift issued into the raw air, traversing the little firewood swaying in the morning breeze, and turning her steps to the pit in order to summon her father to his morning meal. There was an unusual stir about the working, and Thrift paused on the first knowe to watch the scene. There it lay, so close to her that she could not only distinguish the actors, but hear their words. There were the heaps of hardened, trampled down clay-slatey shale, and limestone surrounding the smouldering peat fire—there the black yawning cavity, in which treasures more potent than diamonds might lie buried—there the rude machine that creaked round and round, dragged by the old grey pony, with his dizzying mechanical pace, and the crick in the neck he seemed to have acquired in his endless circles. The whole had a cheerless, and a dismal crumbling aspect, that seemed to eschew gain, and to pertain to disaster and decay; and agreed with the cold October sky, and the flat which it overlooked.

But in place of the slouching, lounging figure or two that waited on the ascent of the tub, and emptied its contents, and the one stationary man that contemplated their labors there was a little knot of excited workmen, remonstrating against the solitary voice of command they yet hesitated to disobey.

The Laird stood erect and still, extending his arm and giving his orders clearly and distinctly as ever he had done in his life.

"Unyoke the pony, and you, Simon Moys, lead him over to Claygates; his wind's sair spent, but his back's no broken, and he'll supply the place of the gude grey mare that fell wi' the full cart and broke her hough banc last night; the lave, e'en gang into the gin, and yoke to the trams, and pull shouther to shouther till noon."

The men looked at each other rebelliously, and then a spokesman came forward a pace, and addressed Ringan Cockburn—"It may be neeborlike, Laird, for you to lend a hand to Claygates wi' the corn no in, and Martinmas nigh," he said, grumblingly, but respectfully, as men will respect those who have self-respect written broadly, even in furrows and bleached hair; "and I'll say we would be sweer to resist your bidding, for you're a just master and a kind; and some o' us have been born and bred on your land; but to render ourselves brute beasts to pleasure you, and work out your dreams, is mair than only mortals could accord."

There was an acquiescent murmur from his companions, followed by a pause. The Laird lifted his hand to his brow, and then looked in the rough weather-beated face of the ringleader with bright, unflinching eyes, without a contortion of passion or shame disturbing a muscle of his own countenance.

"Man Simon," he said simply and composedly, "yer so far richt, I would be neeborlike in the hairst to Claygates, wer it in my power, but I'm sair straightened for siller; I'm sending off poor Rory, whose forbear I rode when I was a laddie, not to help Claygates, but to bring me a last pound note or the coal be found."

The men stirred and stared in blank dismay, and then broke into a unanimous outcry—

"Gie in, Laird, howk nae deeper; ye've waured ower muckle already; the day's dead set against you; and you'll never licht a spunk frae that hole."

But the Laird's voice bore down the clamor, like a trumpet, such a rallying sound was in its dauntless words—"Gie in, when the hard battles fought and victory won—the fuel that shall blink in our hearthstanes and gladden them, and raise mair biggins on Watery Butts than there are anns on a barley head! Doubt Providence, while he's left ae twig to hing on by! Yes mistaen, lads;" and casting off his coat, Ringam Cockburn laid his own hands on the poles as if the might of his spirit alone would impel dull wood and rusty iron. But the men were shamed for the moment, and inspired with a common reaction. "Na, Laird," they said confusedly, pushing forward, "we'll no fail you now. We'll stick by you anitner day, though we be to replace Rory; wha kens but this may the last bout, and something may be in't?" and as if they had been oracles, these rude impulsive men, while they pulled round the machine with right good will, a faint hollow call, repeated, and prolonged, rose from the pit-mouth. Was it, it after all, the proclamation of great tidings;—had the last mine been driven to victory—the planting of the standard on new fields that were to render unfavored Watery Butts opulent and famous? The men tugged and strained till drops started on their toil-worn brows, and a strange fire of kindled expectation glowed in their eyes. The Laird stood firm, but with a tighter contraction of the sagacious lip, and unconscious lowering of the white eyebrows, but how the great heart within must have panted and prayed!

