

THE KINSTON JOURNAL.

J. W. HARPER, Editor & Proprietor.

TERMS—\$1.50 Per Year.

VOL. 1.

KINSTON, N. C., FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1878.

NO. 2.

The Golden Side.

There is many a rose in the road of life,
If we would only stop to take it;
And many a tone from the better land,
If the querulous heart would make it:
To the sunny soul that is full of hope,
And whose beautiful trust ne'er falters,
The grass is green and the flowers are bright
Though the winter storm prevaileth.
Better to hope, though the clouds hang low,
And to keep the eyes still lifted;
For the sweet blue sky will still peep through
When the ominous clouds are rifted:
There was never a night without a day,
Or an evening without a morning;
And the darkest hour, as the proverb goes,
Is the hour before the dawning.
There is many a gem in the path of life,
Which we pass in our idle pleasure,
That is richer far than the jeweled crown,
Or the miser's hoarded treasure;
It may be the love of a little child,
Or a mother's prayers to heaven,
Or only a beggar's grateful thanks
For a cup of water given.
Better to weave in the web of life
A bright and golden filling,
And to do God's will with a ready heart,
And hands that are ready and willing,
Than to snap the delicate, minute threads
Of our curious lives asunder,
And then blame Heaven for the tangled ends,
And sit and grieve and wonder.

Selected.

THE COUNT'S RANSOM.

A HISTORY OF AN ANCIENT KNIGHT.

The hero of my story, Norman Webster, so called from his craft of weaver (or Webster as it was then designated) was one of those fortunate military adventurers, such as we sometimes read of, who by the sword succeed in cleaving a passage from the lowliest station in life to wealth and distinction.—Abandoning his loom, casting warp and shuttle aside at an early age, he enrolled his humble name among the gallant muster then existing under the youthful Henry V., of England, following his bright-starred sovereign to the battle-fields of France.

Norman's father, Tom Webster, had acquired some skill in his craft of armorer, and shrewdly judging that the commencement of a war boded well for artisans of his calling, naturally enough represented to our hero that he had better remain at home, and assist him in hammering out suits of mail, instead of setting out with the silly intent to better them in the foreign wars just at the opening of the prospective remunerative harvest at home.

But all in vain were honest Tom's representations. Norman "had heard of battles," and he longed to distinguish himself in the field; so he inflexibly clung to his resolve. Having once made up his mind that smashing French harness would produce a richer reward in shorter time than either throwing the shuttle, under his old master, or mending battered armor, under his father, he one night helped himself to the best blade in old Tom's stall, and with this first achievement in the way of booty, joined the royal forces at Southampton.

Once wafted by fair breezes to the sunny shores of Normandy, our hero's invincible courage and great powers of endurance, added to that daring spirit of adventure that rendered him reckless of danger, soon gained him the notice of the young and chivalrous Henry V. He rapidly advanced from one promotion to another; until at the battle of Agincourt, where he towered like the very embodied demon of the fight, breaking with his resistless might through the before invincible ranks of the war-injured Alencon, he was not only honored with the command of a battalion, but his deeds of high enterprise were rewarded with knighthood.

When Norman approached his sovereign to receive the ennobling stroke, and the question usual in such cases was put relative to his name, it not a little puzzled our worthy craftsman, who had received no other cognomen at the baptismal font than Norman, son of Tom. Now, however, as it was obvious that a knight should be supposed of a family of mark sufficient to indulge in the luxury of a surname, our adventurous knight of the shuttle hesitated for a moment whether to pitch his choice upon a derivative (Tomson) from his father's name of

Tom, or the given one pertaining to his craft of Webster. True, neither the plebeian patronymic nor yet the craft appellative was particularly pleasing to the soaring views of our aspiring candidate for knighthood spurs; still he might not hesitate beneath the royal standard and in the presence of the victorious sovereign; moreover, so familiar was his long-time cognomen of Webster, that before he had any chance for deliberation, he had given it unawares in his reply, and now he hears himself proclaimed one of the fraternity of knighthood, as "Rise up, Sir Norman Webster, and be thou a valiant knight and true!" gave a name and rank to the weaver's apprentice, since rendered even more illustrious by those who cared not, perhaps knew not, that it was given to their ancestor on the field at Agincourt.

From the first, our valorous knight was in two-fold sense a soldier of fortune, caring not only for fame, but keeping at the same time a sharp lookout for the main chance whenever anything in the way of plunder turned up. Nothing came amiss in the way of booty, from smashed harness to women's kirtles. His great personal strength and invincible courage gained him distinction, while his indomitable resolve in all cases of emergency to look out for Number One, brought him riches. Taking nothing to the wars save these qualifications, backed by the sword abstracted from his father's stall, he returned laden with the spoils of sacked convents and Norman castles; yet were all these outshone by a trophy prouder far than any derived from rifled abbey or slaughtered leaders, when he presented at Whitehall a young, beautiful and high-born bride—the daughter of a noble Norman knight whom he had rescued, "for a consideration," from the field where chieftain and follower lay mangled together. But not to our knight's generosity was Count Vidal indebted for his life when that worthy stood with uplifted sword considering the value of the noble's suit of mail as he lay bleeding there. Since we are telling a veritable tale, we must needs confess the truth. The count offered his vanquisher a sum quite sufficient as a ransom to compensate for permitting him to retain his mail corslet and diamond-hilted rapier for the nonce.

