Randolph Regulator.

GOVERNMENT WAS INSTITUTED FOR THE GOOD OF THE GOVERNED.

VOL. I. ASHEBORO, NORTH CAROLINA, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1876. NUMBER 42.

THE RANDOLPH REGULATOR.
PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY
BY
THE RANDOLPH PUBLISHING CO.
OFFICE—2 DOORS EAST OF THE COURT HOUSE.

One Year, postage paid.....$2 00
Six Months, postage paid.....1 00

RATES OF ADVERTISING.

One square, one insertion.....$1 00
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ETHEL'S HISTORY.

BY E. F. W.

A cabinet size photograph lay upon Ethel Stanley's knees—the photograph of as handsome a man as ever looked love into a girl's eyes—Rupert Stone's picture; so like him, from the careless curve of the dark hair off the brow, to the proud firm lips of such tenderly exquisite modeling, that the girl's heart was throbbing fiercely as she looked down into the almost sentimental eyes, and then clasped more tightly the open letter in her hand, that was written in Rupert Stone's peculiar unmistakable hand.

This was what the letter said—the first love-message Rupert Stone had ever sent her, and that seemed inexpressibly sweet, almost incredible, to the girl, who had loved him so long, so repressedly; and Ethel kissed the bold, round chirography as she never would have dared kiss the lover who had written the words:

"MY OWN DARLING: I send you my photo, as I promised you, and in return I want—not your picture; but yourself! Ethel, my little girl, I know you love me. I have seen it in your eyes this many a long day, and as you look at my picture imagine, if you can, how I shall take you in my arms and kiss you when I have learned you have decided to be my wife! Remember, dear you will have much influence brought to bear against the verdict of your heart; but also remember I love you, and want you to come to me, and may Heaven reward me as I deal by you!"

It certainly was a letter to have made any girl's heart throb, and Ethel had caught the picture and the letter in a passionate embrace, and was caressing them with her sweet, moist lips, just as some one's dress rustled over the carpet, and a severe, slocked voice pronounced her name:

"Ethel!"

She gave a little start as she looked up into her mother's face—her lady mother, with her iron authority vailed under velvet softness—her proud, aristocratic mother, who disliked Rupert Stone above all men, for the reason that he, being penniless, had dared presume to her daughter's hand, and that, being proud, he had dared to tell Mrs. Stanley he did not consider his being only a salaried man was the smallest objection. He could certainly make her daughter comfortable—he would certainly make her happy.

And Mrs. Stanley had resented his honest offer as almost an insult. She had peremptorily forbidden another word on the subject, and had told Ethel that Mr. Rupert Stone must hereafter be considered off the roll of those made welcome under her roof.

And here, not a fortnight later, Mrs. Stanley had come upon Ethel, passionately kissing a letter from Rupert Stone—a photograph of Rupert Stone! And volumes of exaggerated adverbs could never do justice to the intonation of that one sylable—"Ethel!"—she pronounced, or give a remotely correct idea of the manner which accompanied it.

The girl turned pale; then with a little defiant laugh, confronted the situation unhesitatingly.

"Mama, there isn't the least use of your scolding me. You may read Mr. Stone's letter, but I will tell you beforehand that I love him better than all the world."

Her blue eyes shone like stars, and her lovely face was white and firm.

"My daughter; you forget you are addressing your mother when you say there is no need for me to scold. I do not usually manifest my displeasure in such a manner. Show me Mr. Stone's letter, please."

Ethel shivered a little at the icy, courteous anger visible in every well-chosen, carefully-modulated word from her mother's lips. Such wrath was more hopeless to combat then hottest anger, as Ethel had more than once found in earlier days.

Still, she was almost haughty as she bowed slightly, and laid the letter unhesitatingly in her mother's hand, watching the cold immobility of countenance that accompanied the reading.

Then Mrs. Stanly deliberately tore the precious treasurer to fragments.

