THE ROANOKE NEWS.

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VOL. XIV. WELDON, N. C., THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1885. NO. 32.

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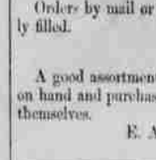

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HER OPINION OF COURTSHIP.

BY BABY VANDERVOTOS.

"He's in love with you?" Of course you should know it!
I think that you must be blind!
If I were a man I would show it,
When once I was sure of my mind;
But no! you must wait till you're certain,
You turn stress so fully proud,
With everything chosen by fear like a curtain,
When you ought to be speaking aloud.

Don't you think that it's doubtfully silly
That we must conceal what we feel?
I'm sure that it couldn't work illy,
And would simplify things a great deal;
Less none of the girls would be married,
Could they ask to be somebody's wife,
And one wouldn't always be harried
For fear she was single for life.

I love I know little of story,
Of books and lore, and all that;
But I see the full poetic beauty,
And that is right to look at.
So doubt you reason—you know better
With that very superior air;
But it don't change my diction one letter
Because you overhaul it—so there!

What sort of a man would I fancy?
Well, one of the handsome shade:
Tall, handsome—that much I can say—
And—why—he must have a mustache
Black as jet! Father won't not affronting,
Of course, one needs dresses and gloves;
But it is romantic and charming
To be poor with the man that one loves.

But I'm not here to tease
He wouldn't wait all of months,
Something to openly assume.
No, he'd ask me if I'd be his wife,
And I'd know that his love was toward me
First, as well as when he had proposed.
What! must know? Three times you've asked me!
Good gracious! I never supposed—.

[Written For The Roanoke News]

BY QUANKEY'S STREAM.

A STORY BY E. C.

CHAPTER—X.

"I AM PROUD OF YOU—DAVID."

Sunday after the Fair was dark and cold and dreary, one of those Fall days when earth and trees and clouds all seem to be weeping together, when the dampness collects everywhere and on everything, changing into leaky and bedraggled garments, the royal robes of color, with which the fair Autumn had been clothed a few short hours before. Nor was Autumn the only sovereign who had to say Ichabod over the brilliancy of the past week's reign. Judith Edgerton whom people had called the "Queen of the balls" was now sitting at home sick and sorry and worn out. As if to emphasize her sympathy with the dreary weather, and furnish the greatest possible contrast to her rich dressing of the last four days Judith had put on her one black dress, and had seated herself listlessly before the fire in the old parlor, idly watching the blaze as it flashed up or died down; and conscious of a passive sort of wish that Margaret would come and talk to her. She heard a step on the porch and went at once to the door, half expecting to meet the fulfilment of her wish; but instead of Margaret, Heywood was standing there looking so haggard and wild-eyed that Judith was startled into forgetfulness of his neglect and her resentment. He held out his hand to her and as she placed hers in it, its scorching heat almost burnt hers. He took a chair and made a strong effort to speak naturally and gayly, but the very demon of unrest seemed to have possession of him; and, rising with an impatient gesture, he began pacing the long room with short quick tireless steps. For a moment Judith thought he was drunk, but she soon saw that was a mistake, then she concluded that his gambling must have been unsuccessful and that he had lost heavily, without winning anything to offset it. But he was suffering now, whatever the cause of his trouble might be, and, much as she had against him, Judith had her whole heart for him, so that she could not see him suffer thus without deep pain to herself.

"Heywood," she said at last, drawing an arm-chair close to the fire, as she spoke, "come and try to sit still. Come here and try to rest, and tell me what is the matter with you."

"There is everything the matter Gypsy," he replied taking the seat she offered him, and gazing silently into the red coals. With a woman's tact Judith sat silent too; and when, after awhile, Heywood looked up it was to see her eyes bent upon him with the anxious, puzzled look that a mother might have for a sick child, whose petulance she knows not how to soothe.

"Judith," he exclaimed, "I was a fool the other night when you tried so hard to save me, a blind fool. Are you willing to save me yet, Gypsy?"

"How, Heywood?" she asked, feeling that all overtures should be made by him this time.