No tub containing the smallest fragment of the long-sought, much coveted mineral, whether in slaty layers of shining lump—a white scared face, how unlike the harbinger of fortune and thanksgiving—a hoarse, voice, calling out wildly, "Row, for God's sake, there's twa forby me, and the sides o' the mine cracking like the ice on Cambus Loch."

The fated words were scarcely uttered, the tottring feet landed, when a hollow rumble, like the roar of surf, a muffled, sharp report like the crack of a volley of musketry, a concussion of the solid earth beneath their feet, a cloud of dust rising from that great yawning grave, and men's hearts quailing, ebbing for a second, flowing back in a wail and lament of horror and woe.

"Laird, Laird?" called Simon Moys, clutching his master by the arm, and confronting him with dire accusation in his appalled, wrathful face, "ye tempted the Lord, wha had gien us the braid peat moss and bidden us be content, and his curse has fallen for your sin on innocent heads."

Ringan Cockburn spurned the touch, and the red blood returned to his white lips as he shouted for spade and shovel, and clutched the rope hanging over the pit-mouth. Much need was there of a leader's presence of mind, of immediate, vigorous action; for work as their comrades might, with the strength of brotherhood yearning over their fate—let the whole country side be arrested to relieve their strenuous exertions, it would be mirk night before these human bodies could be drawn from the pile of sand and stones heaped high above the ground, where they stuck their picks, living, lifelike men that morning.

Women, with their fluttering gowns and shawls, were appearing on many a meandering line across the moor, trudging to their work with their pitchers and baskets, conveying breakfast to husbands and sons terribly engaged. At the first suspicion of evil they flocked in, tossing their arms and screaming in sore distress. For, who were the sufferers? What wretched wife or mother was to find her own in that buried pair, gone forth from them in strength and security—to win their bread—to shelter and cherish them—to be praised or abused never more?

Lawrie Blair, the wild but good-natured prodigal, whom the Laird had so often forgiven, the sole support of the fractious, ailing mother, who was continually bemoaning his sins—and there she was, she who had not walked half the distance for years, already apprised of the calamity—tumbling along, her feeble hands twitching at her neckerchief or check apron.

"Oh, Lawrie, Lawrie, hae ye come to this?—Laird, Laird, save the lad that wad hae deet for ye afore the doucest an' decentest man in your employ—that has deet for you! Wae's me, wae's me! Had ye lived but a ditcher, my bairn, like your father afore you, ye wad hae been to the fore through mony anither spree."

Thrift took her by the hand and found a seat for her on the grass, and tried to tell her to take heart, for Lawrie was in the Lord's hand, even in that overwhelmed pit, and that he had been found at his post of duty, though it was but a miner's shift.

Chapter 4.

A murmur was spreading among the workers, paralising their efforts; glances of far deeper commisseration and distress a hundred fold shot around; Simon Moys again stood out, and taking off his cap, communicated something reluctantly and hesitatingly to the Laird. Ringan Cockburn staggered and looked up piteously to the leaden sky. No—no. It could not be.

"Father," said Thrift, joining him, and suddenly aware of a strange overlok, "why is Wat not here? Send him and the bansters word; they'll take their turn with the miners. Wat will do the work of two men, ay, however grieved he may be to see this sight."

"Let alane, Trift, my woman," replied the Laird, weakly. "Wat's housing the shaves, and he could do no gude here; you see there's no room for the folk already. There's relays, let a' be."

"Housing the sheaves when men's lives are to save!" Thrift remonstated indignantly. "Father, ye dinna ken what you say, or how sair ye wrang Wat. I'll run for him mysel."

"Bide still, Thrift, bide, here I command you," the Laird exclaimed, violently. Thrift was thunderstruck; she looked at her father, shaking in every limb, his fine tranquil face working with emotion. She caught the glances of the others, now turned from Tib Blair, sitting rocking herself on the moor, all directed to herself with the same inexpressible gentleness and solemnity so strangely from those familiar, homely faces.—The truth gleamed upon her, the awful fact that Wat, vexed by her pain and resentment, had risen from his bed; and, as if possessed by a dark fate, had gone where he had not been for weeks, to the pit head; and, before the main portion of the workmen assembled, had borrowed a miner's tools and descended the shaft—either seized with a wild superstitious notion of trying his individual luck in the costly and condemned speculation—or with a calmer purpose of attempting to satisfy himself by actual eyesight, whether it held out the least glimmering of the resolution which the Laird yet pinned his faith.

