

The Altoona Tribune.

McCRUM & DERN,

[INDEPENDENT IN EVERYTHING.]

EDITORS AND PROPRIETORS.

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THE ALTOONA TRIBUNE.

McCRUM & DERN, PUBLISHERS AND PROPRIETORS.

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Choice Poetry.

THE SOLDIER'S LETTER.

How sweet when night her misty veil

Around the warrior soldier throws,

And twilight's golden skin grow pale,

And woe's wild winds in rags

To sit beside the watcher's night,

Where friendly comrades nightly come,

To sing the song of other days,

And talk of things we love at home.

Of those we love, who list and wait,

Beneath the same benignant moon.

The postman's step beside the gate,

With tidings from the absent one;

And beaming smiles their thoughts reveal,

And love is mirrored in their eyes,

As eagerly they break the seal,

Else with joy and glad surprise.

But dearer yet, the sheet that rings,

To caution, loud and clear,

To halt the messenger who brings

Letters from home and kindred dear;

And 'neath the pale moon's smiling light

The soldier reads his treasure o'er.

And through the hours of silent night

He dreams he visits home once more.

In dreams he sits beside the hearth,

Afar from camps and traitor's wives,

And dreams the dearest spot on earth

Where loving wife and mother smiles,

And many a face almost forgot,

And many a word so fondly spoken

Come flitting round the soldier's cot.

Till the sweet dream, at morn, is broken.

Oh! ye who love the soldier well—

Be kind and be his friends and true,

Better he knows than you can tell,

The perils that attend his way.

Some word of hope in battle's hour,

While waiting with a weeping foe,

Has saved the soldier's arm with power,

To strike or ward the pending blow.

The soldier brave, in often prone

To deem himself forgotten quite,

A wanderer on the earth alone,

When friends at home neglect to write,

Then cheer him oft with words like these:

And thus, your deep affection prove;

Let every leaf that plows the sea

Bring him some message full of love.

come so far, doctor," he said, looking at me from under his fur cap; but there's a bad accident happened over at our clearin'; and if you can do anything for the poor chap I'll be glad to see it done, more particularly as I helped to shoot him."

"Helped to shoot him?" I said with a start, "what do you mean?"

"We took him for some kind of a critter; that's how it was," answered my visitor; "not a purpose, stranger. We thinks heaps of him. I'd sooner hev shot myself."

"I knew that the man spoke the truth, and taking my box of surgical instruments under my arm followed him to the spot where his horse was tied. Mine was already saddled; my little darkey knew well enough what the arrival portended, and had made him ready. We were off in a few moments."

"Few words were spoken as we rode along through the darkness. I asked whether the wounds were very serious, and my companion replied—"I'm afear'd they be, doctor." I asked if the injured man was young or old, and he answered,—"Rising forty;" and then, after a few words upon the badness of the road, we relapsed into silence."

At last a glimmering light told that we had approached a dwelling, and with a short "We're thar, doctor." My company sprang from his saddle and entered the door. I followed him. The room was feebly lit by flickering candles. About a bed in the center were grouped four or five men and a woman, large and broad shouldered as any of her masculine companions. A child too, lay cradling in its cradle, but no one seemed to notice him. They made way for my approach, and I saw a figure stretched upon the bed. It was that of a man with sinewy limbs and weather beaten face. His shirt was unbuttoned, and the breast and sleeves were soaked with blood.

"Taint of no use, doctor," he said as I bent over him. "I'm a gone good. Doctor's stuff ain't no account to me now."

I did not believe him. His face was not that of a dying man and the wounds scarcely seemed dangerous. "These bullets are bad things to have in one's side," I said, "but men have lived through more than that. Cheer up!"

"I ain't down hearted, doctor," answered the man. "I shan't leave no children nor no wife to fret after me and suffer for want of my rifle. I never have been so much afear'd of death. But I tell you all you can do's no use. There's a sign that can't be mistook."