"Ethel, positively you shall have nothing to do with Rupert Stone. If, as you say, you have imagined you were interested in him, your wisest course will be to disenchant yourself, or choose finally and irrevocably, between him and your mother."

Ethel's lips had trembled and her eyes moistened when her mother so cruelly destroyed the letter she would have read over and over with never cloyed happiness. Now, at sound of the calm, even pleasant tones, yet merciless as fate, her heart sank in wretched distress.

"Mama, you seem to forget you once were a girl and had a lover. Mamma, don't be so cruel—don't make me disobey you for indeed it must be as Rupert—as Mr. Stone wishes."

Mrs. Stanley smoothed out the thick ruffles of silk on her over-dress with complacent indifference as she rose.

"You are perfectly competent to make your own decision, and equally free to make your choice. But remember this—you cannot be my child and Rupert's wife."

And the result of undue unparental coldness of rarely unmotherly conduct, was that three months from then saw Ethel Stanley the bride of Rupert Stone, and the deadly enemy of her mother, forbidden the house forbidden to write, and cursed with an awful curse.

It was dreadful to the girl, and months went by in which she pined for the mother's voice vainly.

But with Rupert at her side, brave, loving, indulgent, Ethel could not be utterly miserable; nor did she ever realize what actual anguish was until one fateful day sickness came to him—her beautiful darling—and laid him on his back for weeks and weeks, draining them of their frugal earnings, robbing him slowly, surely of his life; and at the last taking him from her clinging arms, and leaving her all alone to face the world and her coming trial.

Then, when the baby came, poor, orphaned nursling—a fair, lovely little girl with Rupert's eyes and the Stanley features—then poor little Ethel knew what it meant to drink the cup of sorrow to the very dregs. Then, when the pitiful struggle for daily bread began, with Rupert's eyes looking at her in baby's face, she yearned for home and mother as never, before.

She dared not go to her mother. In all those long months she had never seen her but once, and then Mrs. Stanley stared in sublime unconsciousness over her head as the Stanley carriage rolled by the pavement where Mrs. Stone, in plain womanly attire, was walking with eyes full of misery and face full of pain, as Mrs. Stanley so cooly gave her the cut direct.

She did not dare to lay her fatherless babe on her mother's breast, but she did dare to give it her mother's name, Eleanor Stanley Stone and then, for Eleanor's sake, the delicate young widowed wife commenced her hand-to-mouth wrestle for bread.

It was a wearisome task, and more than once little Eleanor's mother went hungry to bed—more than once parted with her dearest treasures to keep the cold from baby's dainty flesh, the while Mrs. Stanley, not a mile away, had all the luxuries that wealth could command or taste dictate. Then employment precarious at best, failed utterly, and Ethel knew it was to be death or desperate resolve with her and Rupert's child; of the two she chose what she dreaded most—the resolve to go to her haughty mother—for baby's sweet helpless sake.

It came to her almost like an inspiration—how she should go to her mother's house, whose doors were now closed against her; and wrapping the violent eyed baby in a shawl, and tying a thick veil over her own dark hair, she started fourth just as the dusk was falling one cold night in the midwinter.

The lights were burning dimly in the elegant mansion. She went down the area steps as a thief would have stollen down them then as the one daughter of the house should have done. She rapped timidly, her heart in her throat, to be answered in a second by the well known face and form, and voice of Emma Roop, the upper housemaid, next in authority to Mrs. Hamerton, the housekeeper.

"Is—will you—I—don't you want your fortune told."

She suddenly gathered her courage together, and desperately fought down the pain of old memories that swayed over her at sight of the woman, who frowned, then laughed, then opened her honest, stupid eyes in astonishment as Ethel went on hurriedly—

"I can tell good luck, and your Christian name, and how old you are, and all about your lover that's a soldier. And—"

Emma's countenance paled. She little knew it was Miss Ethel who knew her life as well as she knew it herself. Her dull eye sparkled with curiosity and something of fear.