Still and stark, or uttering stifled groans of mortal anguish, fathoms beneath their feet, crushed and concealed in a living grave, with the clods and stones heaped on his uncoffined, unshrouded breast, lay comely, kind Wat Cockburn, the husband and father, in the flush and promise of his manhood.

Thrift's blue eyes glared upon the witnesses, her white cheek grew a purple red, and she droppeb down at her father's feet, clasping his knees, and writhing before him: "Give me back Wat, father; I gave you all else, the bite from my bairnie's mouth, but not Wat, never Wat!"

Oh, hapless King of Israel, who rent thy royal robe at the mocking mandate of the imperiuos Syrian, here is a man more tourtred and abased, as if he too were "a god to kill and to make alive;" and one of the wretched suppliants his pleasant child, Thrift, a young bride, three twelvemonths back.

No sorrow alone, but remorse, is cankering and maddening the cordial happy nature, convulsing and transforming each feature as if an evil spirit had possessed itself of the fair body.

"Oh, Tib Blair, he hae flyted on Lawrie mony a day, but ye parted friends at last; I tell you a' standing there, I gloomed on my Wat, my gude, sober, kind gudeman, my dear, dear Wat, I, an ill wife, a hard heart, I braggit him till, against his better judgment, he gaed down the pit; and met his death this day."

Yes, this will be the fearful burden of Thrift's sad widowhood, the blight that will alight upon her this moment, and haunt her sunk, searching eyes—her hair with not one or two slight threads, but whole flakes of silver breaking its brown before the October day be done, and she but a matron of twenty-five—until her doing moment, be it near or far; that there had been discord between her and Wat Cockburn on that last night, in the cheerful light of their quiet hearth: that he had risen and gone out of his house in the grey morning, without one word of reconciliation and reviving regard exchanged between them. They who loved each other so truly, who were one flesh in the blessed bands of holy wedlock.

Thrift's first paroxysm of despair soon sunk in exhaustion, and with hands and heart cold and heavy as lead, she sat as still as Tib Blair. Another hand led away the innocent, ignorant, daunted child, or forced refreshment upon the Laird. Now that he has gone, taken from her so suddenly and fearfully, Thrift cared for none but Wat Cockburn.

Many a strong arm that had dug with grim application gave way; the shades of evening fell chill on these wastes; by the red smoky light of lanterns, the Laired looked haggard and aged as some patriach—God-forsaken like Job—before there was a halt, a shout, and a signal that the lost were found.

The men clustered together, an agitated ring; the women hid their faces, and sobbed anew with bitter violence. A board has been fixed above the ordinary tub, and upon it a man was ascending, with a dark mass resting at his feet; slowly and cautiously they wound the rope uuntil they were almost on a level with the bystanders. The lights fell on a great crimson stain, and every breath in the circle was drawn hard and short.

"There's life in him yet; but howd him frae his mither."

Life! what a power there is in that sound, though it be but a vapor fluttering in its flight, expiring in fitful tortured flashes. Life! how the name alone can heal the broken heart, and revive energies strange and wonderful as humanity can display. Tib Blair rose up strengthened, and followed on her own feet the shapeless, bruised form. Was not her Lawrie still in life, and might not a merciful Providence spare him, maimed and helpless, for her, his old mother, to tend and succor—for whom her feeble fingers might spin day and night—to whom she would never again give crabbed, spiteful answers? A wild imagination, but still a ray of hope to lighten the misery of the bereaved heart. And how Thrift Cockburn coveted that poor burden, and what would she not have given to have received her Wat thus.