The group about the bed glanced at each other; and the woman shook her head at me as though she would have said, "Never mind his words." The bullets were extracted and the wounds bound up. He was weak but not desperately so. I looked at him and smiled. "How now?" said I.

"Taint no use—the watch is stopping fast," he answered.

Then for the first time I noticed that beside him on the bed lay a great big old fashioned silver watch, the case battered, the face discolored, and that it ticked with a strange dull sound, as though it was very old and feeble.

"The watch has been injured by the bullets, I suppose," said I; "besides all watches stop sometimes."

"Not this one stranger," said the wounded man. "They've laughed about that watch a hundred times; now they'll find my story's true, I reckon. That watch and I will stop at the same minute."

The woman at the bedside shook her head again. "It's an old fancy o' yours, Mike Barlow," she said; "you'll live to see the folly of it."

"So they talk," said the man. "Now listen doctor. You've come to see me; and done all that you could. I'll give you that watch. It's money value arn't much, but it'll do you service. It was given to me by an old Frenchman, out o' Canada, when he was layin' just as I am layin'." It had been his father's and his grandfather's, and his great grandfather's; and this is what he told me about it, and that is what you'll find to be true. That watch will tick slow and steady, regular as the sun, as long as whoever it belongs to is well, and safe and thriving. When there's danger coming, it begins to go fast, faster and faster and faster, until it is past and so loud that you can hear it across the room as plain as if you held it in your hand. When death is coming that watch begins to stop. It goes slower and slower. Its voice grows hollow, and when the breath leaves the body, and there's no more sound to be heard, all you can do won't make it go for a year. At the end of that time it will start all of a sudden, and after that time you can read your fate by it and know your death hour. It was so after old Pierre died. It will be so now. Keep the watch when I am gone, doctor."

I could not help looking with some interest at the battered time piece. A strange story had been woven about it, and the marvelous ways had a charm for me. I sat beside my patient until he sunk to sleep. He seemed to be doing

well still, and I had no doubt but that the morning light would see him greatly better. But western hospitality would not admit of my departure at that late hour, and I was lodged in an upper chamber upon a bed as clean and simple as it was fragrant. I slept soundly. At midnight, however, I was awakened by the news that my patient was worse. He had awakened in mortal agony. Some inward injury, impossible to discover, had done its work. I said nothing of hope now, and the dying man looked at me with a ghastly smile.

"Take the watch," said he. "Watch it and me; you will find me right."

These were the last words he uttered. He muttered incoherently after this, tossed his arms about and struggled for breath. At last he seemed to sink into a slumber. My hand was on his heart. I felt its beating grow fainter, fainter, fainter still. At last there was no motion. He was dead. I lifted the watch to my ear—that had stopped also.

There were tears in the eyes of the rough men about me, and the woman wept as she might for one of her own kindred. I could do no good now, and I turned away, leaving the watch upon the coverlid, but one of the men came after me.

"He gave it to you," he said, "and its yours'n. He had nobody belongin' to him, so you need not be afear'd to take it. He must hev taken a likin' to you, for he thought a heap of it. Take it doctor."

It was dumb and motionless, and remained so. I took it to the watchmaker, and he laughed at the idea of its ever going again. This was after I had left the West and dwelt in a large and populous city in the Eastern States, some eight or nine months after poor Mike Barlow's death. The watchmaker only confirmed my own suspicions. It was a strange coincidence that it should last exactly its master's lifetime, but that was all. So I hung it upon my chamber wall, a memento of those days of toil and struggle in the far West.

One morning I awoke early. The blushes of dawn were just breaking over the earth. It was the month of November, but still the day was lovely. There was an unwonted sound in my room. At first I could not guess from whence it came. Had the sky been cloudy I should have imagined it to be the rain upon the roof. Then I began to feel that this sound I had heard was too delicate for the pater of rain. It might have been the clang of a fairy hammer, or the tapping of the beak of some minute bird, save that it was too regular. But the mystery of the sound was that it seemed to appeal to me—to reproach me with forgetting it.