Leading his prisoner to his own tent, our hero had the count's ugly-looking gashes dressed, and treated him with every becoming and humane attention, until he thought him sufficiently recovered to be able to discuss the matter of the ransom. With this intent he began to examine the count's suit of armor and other accoutrements when he perceived to his dismay that what he at first thought to be of great value was but gilt, mere gloss and tinsel. Discovering this by scraping the gilding with his dagger from the baser metal of the basinet, our valorous knight threw it contemptuously from him while giving vent to his imprecations on the pauperism of French peers, who by resorting to such devices, succeeded in arresting the uplifted swords of England's chivalry when ready to descend on their worthless heads; and going straitway to the sleeping count, he shook him in no very amiable mood, demanding if he were ready to disburse the sum promised, as he would thereupon liberate him.

Roused from his sleep, the old noble, with genuine Norman savvy, replied that, anxious to preserve his life, he had spoken without giving due consideration to the fact of his present inability to raise so large a sum as that specified, when, as now, ill and absent from his French estates. Our knight hereupon mused gravely upon this distasteful bit of information, and showing the basinet from which his laudable quest he had scraped the gilding, he said: "Hark ye, sir count, in yonder frippery of copper tinsel I have sufficient demonstration on that point! but since you cannot pay what

you have yourself volunteered, how much can I rely upon if I liberate you?"

"Most puissant knight," replied the luckless prisoner, "I acted wrongly in promising more than I had any possibility to perform, being, in good sooth, not master of half the sum agreed upon."

"Then, by my knighthood, sir count, you have put a vexatious cheat upon me!" said our hero. "Had you fallen into the hands of a less magnanimous knight than myself, you would soon be taught that it was but a sorry jest to render yourself up a prisoner upon condition of paying a stipulated sum as a ransom; nor must you think that I will be defrauded out of what you can pay me; therefore, to come at once to the point, how much can I rely upon, prithee?"

"Alas, noble sir, not above a tenth of what in my fright I promised, I fear me," replied the count; "still, I will disburse to the extent of my means."

"Then, prithee, set about discharging that same at once, that I may be rid of the cost and charge of your maintenance."

"Right willingly will I do so, sir cavalier, if you will liberate me upon my parole, seeing that here I can raise nothing, and that you have so adroitly rummaged within the folds of my doublet (expertly emptying the pockets therein), that I have not a sou left. If you will accept my parole of honor; I will return to my estates, and there use my utmost endeavors to raise the sum agreed upon."

"Now, by St. George, monsieur! if you think to escape me scot free, after bribing me to save your paltry life at St. Crispin's massacre, you are mistaken. What sort of security, sir count, do you propose to leave that you will perform your engagement?"

"Alack! almost puissant knight, I have nothing to leave you as a pledge, unless you would accept of a fair daughter, now in the convent of St. Opportune, hard by," replied the luckless count.

"And how know I that she is fair?" returned the knight. "Perhaps she is like that old tabard of yours, only parcel gilt. Harkee, sir count, can she sew well with her needle? Can she distill herbs for wounds, and brew, and make pastries?"

"I know no one who can bake or brew better," replied the count.

"Humph! can she darn well with her needle, for that is chiefly what I want?" asked the discourteous English knight.

"Heaven defend me from boasting, sir knight, but to say that Celine can darn your hose, bake and brew, would be to fall far short of her accomplishments, seeing she can do all manner of curious stitches, to blazon banners and broider coats."

"Broideries I care little for," said the knight, "but if she can mend my doublet, I will consider upon the matter, seeing that though a belted knight I have to darn my own hose and repair my doublet."

"Valorous knight, Celine will not only keep both in good repair, but she can card and spin both wool and flax as well as the noblest dame in Normandy, having been perfected in all useful accomplishments by her aunt, the abbess of the convent of St. Opportune."

Our English knight, upon hearing this lucky piece of intelligence, rubbed his hands in very delight as he rejoined:

"By the mass, sir count, but your daughter seemeth a clever one! Prithee, how old is she?"

"Not yet seventeen, most worshipful sir; lively as a kitten, fair and graceful as a lily; and sooth to say, it much grieves me to devote her to a convent."

"And why should so thrifty a damsel be cooped up in a convent, when a belted knight like myself has to darn his own hose and patch his own doublet, for the lack of some one to mend them for him? Now harkee,

sir count! I must first see this daughter of yours, and if she is as fair and well-trained with her needle as you say, and can make pasties and confectations, I will accept her instead of the ransom for your paltry life. But suppose she does not like me, have you any money in your beggarly coffers?"