Another interval of suspense, brief, but which seems to these who endure it a very life-time, sickening, heart-rending: a few more shovelfuls thrown from the hill of the stony mould that never seems to decline—and the second watched for token that the weary task was ended. Thrift would not be kept back by any force, but she stood still, rigid rather, in the centre of the group. There was no disorder or disfigurment of Wat's members, scarcely even of his dress; his head was thrown back with a stately air, the features fully exposed; but oh! the repose on the face, as if the burden and heat of the day had been borne, great strife, perhaps, passed through; a wrestling for dear life, and those dearer than life—but all toil and suffering over. Simon Moys, and other than he, turned aside, but Thrift did not waver—the spectacle was so solemn, it soothed rather than harrowed her—for it was just like a vison, greif-laden, but majestic, to the poor pierced spirit-wrung girl; and all the sign she gave, or emotion she testified, a single quiet whisper of terrible egotism.

"Ay, Wat, my man, I wad hae seen the hale warld lie there rather than you!"

But a slight trembling stirred Wat Cockburn's benumbed limbs; a tinge of red flicerked on his blanched cheek; the eyes they had believed shut for ever opened and gazed around with confused, unmeaning, uncertain lustre, clearing slowly until they rested on Ringan Cockburn, and then suddency brightening with a flash of intelligence, a world of knowledge which they struggled to convey, a contrition softening them inexpressibly, a magnanimous, generous congratulation, an honest, affectionate trust.

"Laird," said Wat, with his first choked, stuttering accents, "the coal's won!"

Sure enough, Wat's clenched hand yet retained a precious fragment of the coal seam, laid bare at last at such a time and under such circumstances.

God's arm had been over the pair in the recesses of the shaken pit, directing the course of the avalanche, which stunned and smote, but did not slay; turning aside the danger, iminent and deadly; and the cherished desire, the long-look-forward of Ringan Cockburn's busy life, was achieved; the swarming, diffused, exhaustless prosperity of Waterry Butts was secured to his latest descendants.

No more pinching poverty and disheartening struggles—no more thwarting and decrying—no more mockery and contempt; perhaps, for their future moderation and peace, Wat Cockburn and Thrift needed the fiery ordeal of that miserable October day to precede the change in their fortunes; but to Ringan Cockburn, in that sense, it was unnecessary. He was too truly great to be elated by triumph, any more than he had been depressed by discomfiture and failure; though he smiled on the happiness of others and rested on his noble, peaceful laurels.

Punch illustrates the common blessings of common men in the following truisms:

You wear out old clothes.—You are not troubled with many visitors.—You are exonerated from making calls.—Crossing-sweepers do not molest you.—Bores do not bore you.—Sponges do not haunt your table.—Tax gathers hurry past your door.—Itinerant bands do not play opposite your windows.—You avoid the nuisance of serving on juries.—You are not persecuted to stand godfather.—No one thinks of presenting you with a testimonial.—No tradesman irritates you by asking, "Is there any other little articles to-day, sir?"—Begging letter-writers let you alone.—Impostors know it is no use to bleed you.—You practice temperance.—You swallow indefinitely less poison than others.—Flatterers do not shoot their rubbish into your ears.—You are saved from many a debt, many a deception, many a headache.—And lastly, if you have a true friend in the world, you are sure, in a very short space of time, to learn it.

Mrs. Partington on Weddings.—"I like to 'tend weddings," said Mrs. Partington, as she came back from one in church, and hung her shawl up, and replaced the bonnet in the long-preserved bandbox. "I like to see young people come together with the promise to love, cherish, and nourish each other. But it is a solemn thing, is matrimony—a very solemn thing—where the minister comes into the chancery with his surplus on, and goes through the ceremony of making them man and wife. It ought to be husband and wife, for it isn't every husband that turns out to be a man. I declare I never shall forget when Paul put the nuptial ring on my finger and said, 'With my goods I thee endow.' He used to keep a dry goods store then, and I thought he was going to give me the whole there was in it. I was young and simple, and didn't know till afterwards that it meant only one calico dress a year!"

The way of the world.—*Small boy number one.* "I say, friend, they say you're getting a dollar a week."—*Small boy number two.* "You might have known that by the way fellows come round soapin' me for treats."

Selected Poetry.

From the Baltimore American.

