

# North Carolina Argus.

NEW SERIES—VOL. V—NO. 71

WADESBOROUGH, N. C., THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 1863.

[WHOLE NO. 220.]

## THOUGHT IS FREE.

Thought is free,  
Chainless as the unfathomed sea,  
Rapt as the breath of Heaven,  
Rapid as the gleaming lovin,  
It was born before the light,  
And will last beyond the night.

## Thought is free!

"Free as air men's thoughts should be,"  
So English Alfred said;  
So did preach the martyr'd dead  
In the land in times of old,  
Where truth bravely yet is told.

## ELSIE RAYMOND.

BY VIRGINIA F. TOWNSEND.

"Wait a moment grandma, I just want to rap out, and say good-bye to Daisy;" and the sweet face, set in a frame work of bridal hat flowers, looked a moment through the open door and then vanished, before the lady, in her quaker statu and white muslin cap, could reply.

"What, isn't Elsie here?" The questioner was a young, and noble looking man, and there was something peculiarly attractive in the smiling of his dark expressive eyes, as they swept the room with a single glance, and then lighted on the old lady.

"She's just run out, Alden, to bid Daisy good bye. You know it wouldn't do to go off without seeing her old nurse anyhow. Everything's packed isn't it?"

"Yes, and the carriage is waiting;" and as the young man spoke, a tide of gleeful laughter rolled up to their ears from the company below stairs. The old lady did not mind it. She came close to the newly made husband, and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Alden," she said, very earnestly, "now the hour has come for our parting, I can think of many things I want to say to you, and I ought to have done this before. But it's too late now. O, Alden, you will be very tender of my darling, won't you? You will never forget how she has been watched and cared for, (it may be too much,) and how she has never known a harsh word in the home from whence you are taking her?"

The old lady's voice was pleading almost to sadness, and her eyes were full of tears; but dimmed as they were, she saw the look of beautiful tenderness that flashed in the young man's expressive features.

"Do not fear to trust me, Mrs. Williams," he said, solemnly, taking both her hands in his. "Her happiness shall be the aim of my life. The love that has watched over, the tenderness that has guarded her girlhood from the very shadow of evil, shall be increased a hundred fold in the home to which I take her;" and had you heard those eloquent tones, and seen the look which accompanied them, you would have predicted a joyous wedded life for Elsie Raymond.

"I do believe you, Alden, my boy;" answered the old lady, fervently. "But sometimes you may find Elsie a little impatient, or self-willed. I don't like to say it, for the heart's always in the right place only you know how quick and impulsive she is, and she don't bear contradiction, for I s'pose she is a spoiled child."

"Who's a spoiled child?" asked a voice so sweet it would have thrilled your heart like a sudden outbreak of harp music, and the graceful figure of the girl-bride sprang into the room.

Rubens ought to have seen her at that moment. With her blue, sparkling eyes, the half blush gathered into her soft cheeks, and the arch smile breaking over her lips, as morning sunshine breaks into the heart of mountain roses, she was just the vision of outward, joyous earth loveliness that his soul would have delighted in. Her white bat with its loopings of lace ribbon, and her rich traveling dress, harmonized with the rare English creaminess of her complexion, and altogether she looked to the loving eyes that now rested on her, so bright, and sparkling, and happy, that they forgot everything but her beauty.

"Grandma's been saying bad things about me," said the bride, with a pretty pout, that any young husband would have thought worth a dozen kisses.

"Now Alden, don't you let her frighten you one bit, for I'm going to be just the most loving,

obedient little wife in the world, and never do a thing you say I musn't as long as I live."

"I shan't say musn't very often, darling," answered the young husband, stroking the curls that fell out of that little hat. "But come, Elsie, we shan't be in time for the ctra. Say good bye to your grandmother quick."

"I'll be a good girl, indeed I will," whispered the trembling lips, as they drew up to the grandmother's; and the smiling face was dim with tears.

"God bless you, Elsie, my child!"

And her husband hurried her away.

Elsie Raymond's future must tell the story of her past. Both her parents lay under the spring grass before she had learned to know them, and so she went to her grandmother's heart and home. There, only sunshine lay over her life. The tender, indulgent grandmother forgot there must come an hour when the clouds would rise, and the great life-storms descend upon the flower that grew up in such beauty at her hearthstone.

Elsie had one of those fine, rich, impulsive natures, that especially require judicious training. This she had never received from her grandmother, and the under current of self-will and pride in her nature had gained depth and force, which in her early girlhood, only revealed themselves in her impatience of mild reproof, or contradiction.