"Anyhow," he answered, rising and pacing the room, once more; "anyhow you will, Judith. I refused then to go to Texas with you, now I come and beg you to let me go. I implore you to marry me and go with me. Marry me tomorrow and let us leave this place, Judith, it is hell to me and every hour I spend in it I am suffering the torments of the damned. Be my wife, be my savior," he said stopping in his hurried tramp and standing before her, holding out his hands to her as a drowning man might to a rescuer, "you loved me once, Sweetheart, don't you love me still?"

"Yes," Judith said, answering the question. Whatever else was doubtful, whatever were Heywood's reasons for this great change, this at least was certain, that she loved him still.

"Well if you love me yet," he said, still standing before her, but this time holding her hands in his, "marry me tomorrow morning and let us go away from temptations, as you said that night, you and I alone together."

Judith believed that now was the time to save Heywood when he was disgusted with his habits, distrustful of himself, and looking to her for help and comfort. His proposition of a sudden marriage therefore appeared a wise one to her; and to aid this, was the fact of Judith's life-long aversion to what she termed a "fussy wedding." She was about to consent to his petition that they should be married the next day when she heard her grand mother's feeble step outside the door and then caught the voices of both grand parents as they stood talking to each other. Reminded thus of them, she thought of how her going from them would grieve them, of how by leaving them she would be, as it were, taking the very light of day out of their lives with her.

"How can I leave *them*, Heywood?" she asked tremulously, motioning towards the hall where they were standing. "How can they give me up?"

Heywood had many kind impulses and he saw quickly what this parting would cost Judith, as well as the old people.

"You are right," he said, "how can they give you up? How can you give them and everything else up for a wreck like me? No Judith it is better you shouldn't, it is better for me to go on—to the devil, whither I am bound, alone, and not drag you down with me."

He sank wearily into the arm-chair again, and the flush that had been in his face died out, leaving it white and haggard and desperate. "Forsaking all others cleave only unto him, so long as we both shall live." The love which makes this promise possible of fulfilment was strong in Judith's heart for Heywood. Her's was not a nature for close self examination nor for high ideals. She had never possessed those strong religious beliefs which governed Margaret Hamilton and caused her to distrust her own impulses. Judith had all her life followed whither her inclinations led, and hence had given her warm woman's heart to Heywood Montfort regardless of prudence or judgment. She but knew that she loved him, that for his sake she would promise to leave all that she had held dear, all that she had counted desirable before this one supreme emotion had entered her life. She watched him sitting there, pale and worn a few moments, then rising she went to him and tenderly stroked back the clustering dark hair that had fallen on the beautiful brow.

"No Heywood," she said smiling, "you shall *not* go to the devil—you and I will go to Texas, instead, and we will go to-morrow, if you say so."

And so it was settled that to-morrow should be their wedding day. Heywood grew so much calmer and brighter after this that Judith regained all her own bright life and spirits, and she and Heywood set themselves to win the consent of the old people to their plan as also to soften the parting as much as might be to them. Old Mrs. Edgerton was the more easily won of the two. She had been brought up to consider the Montforts as amongst the rulers of the world and there was a secret sense of pleasure and pride in the thought that Judith should become the wife of one of the aristocratic name and race, however poverty stricken he might be. Her husband was not so easily persuaded.

"You needn' ask me," he said to Heywood. "Judith's one and twenty, an' I've managed ter make the money her mother lef', double itself in these years. That money's Judith's ter throw way of she wants ter, jest lak the Texas plantation is. But I kin tell ye now, young man, I ain't goin' ter leave my money so you kin make ducks an' drakes of it lak you an' yer people's done with ole Amos Montfort's earnin's. Naw suh! I aint goin' to fuss 'bout yer marryin', becuse I know Judith. She's er monstrous strong-headed gyal lak all the Edgerton women; an' ef she will have ye, she *will*. But ey fur tryin' ter make me say I'm willin' ter see it! I aint no more'n I'd be willin' ter see my bes' cotton lan' turned out ter grow up in brum-straw an' pine saplin's." Nor could the combined caresses and coaxings of his wife and Judith change the old man's decision.