PARTING.

BY FANNY E. CARTER.

Nay! Nay! My love, I will not take
This parting gift from thee! Take back the love,
The dreams, the hopes, the promises I gave.
Not thus will I forsake thee—not thus commit
Thee to thy heaven-appointed task. I'll go with thee
Across the ocean's trackless waste—unto Arabia's
Burning sands. I'll go to toil, to suffer, or to die,
And bless the happy fate that calls me thus to be,
Dearest of all, and ever nearest thee.
God speed thee on thy high commission!
Like one of old thou'rt called to take the bread of life
He blessed and brake, and feed the hungry
Multitude. And I will go with thee, and at thy feet
Lay down the shackles of opinion, that erst have
Veiled from my dim sight thy heaven inspired devotion.
My hand in thine I place, unwavering, undoubting;
I lift my eyes to thine and bid thee read
The strength of my affection, "contending with,
O'ercoming all things."
I read aright the one high aim
Of thy unselfish heart. 'Tis love to God that lures
Thee thus from home and kindred to bear
The glad, glad tidings to the dwellers on
Judea's consecrated ground, and there
To say to her benighted sons—'Twas here The Child
Was born—'twas here He wept and prayed—
Here He sweat great drops of blood, and here
They mocked and scourged Him—and on
This hill he bore the load of all thy guilt
And washed it with His blood away. Ah!
Methinks those lips will then be touched
From the live coal from the altar, and burn
Into the hearts of men truths that shall make them free.
But I would not deceive thee! For love of *thee* I go,
With hope that I may cheer thee in thy lonely toil,
Revive thy hope in each desponding hour,
Beguile the thought that oft will bring
An aching brow to thee. And I have thought
If sickness should o'ertake thee, and none but
Strangers' hands to do thy bidding, the stranger's step,
The past has taught me, falls dull and heavy
On the sufferer's ear—the stranger's voice has not
One soothing tone—his touch no gentleness. From this
My love would ward thee, and this shall be
My mission; for this I leave my childhood's home,
The house where I was born; for this forego
A mother's love the tenderest daughter ever knew,
And sister's fond companship. I've sought,
And found, my world, my home, my all in thee!

Selected Miscellany.

REPORT OF A FISH CONVENTION.

It is to be understood that all the marine monsters, big fish, and "small fry" of the great deep are assembled in conclave—the Whale "in the chair."

He opened the Convention by stating that he did not wish to make a speech; he would take up as little room, and be no longer than possible.—(Here the Shark whispered [illegible] that it was not possible for the Whale to be much longer, as he was over 80 feet now. In his opinion, he only wanted a chance to spout; in fact, he considered him a regular blower.)

The Whale contended that he had been grossly insulted by man—he might say lampooned, not that he would pun upon the use made of his fat, as he did not wish to make light of such a matter. He had been harpooned, at least. Men were sarcastic toward him, and their shafts were sharp and pointed. Some of his fellow whales had been much cut up, and exceedingly tried.—He had latterly learned that a substitute for oil had been invented, which might lessen the persecution of whales—but he feared it was all gas. The whale alluded to a harpoon which had lately hit him, and, he feared, had affected him deeply. Here his feelings overpowered him, and he sat down (on the Shark) amidst a general blubber. The shark rose with some difficulty, and remarked that the tale of the Whale had moved him; in fact, it was very striking. His own situation was far from pleasant. He was by profession a lawyer, and he flattered himself, one of the deep kind. But business was bad, and he had been obliged to take in a few pupils. He had lately presented a fine opening for a young man who had fell overboard, but soon afterwards obliged to reject his suit as indigestible. Unless he had more cases, he should leave law and open as a dentist.

The Sea-Serpent did not wish to intrude upon the Convention; he did not know whether he properly belonged to the fish tribe or not. All he asked was, not to be classed with the Eel, whom he considered to be a very slippery character.—(Here the Eel was observed to wriggle violently.) Lately, he was passing a certain species of the Eel, when just happening to touch him, he had been so shocked that he hardly recovered.