But usually she was so loving, so gentle, so transparent—and, as I said, her future must tell her past.

Two years had gone swiftly, happily by. Mr. and Mrs. Raymond sat at their breakfast table that morning. The room with its appliances of taste and luxury, was one of those rare home gems, that only an artist can appreciate.

But the little wife, behind the silver coffee urn, in her fawn-colored morning gown, with its tassels of blue silk, was after all the crowning beauty of the sweet home scene.

"Alden," said Mrs. Raymond, as she passed his second cup of coffee, "won't you just put down that paper, and listen to me one moment. You know that party you promised me, almost a year ago. Well, I've decided to have it next week. It's just the season for it now, and we'll make a grand effort to make it pass off well."

If Mrs. Raymond had at that moment looked narrowly at her husband's face, she would have seen it grow pale at the mention of the party.

"I'm sorry, Elsie," he commenced, moving restlessly in his chair.

"Now, don't, interrupted the little wife, quickly, "don't Alden, say one word against the party, for I've quite set my heart on having it. I told the Campbell's, and the Wildman's about it, more than two weeks ago, so I should die with shame to postpone it."

"You shouldn't have mentioned it to them without consulting me first." Mr. Raymond's tones were cold and severe for the first time, but his wife would have forgiven them, had she guessed the anguish that lay at his heart.

As it was her face flushed with anger.

"Really," she answered, "I was not, until this morning, aware I was responsible to you, Mr. Raymond, for the subjects I might choose to select for conversation with my acquaintances. Once for all, what is the reason you refuse me this party?"

"I do not refuse it Elsie, I only ask you to delay it."

"And I must and will have it next week or never. I cannot see why you wish me to postpone it, unless it is because you know the delay will greatly annoy me."

"The young man's pale face flushed with the pain her words had occasioned him."

"Elsie," and his voice was quieter and sterner than before, "you cannot move me by these accusations because you know as well as I do, there is no truth in them. I have some heavy payments to make this week, and that alone was the reason of my requesting you to defer this matter. All I have to say is, you will be quite as likely to accomplish your wishes by presenting them in a less dictatorial manner."

It was very unfortunate for Mr. Raymond that he added to this explanation that last remark; for now that he assigned a motive for the delay, his wife's heart had begun to soften toward him, but that last speech hardened it again.

"I don't believe a word of what you're saying, Alden Raymond," she answered, pushing back

her chair and bursting into a flood of passionate tears. If money had made any difference, you'd have told me before this late day and it's because you want to mortify me now before the world that you are so stingy this morning. I wish I was back again in my old home, with grandma and dear old Daisy, who would never have spoken to me the harsh, cruel words you have just done. I wish I was back there again, and that I had never left it, and that I had never seen you, Alden Raymond!"

And springing from her seat, the lady burst out of the room, and her husband made no effort to detain her. He only leaned his head on his hand, and groaned deeply. It was the last drop in his cup of bitterness.

An hour later the young merchant was walking up and down his counting room, with restless step, and haggard face.

There had come a sudden revolution in the mercantile world, and his house was one of the first to feel it. "There is no chance to sail clear of this, that I see," murmured the young man as he struck his forehead. "A few weeks, and we must all sink. I shall be a ruined man, and Elsie—his face worked fearfully a moment, and then he resumed: "There is no way to raise the money, unless—" he stared anxiously all about him, as though he felt the terrible secret which lay behind that "unless," might have revealed itself though it had never crossed his lips; and for the first time in his life; his face wore a look of cowardice and guilt.

"Yes; I could get it so," he said leaning his head on his hands; "and if our affairs should happen to take a favorable turn, I could repay the note before anybody was the wiser; and if not," and his voice grew hoarse, "the river or a pistol shot could settle it all."

"Elsie's little property's all swallowed up, too. God knows I meant to secure it, and were she to know this she'd hate me worse than ever, and maybe, I can win back one of the old love smiles to her sweet lips if—" he did not finish the sentence.

"Elsie, you can give out the invitations for your party next week. There is the money which will defray the expenses," and Mr. Raymond placed a note for a thousand dollars in the lap of his wife.

It was dinner time, and Elsie had had all the morning to reflect on her conduct at breakfast, and bitterly had the young wife reproached herself for the unkind words she had spoken. But her will was unsubdued still, and when the footsteps of her husband rang through the hall, the old pride came back to her rosy lip, and she thought to herself Alden shall speak first."