"I don't know what the missus'd say if she knowed I took a common gipsy woman into the house," she said, and with a mental reservation to keep an eye on her, she bade her come in, and Ethel went trembling into the kitchen where hundreds of times Emma had given her bread and butter and sugar in response to childish teasing.

She sat down in the shadow of a corner, nestling her baby close to her breast, and wondering whether she would succeed above as well as below.

Emma sat full in the glare of gas, her countenance as eloquent with superstitous satisfaction as such a mass of good natured stolidity could be.

"If you really do know about past things, and absent people, and lucky marriages, and lost things and all, why let's have some of them. I'll give you half a crown to tell me about—"

Ethel finished the sentence quickly.

"About the tall young man—not exactly young, but not old—with black hair and a mole on his neck, who writes once in a while to you, and always signs his letter "yours to command." He's a soldier, and he's true to his "dear Emma" this many a year."

The girl's eyes were like saucers.

"Heavens and earth! I declare if I oin't half scared of you! If you would only tell me what his name is now, I declare if I wouldn't take you up to see the missus—her as worries continual about her daughter what married below her station. I wonder if you could tell her anything like that clairvoyant woman she went to a-purpose to see if she knew anything of Miss Ethel? There, mind not to speak the name."

Ethel sat trembling like an aspen; her breath threatened almost to suffocate her; and little Elenor Stanly nestled warmly at her breast—the granddaughter of the hauty mistress of the house, the heiress of the entailed estate of Stanley!

"I can see strange things sometimes—I can hear strange things, too. Just now there is a man's voice whispering in my ear—a voice that lisps a little, and it says, "Tell Emma Roop that Tom Floyd will be home before long."

Emma sprang to her feet.

"Good Heavens! it's Tom's lisp and all! Come on up stairs—missus 'll be glad to listen to you. Come on!"

Ethel's limbs were trembling so she could barely stand, but she managed to get along up the well-known stairs through the elegant hall, past the door of her own room—oh! such surging agonies of memory were thrilling through her!—and Emma showed her into the very room where she had sat that day when Rupert Stone's letter had come to her, when her mother had bade her make the choice which had been so fearfully abided by.

There, in a darkened room, where the only relief from total darkness was the faint rays in the open grate—there, in Ethel's own accustomed chair, by the fire, sat Mrs Stanley, her silken skirts shivering as she slowly rocked, and her diamond ear-rings gleaming like stars.

Emma crossed the floor, leaving Ethel, almost dying with intense repressed excitement, standing by the door, and whispered several eager words in Mrs Stanley's ear. Then, for the first time in three years, Ethel heard her mother's voice.

"Sit down, good woman. Emma says you have a wonderful clairvoyant power. Could you tell me of some one who is absent?"

The proud voice trembled ever so faintly, but it summoned all Ethel's courage.

"I think so, madam, if you will sit quiet a moment and let me take your hand, to establish a circuit, please."

And with one hand on her baby's silken head, and the other in her mother's light, warm clasp, with heart throbbing and brain whirling, Ethel began:

"I see a young girl, short, slender, fair, with dark blue eyes and a merry laugh, and she has a lover, tall and dark, and there seems to be something in the way. It looks very dark all around them—very dark and threatening!"

She paused, her agitation almost getting the better of her.

Mrs. Stanley whispered, almost hoarsely.

"Go on—yes!"

"I see the young girl again—older and sadder, and more womanly—and she seems to be comparatively happy; but there is an awful cloud hurrying on to her—dark, oh, dark as midnight! It is the shadow of death, madam!"

Mrs. Stanley screamed, piteously—

'Oh, no, no—it is not death! Look again! Do not tell me my child is dead!'

Ethel clung to the nestling baby under her shawl, that lay so sweetly sleeping on her breast.

"If it is death, it is death. I see a corpse; it is a tall, dark man; and the girl is weeping over it, and I hear her call 'mother—mother!' and I see her on her knees, begging Heaven to take her, or else give her back to her dear mother again."