I sat up and looked about me. In an instant I understood the sound. It was the tick of the old watch on the wall. Silent for a twelve-month, it had suddenly found voice, as though some spirit voice had touched its springs. I looked at my memorandum book. Twelve o'clock of the past night was the anniversary of Mike Barlow's death. His words had come true at last. He had said that when it once began to move, it would be as my monitor of safety or danger. All else had happened as he had foretold;—why should not this come to pass? I wore upon my guard chain a dainty little Geneva watch. I unfastened it, and put the battered silver monster in its place. The budding developments of the mystery made it more precious to me than if it had been set with jewels.

It did not stop again. I heard the soft clear "tick, tick," all the day, and when I awakened in the night. Once or twice it beat more rapidly than usual, and always before peril—the first time when a fever threatened me; the second as I stood upon a broken bridge, which was swept away one hour afterwards; and at an other moment which I have forgotten, but which served to keep alive the fancy that I loved to cherish. Never was its voice so clear and soft as on that evening when I first met Rosa Grey. I loved her from the first moment, and she loved me in return.

We had neither of us any friends to interfere, for she was an orphan, brotherless and sisterless; and so after a brief courtship, we were married.

I had no secret from my wife, and in a little while she learnt the story of the watch. She had faith in it, and thought or fancied could detect the very shades of difference in its utterance when I was weary, she said the watch was weary too; when I was glad it had a joyous echo. I know that on that night when a feeble frame, and the little creature to whom our love had given existence struggled vainly for its life, there was a piteous cadence in the voice of the old watch I hoped never to hear again.

So we lived together. It was God's will that we should be childless, but we loved each other all the more. I grew rich and prosperous, and our only grief was the missing of those baby eyes and voices which we had hoped to have about our hearth.

It was my fortieth birthday—I shall never forget the day—when the watch began its warning. My wife and I heard

it at one moment. Never before had the voice of that watch been so loud and rapid. All day long, all the next and all the next, that warning continued. The strong pulse within the watch shook the table on which it rested, when I drew it from my pocket, and made the garment on my bosom rise and fall when I replaced it. We were threatened with illness? No! her cheek was blooming and my pulse was regular. What could it mean?

After four days I began to laugh at my own credulity, and even Rosa began to lose her faith in the monitor. About noon I left her, and went alone in a little room where I kept my medical works and some rare drugs and curiosities. It was my purpose to study for a lecture which I was to deliver that evening. I seated myself at the desk and commenced to read, but after a few moments I began to experience a singular faintness and to inhale a disagreeable odor. I recognized the smell in a moment. In one of the jars upon my shelves was a rare essence of great use in cases where a suspension of consciousness was necessary, but excessively dangerous save in skillful hands. Some one—a servant probably—had been meddling with the jar and removed the stopper, and the room was full of the powerful odor. I must leave if I would live. I staggered to the door, but my hand upon the lock, when horrors! it remained unmovable—something had happened to the catch. I strove to call aloud, but my voice failed me. I clutched the table for support, but lost my hold, and fell heavily to the floor. I could see nothing—all grew dark about me. Mechanically I placed my hand upon my watch within my bosom. It stopped! and I remembered nothing more.

Consciousness came back to me, as it may come back to a new born babe, for I knew. I felt without understanding; was conscious of facts for which I cared nothing; I was in the dark; I was very cold and my movements were constrained—but it did not seem as though that were any affair of mine. Hunger at last awoke me—the animal aroused the mental, and I began to wonder where I had been and where I was. I put my hand up as well as I could. There was a low roof over my head, folds of muslin lay about me and something was on my breast, which emitted a sickly fragrance—a bunch of flowers seemingly half withered. I knew this by the touch. What was the matter with me? Why could I not breathe freely? Was I blind and deaf that I could neither see or hear? Suddenly the truth flashed across me: I had been buried alive—I lay in my coffin!