The Eel hastily arose, and said he was shocked, he might say electrified, at these remarks. It was evident to him that the Serpent must get him himself into a coil. As for his being a "slippery character," he thanked Neptune he didn't belong to such a scaly set as the Serpent.

The Whale called the Eel to order, and the Eel called the Whale an "old swell-head," and was then summarily put out of the Convention.

The Turtle said he was suffering from indisposition. He was walking on shore, he said, a short time since, when he met a party of jolly young sailors. The result was, that he was laid on his back, and was unable to move for some time, and since then he had not felt so lively as usual.—There was one thing to which he would call the attention of the Convention; he prided himself upon the purity of his political principles. The shark had lately insulted him by calling him a "regular old Hard Shell."

Here the Shark interrupted him by saying, "Is not that your case?"

The Turtle replied, that he should say nothing more at present, but should have something to lay before the next meeting.

Yes, replied the Shark, contemptuously; "a few eggs probably."

The Porpoise undertook to speak, but was speedily silenced. The expression of the Convention was, that he was a "blower."

The Small Fry were next called upon—Oysters, Lobsters, and others. The oyster opened his case which was a hard one. He was always in trouble—a perpetual stew or boil. His half brother, Clam, was a disgrace to the family: always in liquor, and generally considered a "squirt." Some of his family were indolent and spent most of their time in "beds." There had been some rakes among them, who had created great disturbance.

There was one of his neighbors, he said—he would not call any names, for he scorned scandal—who was very surly and crabbed. He was a one-sided individual, and nobody approved of his motion.

The crab protested against this abuse, and said that the rest took advantage of him because he was "soft." He respectfully retired backward.

The Codfish, who had been visiting a school; the Shad, much nettled at what he had heard; the aristocratic Salmon, who got into a row with a York State Trout, who called him a Northern Fish with Southern principles; and the Flying Fish who flew into a tremendous passion—all took part in the proceedings of the Convention.

But so it was, at last, as the erudite Dogberry has it, that "the whole assembly disappeared in good order, notwithstanding an attempt at disturbance made by a "jolly old Sole" and "a lot of Suckers."

A clergyman, engaged in catechising a village school, asked a youngster "what his godfathers did for him?" "I don't know what they mean to do, please your reverence," rejoined the lad; "they've done nothing for me yet."

From the National Intelligencer.

WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL.

The following extract is from a letter written by a lady upwards of eighty years old, residing in Philadelphia, to her grandson in Washington:

"When General Washington delivered his Farewell Address, in the room at the south east corner of Chestnut and Sixth streets, I sat immediately in front of him. It was in the room the Congress had occupied. The table of the Speaker was between the two windows on Sixth street. The daughter of Dr. C......, of Alexandria, the physician and intimate friend of Washington, Mrs. H......, whose husband was the Auditor, was a very dear friend of mine. Her brother, Washington, was one of the Secretaries of General Washington. Young Dandridge, a nephew of Mrs. Washington, was the other. I was included in Mrs. H......'s party to witness the august, the solemn scene. N...... C...... declined going with Mrs. H......, who had determined to go so early as to secure the front bench. It was fortunate for N...... C......, (afterwards Mrs. L.) that she would not trust herself to be so near her honored grandfather. My dear father stood very near her; she was terribly agitated. There was a narrow passage from the door of entrance to the room, which was on the East, dividing the rows of benches. Gen. Washington stopped at the end to let Mr. Adams pass to the chair. The latter always wore a full suit of bright drab, with slash, or rather loose cuffs. He also wore wrist ruffles. He had not changed his fashons. He was a short man, with a good head. With his family he attended our church twice a day.

"General Washington's dress was a full suit of black. His military hat had the black cockade. There stood the Father of his Country, acknowledged by nations "the first in war, the first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen." No marshals, with gold colored scarfs, no cheering. The most profound stillness greeted him, as if that great assembly desired to hear him breathe and catch his breath—the homage of the heart. Mr. Adams covered his face with both hands. The sleevs of his coat and his hands were covered with tears. Every now and then there was a suppresed sob. I cannot describe Washington's appearance as I felt it—perfectly composed and self possessed till the close of his address. Then, when strong men's sobs broke loose, when tears covered their faces, then the great man was shaken. I never took my eyes from his face. Large drops came from his eyes. He looked to the grateful children who were parting with their father, their friend, as if his heart was with them and would be to the end."