Mrs. Stanley was trembling violently.

'And now I see a baby—a tiny girl, with eyes like heaven, so clear.——'

'A child! a widow! Oh, heaven, what have I been doing?'

Mrs. Stanley sprang to her feet in a spasm of keen regret and anguish, and passed to and fro, in sharp agitation, murmuring the pitiful cry:

'A child! a widow?'

Ethel sat silently, her whole life seeming concentrated in the moment about to dawn.

'Shall I go on?'

'Yes, yes! Tell me she is alive—where I can go to her, on my knees, and take her baby to my heart. Go on."

It was impossible to carry the tragidal scene further. With a cry Ethel tore off her vail, her shawl, and her baby's shawl and sprang to her mother's feet, tears streaming down her cheeks, her face white as emotion could make it.

'Mother—mother, did you not know me? Mother, can you ever love me again, and take us back—little Eleanor Stanley and me——'

She never finished the sentence, for her mother's kisses choked the words, and the baby's lovely eyes opened and smiled on them like a blessing.

A CAPITAL MAXIM.

Lady Mary Wortley Montague relates the following story: 'One day, as an ancient king of Tartary was riding with his officers of State, they met a dervise crying aloud, 'To him that will give me a hundred dinars, (small pieces of money,) I will give a piece of good advice.' The king, attracted by this strange declaration, stopped, and said to the dervise, 'What advice is this that you offer for a hundred dinars?" 'Sire,' replied the dervise, 'I shall be most thankful to tell you as soon as you order the money to be paid me.' The king expecting to hear something extraordinary, ordered the dinars to be given to the dervise at once: on receiving which, he said, 'Sire, my advice is, Begin nothing without considering what the end may be."

"The officers of State, smiling at what they thought ridiculous advice, looked at the king, whom they expected would be so enraged at this insult as to order the dervise to be severely punished. The king, seeing their amusement and surprise, said, "I see nothing to laugh at in the advice of this dervise; but, on the contrary, I am persuaded that if it were more frequently practiced, men would escape many calamities. Indeed, so convinced am I of the wisdom of this maxim, that I shall have it engraved on my plate and written on the walls of my palace, so that it may be ever before me." The king, having thanked the dervise, proceeded towards his palace; and on his arrival he ordered the chief Bey to see that the maxim was engraved on his plate and on the walls of his palace.

"Some time after this occurrence, one of the nobles of the court, a proud ambitious man, resolved to destroy the king and place himself on the throne. In order to accomplish his bad purpose, he secured the confidence of one of the king's surgeons, to whom he gave a poisoned lancet, saying, "If you will bleed the king with this lancet, I will give you ten thousand pieces of gold, and when I ascend the throne you shall be my vizier." This base surgeon, dazzled by such brilliant prospects, wickedly assented to the proposal.

"An opportunity of effecting his evil design soon occurred—the king sent for this man to bleed him. He put the poisoned lance into a side pocket, and hastened into the king's presence. The arm was tied, and the fatal lancet was about to be plunged into the vein, when suddenly the surgeon's eye read the maxim at the bottom of the basin, "Begin nothing without considering what the end may be." He immediately paused, as he thought within himself, "If I bleed the king with this lancet he will die, and I shall be seized and be put to a cruel death. Then of what use will all the gold in the world be to me?" Then, returning the lancet to his pocket, he drew forth another. The king, observing this and perceiving that he was much embarrassed, asked why he changed his lancet so suddenly. He stated that the point was broken; but the king, doubting his statment, commanded him to show it. This so agitated him, that the king felt assured all was not right. He said, "There is treachery in this! Tell me instantly what it means, or your head shall be severed from your body!" The surgeon, trembling with fear, promised to relate all to the king, if he would only pardon his guilt. The king consented, and the surgeon related the whole matter, acknowledging that had it not been for the words in the basin, he should have used the fatal lancet.