"Hush talkin' ter me Betsy," he said as his wife once more tried her eloquence upon him, after they had gone to their room, "you're tickled at it in your heart becase his name's Montfort. That's no more sense in agreein' ter it on that account, then that'd be in drinkin' the nasty drugs onten er barrel becase the name of a fine bran' o' whiskey's painted on the outside of it, so hush talkin', and less try ter go ter sleep."

But despite this last wise advise neither Mr. Edgerton nor his wife nor Judith slept much that night. And when early the next morning Mr. Edgerton drove in to Fairfax for Margaret she met him looking so rest-broken that he said at once:

"W'y Margaret you look lak you aint slept er wink. Hev you been a layin' wake thinkin' over this foolishness too?"

"What foolishness?" she asked naturally. And he proceeded to tell her his errand, growing so wrathful on the subject that he quickly forgot Margaret's pallor.

The truth was that the Sunday which had been so eventful for Heywood and Judith had also brought its excitement to Margaret. Mr. Trenton had called early in the afternoon, and had told her of the missing five hundred dollars, of his conviction that David Cabal had stolen it, hoping to defy detection on account of the large amounts they were paying out daily, and of his intention to discharge David as soon as another man could be gotten in his place.

"I don't intend to expose him," Mr. Trenton told her, "I promised him I would say nothing about it to any one but you; for I have liked the young fellow, I am disappointed in my own judgment, and deceived in every particular by this dishonesty of his. I feel so sorry for it that I would not even mention it to you if I had not spoken so well of him to you, and if I did not know how you have believed in him too."

"How I do believe in him," corrected Margaret. "Circumstances are all against him, Mr. Trenton, but I believe in him all the same, circumstances mislead sometimes. Such a man as Mr. Cabal has shown himself to be all these months *could* not be a thief."

Mr. Trenton regarded her curiously, then smiled at her flushed face and earnest words.

"You are talking like a woman now, Margaret," he said, "I am not going to blame you. I only wish you were right instead of myself."

"I am right," the young woman answered, emphatically, "you will see that I am, some day. No," she continued as he was about to bring farther proof against David, "I don't care to hear anything else about it; it is useless to tell me. Nothing but his own avowal of it would convince me, and that I never will hear, because he did *not* take *the money*, and he would *never* tell a lie."

What was a reasonable, practical man to say to this thoroughly illogical woman, who refused to see facts and figures, who indeed scorned them with fine scorn, avowing her belief in their falsity the more warmly, the more strongly their truth was shown to her? Mr. Trenton grew angry that she should prove herself so hopelessly lost to anything like logic, or sense, and left her sooner than usual, because she would not be convinced of a thing which he himself would have freely given the lost five hundred dollars to disbelieve. He could not know that Margaret lay awake all night while he slept soundly, trying to solve this mysterious problem, trying to account in some way for the missing money. This was the trouble that had kept her from sleep on that memorable Sunday night, and now, in the early morning Mr. Edgerton came with this astonishing news of Judith's marriage.

She started to go with him in her mourning dress, but turned when she reached his buggy.

"I forgot that I was going to a wedding," she said, trying to smile, "I must not give Judith bad luck with my black dress," and she went back in the house to get a white suit, feeling somehow a sort of belief in signs and omens and luck, since changes and cares seemed gathering so thickly around herself and her friends.

Once with Judith there was too much for both of them to do in packing and preparing for the long journey, for either of them to think or talk much. The hours flew by, all too swiftly. Heywood came, still looking pale and care-worn but far calmer than he had been the previous day. Then the gray haired preacher and the few witnesses came, and the words were spoken which, short and simple as they are, yet join two lives so closely together that nothing but death has power to put them asunder. The tearful partings old were soon over with, the two or three guests departed, and Margaret and the two people stood together on the damp veranda a mournful trio, and watched the carriage which took Judith and Heywood to the depot, as it was driven away through the cold, gray November mist. When the last glimpse of it was hidden by the winding road Mrs. Edgerton turned, and in doing so noticed that Margaret still wore the white dress she had put on to give Judith good luck.