All this time you ask, where was my wife, how had she born the blow which had fallen so suddenly upon her? She it was who found me senseless upon my study floor, and she it was who hoped for returning consciousness after all others despaired. At last they told her I was dead, and abrooded me for burial. Learned men decided that the strange preservation of my frame was caused by the manner of death, and at length my body was committed to the tomb.

I had then made my wife promise me that if I died first she would take the watch into her own possession, and wear it while she lived; and so, now that all was over, she took it voiceless as it was, and laid it next to her bosom. For three days and nights she never slept, but at last exhaustion did its work, and she fell into a heavy slumber. She was awakened by a sound as strange as it was unexpected. The watch, silent since that fatal day, had begun to tick—fast and furious, as it never ticked before—loud enough to arouse her—loud enough to make her spring from her pillow in agony of hope and fear.

Those about her thought her a mad woman—but nevertheless, the strength of her purpose bore all before. Through the streets of the deserted town she passed in her white night robe, like a ghost, and they dared not hold her back. She reached the church door at last, and beat wildly at the old sexton's gate.

"I am come to tell you to open my husband's vault," "he's come to life again!" He also thought her mad, and yet dared not disobey her, and all the while the furious ticking of the watch could be heard by each one there. It softened, it stilled, when the doors were opened and the black coffin stood upon the turf. It grew musical when my wife bent over me, and caught me to her heart no corpse, but a living man, and it has had no change in its regular beat since that moment.

It is before me now, battered and worn as it was when it first came into my possession, and you may laugh alike at the watch and the superstition with which it is connected. But my wife believes in it firmly and loves it as though it were a living thing; and, for the matter of that, so do I.

It is enough to make one shudder to read the printers' advertisements for a boy of "moral character," when it is well known they intend to make a "devil" of him.

EYES.

A knowledge of the structure and functions of the eye has been prescribed as a cure for Atheism. I am not certain that the prescription would prove generally efficacious among the fools who say in their hearts "there is no God." But certainly the evidence of skill and wisdom are so apparent in the mechanism of the human eye, as to make manifest the stupid depravity of those who fail to see that a divine hand was employed in its creation. Nor is the human eye more curious of beautiful than the organs of vision of many of the lower orders of animals. The investigations of the anatomist, especially when aided in his studies by the microscope, make us acquainted with a world of wonderful facts. Crabs have their eyes "placed at the extremities of shelly foot-stocks, which are themselves on moveable hinges, capable of being projected at pleasure, moved in different directions, and packed away, when not in active use, in certain grooves hollowed out expressly for them in front margin of the shell." The garden snail carries his eyes at the extremity of a pair of horns. Most persons suppose the scallop to be blind, but it has eyes by the score, and every one of them bright as an emerald, and beautifully set. A single dragon-fly according to the computation of naturalists, has more than twenty thousand eyes, and splendored ones they are. The spider has fewer eyes—generally not more than eight in number—but they are perfect in form, finely set, and almost as brilliant as diamonds. The eyes of the sea slug are protected by a tough transparent covering that enables him to thrust his head through sand and mud without at all impairing his vision. The fish-hawk has eyes that are both microscopic, to fit him for the life he leads. Animals take too minute to be seen by the human eye, are found when examined by a magnifying glass, to have well-defined and useful organs of vision. Solomon seems to have made the eye a study, and frequently refers to it in his writings. He warns us against eating the bread of him that hath an evil eye—that is, of the covetous hypocrite who grudges his guests the entertainment to which he has invited them. In the East, the words of Solomon would receive a more literal application; for to this day there are whole nations that have full faith in the malignant potency of an evil eye. Thomson tells us that the Syrians stand in such dread of this blight that they resort to countless charms to ward it off. If you only look at a beautiful child, you must repeat the name of the Prophet of God, or the Virgin, with a prayer for protection. If you extol the beauty of a horse, you must immediately spit on it; and the same is done to a child, though most persons are content to blow in its face and pronounce a charm. Bright and striking figures are made on figures to draw attention from the fruit, lest it should be blasted by a too steadfast look. We read also of naughty and lofty eyes, of eyes that are wanton, of the eyes of a fool that are in the ends of the earth, and of the eyes of the spouse in Canticle, which are like the "fish pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim."