"The king summoned his court and ordered the traitor to be executed.—Then turning to his officers of State, he said, "You now see that the advice of the dervise, at which you laughed, is most valuable: it has saved my life. Search out this dervise, that I may amply reward him for his wise maxim."

HEROISM.

'Oh, dear!' said Willy Grey, as he sat down on the saw-horse, and looked at the kindling-wood which he ought to have been splitting up for his mother. 'I do wish I could do something for the world. Some great action, that every one could admire, and that would make the country and the whole world better and happier. I wish I could be a hero, like Washington, or a famous missionary, like Judson, but I can't do anything nor be anything."

'Why do you want to be a hero?' asked his cousin, John Maynard, who, coming up just then, happened to overhear his soliloquy.

'Oh!' said Willy, coloring, 'every one admires a hero, and talks about him, and praises him after he is dead.'

'That's the idea, is it? said John. 'You want to be heroic for the sake of being talked about?'

'Not only that, but I want to do good to people, convert the heathen or—or—save a sinking ship, or save the country, or something like that.'

'That sounds better, but believe me, Willy, the greatest heroes have been men who have thought the least about themselves, and the most about their work. And so far as I can recollect now, the greatest—I mean according to the Christian standard—have always begun by doing the nearest duty, however small; and here John took up the axe, and began to split the kindling-wood.

Will jumped off the saw-horse and began to pick up the sticks without a word, but though he said nothing, he thought the more.

'I've wasted a lot of time in thinking what great things I might do, if I only had the chance,' he thought, 'and I've neglected the things I could and ought to do, and made a lot of trouble for mother. I guess I'd better begin my heroism by fighting my own laziness.'

Will anybody adopt Willy's resolution, and carry it out in his daily life?—*Child's World.*

MAKING ROOM.

Term was over, the coach was full of young Oxonians returning to their respective colleges; the morning was cold, wet and miserable, when a well-appointed "drag" drove up to the "White Horse Cellar," Piccadilly.—"Have you room for one inside?"—asked as pretty a girl as you would wish to see on a summer's day.—"What a beauty!" exclaimed one.—"Quite lovely!" said another. "Perfect!" lisped a third. "Quite full, miss, inside and out," replied the coachman. "Surely, you can make room for one," persevered the fair one. "Quite impossible, without the young gentlemen's consent." "Lots of room," cried the insiders; we are not very large; we can manage to take one more." "If the gentlemen consent," replied the driver, "I can have no objection." "We agree," said the inside quartet. "All right," responded the coachman. The fare was paid, and the guard proceeded to open the door, and let down the steps. "Now, Miss, if you please; we are behind our time.' "Come along, grandfather," cried the damsel, addressing a most respectable looking, portly elderly man; the money is paid, get in, and be sure you thank the young gentleman;" at the same time suiting the action to the word, and, with a smile, assisting her respected grandfather into the coach. "Here's some mistake; you'll squeeze us to death," cried the astonished party. "Sorry to incommode you," replied the intruder; "I hope you won't object to have both widows up, I'm sadly troubled with a cough." At this moment, "All right, sit fast!" was heard; and the "Defiance" rattled away, best pace, drowning the voices of the astonished Oxonians.—*Punch.*

A jester in the Court of Francis 1 complained that a great lord threatened to murder him if he did not cease joking about him. "If he does so," said the King, "I will hang him in five minutes after." "I wish your Majesty would hang him five minutes before," replied the jester.

A calf in Milwaukie swallowed six hundred dollars worth of food in one meal, a few days ago. It was in the form of a pocket-book full of bank-notes. They cut the animal open, but he had already digested two hundred dollars. The rest was recovered. He did not survive the operation.

A wealthy New Yorker, more remarkable for money than education, in attending a public dinner recently, heard his neighbor remark to one of the waiters, "Waiter, you have omitted my napkin," and set the table in a roar by saying, "Waiter, I'll take a plate of napkin too."