"Go in the house, Honey," the old woman said "an' take off that white dress. You'll ketch your death o' cold if you don't. An' seems lak somebody's dead now—" she added, as her eyes once more sought the road where Judith had passed.

"Its a'most er pity she aint" Mr. Edgerton said bitterly, following his wife's look, I'm afeard 'twould 'a' been better fur our little gyal ef we'd 'a' laid her this mornin' yonder by Richard, stid o' seein' her go 'way, Heywood Montfort's wife."

"Aw! don't say that William," pleaded the wife, as in her turn she followed his glance, and her eyes rested on the tombstone of her only child. "don't say that again William," she repeated breaking down into shuddering sobs, she's Richard's baby an' she's alive, she's all that's left us, don't wish *she* was dead *too*, for God's sake."

The weather-beaten features of the old man worked convulsively now.

"Thar, thar, Betsy," he said striving to speak naturally and taking her wrinkled hand in his "don't cry, don't cry. We'll make out somehow. But Margrit, it is so hard ter give *him* our little gyal." The tears that possibly had not risen to his eyes since Richard was buried, were welling up as as he said the last words and the sight of them moved Margaret to her very soul.

"Dear, dear Grand-pa!" she exclaimed drawing more closely to them, "I know it is hard, I know it is breaking your hearts."

"That's the right word, Maggie," Mrs. Edgerton said, noticing Margaret's calling her husband, Grand-pa, "we've all along wanted you to feel lak that ter us. Come an' stay with us, now, Maggie. Come an' live here, we're lone an' desolate an' you're lone an desolate, we need one another."

"Yes, Margrit" Mr. Edgerton said, joining in his wife's request. Come an' stay long o' us, wont ye, Honey? ye'll be er sight o' comp'ny ter me an' Betsey an' you'll be almost ez lonesome ez us, now she's gone. Come an' stay twell Christmus any how."

"Stay *always*," corrected Mrs. Edgerton, "I heard Judith beggin' you to come this mornin.' An' we're all so lone an' desolate, Maggie," and leaning against Margaret the poor old woman wept anew.

"We're all so lone an' desolate," the words which made evidently the refrain of Mrs. Edgerton's thoughts struck a sympathetic chord in the heart of Margaret Hamilton. Her father's death first, then this trouble of David's, then this parting from Judith. It seemed to Margaret that the very desolation of desolation was upon her, that the dark, damp dreariness of the misty, drizzling day was typical of what her life had become, of what her life was hereafter always to be, she told herself with the hopeless sorrow of youth. And the dependence of these two old people, the love that they offered her, the fact that they too were desolate and looked to her for help, were strong appeals to her, longing, as she did, for loving human companionship, for the chance to forget her own cares in helping others to bear theirs. While they were still standing on the veranda after Mrs. Edgerton's last speech they heard a faint neigh of a horse and Mr. Edgerton started.

"Thar! he said that's Judith's mare a-whickerin.' She aint been fed to-day, an' now I'll allers feel her, my own self."

And he went, to find that consolation in action which Margaret and his wife found in talking and tears. Before the afternoon closed it was settled, that as soon as she could end her school, Margaret should come to live with the Edgertons.

"An' try ter come quick, Honey," were the last words said to her as Mr. Edgerton left her at her own home. But however anxious she might be for the change, it could not be made for the next week or two until the school month was out; and Margaret went back to her work the next morning with a sensation as if she had lived through whole years since she bade her young pupils good-bye on Friday afternoon. So strong was this feeling, that she caught herself experiencing surprise when she saw that the streets of the old town were unchanged, that the people walked about as usual, even that the sun shone the same, so different did the world seem to her since the changes of the past few days.

It was Thursday afternoon before she saw David at all, though she had watched for him and hoped to meet him. On Thursday, though, she caught sight of him, and hastening her own steps, overtook him near the turn in that lane where he had overtaken her once. When in answer to her call David's eyes met hers she saw that he at least had aged as much as she felt that she herself had since they had last seen each other. And each saw too, that there was no need of concealment, that Margaret knew of the money, and that David knew she knew it.

"Why haven't you been to see me?" she asked reproachfully.