Things that a lady has no patience with.—A lady has no patience with men who go and spend their money on dinners at Richmond or Greenwich, when their poor wives are obliged to content themselves with a simple mutton-chop at home. She has no patience with gentlemen who come in to dinner an hour after their time, and expect the dinner to be on the table the very moment they come in. She has no patience with custom-house officers, who rummage your boxes as though they were a servant's, and they were policemen who had been sent to examine them, and who pull your summer dress about [illegible] ple your linen with no more concern than a washerwoman would who was going to carry them to the wash. She has no patience with men who indulge in personalities and absurd railleries against the female sex, and fancy themselves extremely clever in saying smart things when they are only supremely rediculous. She has no patience with your fine gentlemen, who, when they have hurt your feelings, make you beautiful promises about taking you to the opera, or to Paris, or a tour up the Rhine, and, after the storm has blown over, forget everything about it.—*Punch's Almanack.*

In a matter which came before the Court of Bankruptcy, it appeared that two solicitors were employed upon one estate. Commissioner Goulburn, after showing how necessary it was that law expenses should be kept down in reference to the case before him, quoted the following lines of Jekyll:

"The doctor single like the sculler plies;
The patient struggles, and by inches dies;
But two physicians, like a pair of oars,
Waft him quite smoothly to the Stygian shores."

The "Yellow Fever Heroine."—Miss Andrews, the yellow fever heroine, is preparing a work on the ravages of the pestilence at Norfolk, for the benefit of the widow of the mayor of that city; and it having been announced that this noble hearted young lady intended to publish the book at her own expense, one of our "merchant princes" sent her a check yesterday for $100.—*N. Y. Mirror.*

"I say, Sambo, does you know what makes de corn grow so fast when you put de manure on it?"—"No, I don't know, 'cept it make de ground stronger for de corn."—"No, I just tell you; when de corn begins to smell de manure, it don't like de'fumery, so it hurries out of de ground, and gets up as high as possibl, so it can't breathe bad air."

A Fact Worth Knowing.—Housekeepers should know now that the season of pies and puddings is approaching and sugar inordinately dear, that the acid in rhubarb, gooseberries and currants may be neutralized by putting a third of a teaspoonful of soda in the fruit and without affecting the flavor. A less quantity of sugar will then answer to sweeten.

Ex-President Taylor, in his address at the Jamestown celebration, when referring to slavery, spoke of the injustice of the North in reference thereto. He said he had knowledge of the fact that the marble palace of Stewart, in New York, was built upon the sale of three thousand slaves, who had been sent to New York to be emancipated.

Good for the Eyes.—To give brilliancy to the eyes, shut them early at night, and open them early in the morning; let the mind be constantly intent on the acquisition of knowledge, or in the exercise of benevolent feelings. This will scarcely ever fail to impart to the eyes an intelligent and amiable expression.

A farmer was once asked what inference he could draw from the text in Job, "And the wild asses snuffed up the wind." "Well," he replied, "the only inference that I can draw is this: that it would be a long time before they would grow fat upon it."

In times of yore, a good housewife having received a pound of coffee, boiled it, and served it up with parsley and butter. She declared that they were the worst peas that she had ever seen, as she had boiled them two hours and yet they remained quite hard!

Jones (who thinks that Smith has been a little too free with Mrs. Jones.) "Mr. Smith I wish to speak to you privately. Permit me to take you apart for a few moments."

Smith (who isn't in the least frightened.) "Certainly, sir, if you'll promise to put me together again."

"Isn't the world older than it used to be?" said a young hopeful to his senior.

"Yes, my son."

"Then what do folks mean by old times?"

A Promising Musician.—A recent western paper contains the following: "A gentleman by the name of Thalberg has given a concert in this place. He plays the pianno very well."

A child was recently born in one of the Sandwich Islands having four eyes—two on the back and two on the front side of the head.