The following "lines" were picked up on the forecable of the *Wabash*. They, evidently, are the production of a Jack Tar, whose abstinence from the diurnal "tot" has made him childlike, taking his mind back to the days of Maternal Goose:

"Jack lost his Gill
So said to Bill—
'I know I hadn't oughter,
But at seven bells
I tuss the Welles
That give us nought but water.'"

A loafer who had got his Fourth of July load on, "fetched up," against the side of a house that had been newly painted. Shoving clear by a vigorous effort he took one glimpse at his shoulder, another at the house, a third one at his hands, and exclaimed, "Well, that's a mighty careless trick in whoever painted that house, to leave it standing out all night for people to run against."

Make truth credible, and children will believe it; make goodness lovely and they will love it; make holiness cheerful and they will be glad in it; but remind them of themselves by threats or exhortations and you impair the force of their unconscious affections—your words pass over them only to be forgotten.

An American paper announced the illness of its editor, piously adding: "All good paying subscribers are requested to mention him in their prayers. The others need not, as the prayers of the wicked avail nothing according to good authority."

A witty dentist having labored in vain to extract a decayed tooth from a lady's mouth, gave up the task with the felicitous apology: "The fact is, madam, it seems impossible for anything but to come out of your mouth."

Select Miscellany.

THE MYSTERIOUS WATCH.

You have no faith in supernatural? I have. You do not believe in necromancy or astrology, or in the power of the evil eye? I do. The reason for this is you are Americans, descended from English ancestors, while I have German blood in my veins, and inherit a reverence for what you sneer at. Were a disembodied spirit to rise at my bedside to-night, I should question it, and own to being frightened, while you would throw a candlestick at its immaterial head, and insist to the last upon its being a burglar in disguise. Your hair would rise and your blood curdle, and you would feel what you would not acknowledge for the world. Bah! If such things have no existence, what do our strange shiverings and shudders mean? I wonder do we look about us with awe-stricken eyes when we pass graveyards after dark? You do not, you say. Are you sure of it? I have never seen a ghost and I cannot say I desire the spectacle. There must be an uncomfortable beating of the heart at such a sight. I doubt if many could retain both life and reason through such an ordeal.

I am a doctor. Years ago I was poor and young. I came from my own country with my diploma and nothing else. I found that the great cities of the new world were full of doctors young and poor as I was. I left them and went westward. I settled in the State of Indiana. It was then a great forest with clearings here and there for fields of corn and rude log houses. Any one led a hard life there, and a doctor's it seemed to be the worst of all. Miles and miles of hard riding, through rain and mud, to visit patients who would pay nothing; miles back again, to steal a few minutes of repose before another announcement of some one being "very bad." I was skin and bones in a twelvemonth, but that was nothing uncommon in that part of the world. The only wonder is that I did not have the fever and ague. I was the only person free from it for fifty square miles. However, I prepared after a certain fashion, and in a year or two made a considerable local reputation. The place was growing and my spirits began to revive.

It was about this time when I first saw my watch, to which all I have now so tall relates. A cold night in November had set in. I was at supper in my little home, and enjoying it as only a hungry and weary man can enjoy food. Don't ask what I had; it was out West remember. Of course there was a preparation of whiskey; corn meal, pork and whiskey are the staple articles offered! "out west."

I was enjoying my supper as I have said, and a loud knock at the door was not the most delightful sound which could have broken the silence. However, I said "come in!" with as good grace as possible, and a stranger entered. He was a tall, broad shouldered man, in the dress of a buckwoodsman, and his large features were a troubling expression. I saw at once that something serious had occurred. "It's a bad night to trouble you to