"I was on my way just now," he answered "I was going to tell you good-bye."

"Not so soon as this!" she said while a sudden faintness came over her, partings were growing harder and harder to her.

"Would you have me stay?" David asked, noticing her paleness and the regret in her voice.

"No," she replied drawing herself up, "I want you to go. I would not have you lower yourself by staying under a man who can suspect you. I think I hated Mr. Trenton, kind as he has been to me, when he told me Sunday,—about that money."

David was smiling now, for the first time since Saturday.

"You are keeping your word," he said, "you are believing in me whatever happens."

"I had not thought of my promise," she answered "It did not need a promise to believe in you, it came to me by instinct. I wonder that any one who has seen you, and lived with you should doubt you. I lose patience with Mr. Trenton for letting you leave."

Her indignation brought a bright flush to her face; and to David's loving eyes she had never seemed so charmingly pretty before. But his masculine sense of justice would no allow him to avail himself of her feminine injustice.

"You should not do that" he said as they stopped at the bars where they had made friends some months ago. "When you go over it, as I have done, you will see that circumstances are all against me. Mr. Trenton left on Monday, expecting to be absent ten days. No one had the keys but myself. I was to pay the factory hands off, and also buy the cotton. Mr. Trenton came Saturday, unexpectedly; and the money was gone. Who was there to suspect but me? Besides he has seen that I am doing my best to save money; he thinks that I have a sweetheart—away off North somewhere (David smiled here, at the blush which covered Margaret's face when his tender, half playful glance fell upon her) whom I am trying to get able to marry. How is my unsupported word to stand against all this? especially when I cannot even advance a suggestion as to what became of the money. I only know it was there and is gone, and that is all I can say."

"Is there no way out of it?" Margaret asked, repeating the question that had grown familiar to her during these four days. And she and David walked slowly home talking and thinking over this strange, strange mystery. David told her of his carelessness in going to sleep with the door unlocked and the safe keys on the table and they discussed the improbability of a theif's allowing the money David had on the table to remain untouched.

"Then nobody knew the money was in the safe, nobody knew I had the keys," David declared, "I never mentioned it to any one except Miss Judith and Heywood Montfort."

At the last name Margaret started so, that David looked at her quickly, the suspicion in her eyes soon coming into his too.

"Could Heywood have stolen it?" she whispered, speaking so low that David could scarcely catch the words. "Could this account for his sudden marriage?"

But gradually the same puzzled, hopeless look came back in David's face.

"No" he said shaking his head wearily as he had so often done when he fancied he had reached the solution of the problem but to find himself wrong.

"I left Heywood in Z——— Thursday night; and I have heard that he was there, gambling heavily both Thursday and Friday. No he did not take it," we are uncharitable even to say such a thing."

Margaret and he talked until late in the night with no better result.

"I am going away to-morrow," David said as the time approached for him to leave, "the other man came to-day. And Miss Margaret I want to say that you must not let this prejudice you to Mr. Trenton, he is your best friend here. And he has been kind, even generous to me. He will not let me replace the money, because he knows it would take everything I have in the world, and he has said nothing of his loss or suspicions. Promise me you will not think ill of him, for he must be your best friend now?"

"How can I make such a promise?" Margaret exclaimed. "How can I think well of a man who thinks ill of you?"

Hot blushes covered her face at these words and her voice quivered and sank almost to a whisper. But David heard—and, for that moment, forgot everything in this world except the blushing, trembling girl who was making a paradise of it for him.

"My sweetheart!" he exclaimed his blue eyes shining, "has the time come when you can listen, or is this only pity for me?"

"As if I *could pity you!*" Margaret said, indignant at the words, even when uttered by himself. "I am proud of you—proud of you—*David*."

And then she told him how through these months she had day by day grown to admire and respect him, how he had risen constantly in her esteem as she compared his strong, honest, earnest life, his chivalrous love for her, his truth and his industry, with the life and character of other men she knew. And how, at last, as she watched and thought and prayed for him, through the darkness of that Sunday night, she had come to see clearly that henceforth she must sorrow as he sorrowed and rejoice when he rejoiced.