And he did: and that generous deed of his overcame at once all the pride and self-will of the really loving wife.

She sprang up quickly, and wound her white arms around her husband's neck, while tears of remorse and tenderness swept down her face.

"Oh, Alden she said, forgive me, forgive me for the cruel words I have said this morning. I have been sorry for them. I do love you better than all the world beside, and I would not leave you for a thousand grandmothers. Say just once to me "Elsie, I forgive you," and I shall be so happy."

He drew his bright head to her bosom, and he rained down kisses on her sweet brow, as he said, "Elsie, once and forever I forgive you, but I have been very weak, and I have suffered much this morning. Let me lay my head in your lap, and see if I shall not feel better, while you talk to me."

And Elsie sat there a long time, running her little dimpled fingers through the thick brown curls of her husband, and laying her cool lip, every few moments to his fevered forehead, chatting to him in her sweet, humming-bird style, of her party, and what a delightful affair it would be, dreaming little of the darkness, and sin, and shame, that was drawing closer and closer to their threshold!

It was late in the morning after the party. It had been, as the young wife predicted, "a brilliant affair."

And now she walked through the elegant confusion of her parlors, and thought what glances of admiration had followed her during the evening, and how proud Alden would be when she recounted to him the compliments which the

guests had bestowed upon their beautiful hosts; and how she had inadvertently heard Mayor Hamlin, who was pronounced the most artistic judge in the city, call her the rare blossom of the festival." But these pleasant dreamings experienced a rude interruption.

Two rough looking men entered the parlor and inquired if Mr. Raymond was in.

"No," answered his wife, surprised and startled. "He went to the store this morning."

One of them replied with a significant look around the rooms, that he was not there, they had just come from his store.

"I have not seen him since," was Mrs. Raymond's loquacious rejoinder; and after conferring together a moment, the two men left the room.

The lady sank down upon a sofa, and covered her face with her hands. They were policemen, she could not disguise from herself this fact, and a vague, terrible fear took possession of her soul.

A few moments later and her husband stood before her, wild, pale, haggard.

"Elsie," he asked hurriedly, "have there been two policemen here after me?"

"Yes, and I told them you were at the store. Oh, Alden—"

She could not finish the sentence, for he rushed from her out into the hall, and up stairs like a madman.

Elsie's heart died within her, and it was only by grasping the cushions of the sofa, she prevented herself from sinking to the floor. She feared—she knew not what, but the next moment the woman's heart of Elsie Raymond awoke within her. Alden, her husband, was suffering, it might be he was in disgrace and shame, and who should stand by him, and where should he find comfort and strength, but in her?

She sprang up, and though her limbs shook like a reed beneath her, and her face would not be whiter when it lay under the coffin plates, she went straight into the hall, and up the long stairs to his room.

The door was not locked and she opened it without knocking. What a scene for the blue eyes of Elsie Raymond! Her husband stood in the center of the room with a pistol pointed at his heart. One minute more and she had been too late.

With one loud shriek she rushed to his side, with one blow with her small white hand she struck the heavy pistol to the floor, and with a wild, sad cry springing from her pale lips, "Saved, saved, Alden," she wound her arms about him.

The desperate man put her away. "Saved," he cried hoarsely, "saved to ruin, degradation, to worse than death. Leave me, Elsie, and let me do the deed now."

But she came back for she would not be put away.

"No, no," she answered, and her pale face shone almost like an angel's with its beautiful wife-tenderness, did you think your Elsie would leave you now, when your arms have sheltered her so long? Did you think she would not follow you through suffering and shame, true and loving to the end?"

"But not to prison Elsie, not to prison!"

His head dropped as he said it.

"Yes," she answered drawing closer, and the light of her soul was shining in her eyes, "to prison, to the gallows, to death, Alden!"

And then he took her in his arms, and while his heart was wrung with deeper agony for her than for himself, he told her all.

And Elsie learned, for the first time of the threatened collapse in her husband's business, and of the utter impossibility of his meeting the expenses of their party without—he whispered the words—"he had forged a note for two thousand dollars." He hoped to pay it, and so elude discovery, but matters grew worse, and he could not raise the money.

"And it was for me you did it, Alden; because I spoke those cruel words! Oh! God help me! I am to blame, not you!" cried the heart-broken wife.

But before the husband could answer her, she had sprang from her seat, and a great hope had dawned into her face.

"Alden," she cried, it was I that ruined, it is I that will save you. I am going to that man [See Fourth Page.]