What a wonderful, wonderful almost incomprehensible thing it was to David that this great blessing should be his! that it should flow as it were out of his great trouble!

"My Darling," he said at last, sadly, "I ought not to listen to these precious words of yours. I ought not to let you love me, for your dear life my belief, must not be linked with one on which there is even the shadow of a stain."

"I am not afraid," she told him putting her white hand in his and looking at him with her bright eyes full of faith. "God is good and God is just. He will bring things right and you and I can wait for Him. Let us pray now that He will help us." And kneeling together, she and he prayed fervently. David's voice shaking sometimes with his deep emotion as he thanked God for the love He had given them and begged for His benediction on their heads, and His aid in their need.

And David Cabal left Fairfax the next day, feeling that his life was blessed and hallowed, that he carried with him a sacred gift, knowing that he had in his keeping the loving heart, that he was followed by the loving prayers of a tender and pure and pious woman.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

WORDS OF CONSOLATION.

Ingersoll's Letter to a Mother.

Not long ago a lady of San Francisco was suddenly overwhelmed by a great, crushing, affliction, that, coming like a thunderbolt upon her, for a time threatened her. Her son, and only child, had gone on a short business journey, expecting soon to return. Sudden, and fatal illness overtook him, and a brief telegram announced the dreadful tidings to his heart-broken mother. The terrors of the Calvinistic creed, in which she had been brought up, and according to which, as she well knew, there was no hope of future happiness for the unconverted young man, added greatly to her agonizing grief over his death, until her friends feared that her reason, if not her life, would be destroyed. A lady friend, who had sympathized deeply with and vainly sought to console her, informed Col. Ingersoll, and begged him, if possible, to write something which might at least relieve in a measure the terrible apprehension as to the fate of her son under which she was suffering. The following is his letter: It was only upon the representation that, like Col. Ingersoll's widely published remarks at the funeral of his brother in Washington some years ago, those words also might "comfort other hearts which mourn," that a San Francisco reported succeeded in obtaining a copy for publication, with the condition that the name of the recipient should not be mentioned.

MY DEAR MADAM:—Mr. C. has told me the sad story of your almost infinate sorrow. I am not foolish enough to suppose that I can say or do anything to lessen your great grief, your anguish for his loss; but maybe I can say something to drive from your poor heart the fiend of fear—fear for him. If there is a God, let us believe that He is good; and if He is good, the good have nothing to fear. I have been told that your son was kind and generous; that he was filled with charity and sympathy. Now, we know that in this world like begets like, kindness produces kindness, and all good bears the fruit of joy; belief is nothing—deeds are everything; and if your son was kind he will naturally find kindness wherever he may be. You would not inflict endless pain upon your worst enemy. Is God worse than you? You could not bear to see a viper suffer forever. Is it possible that God will doom a kind and generous boy to everlasting pain? Nothing can be more monstrously absurd and cruel. The truth is that no human being knows anything of what is beyond the grave. If nothing is known, then it is not honest for any one to pretend that he does know. If nothing is known, then we can hope only for the good. If there be a God your boy is no more in His power now than he was before his death—no more than you are at this moment. Why should we fear God more after death than before? Does the feeling of God towards His children change the moment they die? While we are alive they say God loves us; when will He cease to love us? True love never changes. I beg of you to throw away all fear. Take counsel of your own heart. If God exists your heart is the best revelation of Him, and your heart could never send your boy to endless pain. After all, no one knows. The ministers know nothing. All the churches in the world know no more on this subject than the ants on the anthills. Creeds are good for nothing, except to break the hearts of the loving. Let us have courage. Under the seven-hued arch of hope let the dead sleep. I do not pretend to know, but I do know that others do not know. Listen to your heart, believe what it says, and with patience and without fear for what the future has for all. If we can get no comfort from what people know, let us avoid being driven to despair by what they do not know. I wish I could say something that would put a star in your night of grief—a little flower in your lonely path—and if an unbeliever has such a wish, surely an infinitely good being never made a soul to be the food of pain through countless years.

Sincerely yours,
R. G. INGERSOLL.

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