"Alack! not a sou, most valiant knight; but the Lady Celine Vidal knows her place too well, as the daughter of a noble French family, to gainsay her father's wishes in a matter of so little import to herself. Therefore, as I am in somewhat of a hurry to get me back to my estates, I will get a friar to draw out a parchment contracting her to you, as well as an order upon her aunt, the abbess, to deliver her up to you as soon as you will that the espousals may take place."

"Not so fast, sir count!" said the knight. "By the mass! but having been cheated once by you already, seemeth to me enough. Not quite so fast, I pray! I must see the damsel with my own eyes first, lest, like the tinsel on your trumpety French gear yonder, she turn out but another cheat you would *parley voo* upon me. How do I know that she is but seventeen? Now, Mousier, though I would by no means be understood to speak in any wise disrespectfully of any of the venerable patriarchs, still if that old cheat Laban had tried to impose Leah upon me instead of Rachel, I would have made small matter of flinging him into Jacob's well."

In vain the count essayed to put in a word occasionally, little suspecting that the more he vaunted the amiable as well as industrial qualities of his daughter, the more were both suspected by the doughty knight, who, whenever he essayed to slip in a commendation even edgewise, interrupted him with, "harkee, sir count, you have put cheats enow already upon me, I trow; nor will all your talking move me to contract a marriage of your arrangement, until satisfied that the damsel is as comely and well-instructed as you have represented. He who cheats me once, shame for him; but he who cheats me twice, the shame for me."

"Right valiant, sir, why defer going to St. Opportune's at once?" said the count. "Let us go together, when you can see the Lady Celine and judge for yourself."

"Then go we will," said the knight; for even should I not fancy her, which is very likely, still as it is probable your estates have enow of mortgages already, I may as well take her as wait for any chance of being paid otherwise. So, as it please your countship, we will ride to the convent at once."

The day was fine, and St. Opportune's but a few hours ride. Thither they jogged right amicably, with this difference—Count Vidal was anxious to effect his liberty by the transfer of his daughter to the rude English knight, who, on the other hand, with the suspicion pertaining to low origin and uncultured mind, began to have sundry misgivings before they reached the convent lest another cheat was about being played upon him by the count, and he grew morose and silent, while moodily cogitating thus: "Suppose after all, this damsel be but a trumpety bit of gloss and tinsel, like her father's gilt tabard? Well, how am I to know? He says she is fair as the rose of Provence. How am I to know that? seeing I am told damsels use oftimes a distillation of waters from flowers that cunningly give them a fresh complexion. Then her age—No man should have a wite beyond twenty. Nor should I like to be cheated on that point. Yet many an honorable man, I am told, has been. I must say that I consider this same French count as rather a slippery customer, and seeing I am no competent judge of a woman's age, so long as she be smiling and comely, how could I tell whether she be twenty or forty? It would shame me much to have a wife palmed upon me as being young-

er than she really is. Yet I am told that the damsels themselves have deceived many good and valiant men on this point.

Meditating thus on the certainty that the French count was seducing him into a matrimonial trap, our doughty knight had wrought himself into a sullen, unsocial mood some time before they reached the convent.—Count Vidal, meantime thinking that the silence of his son-in-law elect arose from the pleasing anticipation of meeting his destined bride, redoubled his complaisance, which however, had only the effect of reduplicating the suspicions of his boorish companion. Hoping to propitiate his discourteous captor, thinking him impatient to meet his intended, he said to him as they alighted at the lodge:

"I trust your happiness will be complete, since you will soon see the Lady Celine."

"Now just please to spare me any more of your *parley-voing*," said the knight; "but hasten in and summon the girl, that I may see if she be as great a cheat as your old tabard and basinet."

On hearing this, Count Vidal, who did not understand one word in a sentence of what was spoken by his son-in-law elect, laid his hand on his breast, and, bowing most profoundly, led the way to the convent parlor. Arrived there, and seeing the stately superior rise with decorous urbanity to greet her brother-in-law, and mistaking her for the count's daughter, from her anxious inquiries respecting his health our malcontent hero broke out with irrepressible indignation:

"And do you think to impose that pale, withered old fright on me for a damsel of seventeen? By the rood! were she the Duchess of Anjon, I would take her for no wife of mine!"

During the delivery of this ungallant speech, the stately superior, whose pale brow and tranquil features were exposed from the black veil flung back, looked inquiringly at the count for an explanation, whose attention at this moment was arrested by the clear, silvery tones of his daughter, who bounding into the room, threw her white arms around his neck, exclaiming:

"Dear papa, I see you at last! I feared the English barbarians had killed you!"

"My daughter, let me present to you my noble preserver," said the count. "Condescend, most illustrious knight, to see the damsel of whom I spake—the Lady Celine Vidal."

Never did groom elect comply with such a request more boorishly than did our worthy knight; and never did valiant knight gaze upon a sweeter vision of loveliness than met his gaze in the young Lady Celine. Shades of the bright—the beautiful—she was fairer than ye all!

Struck with a loveliness and grace such as he had never even imagined, our uncouth knight no sooner saw the sweet face turned inquiringly toward him, than trying to imitate the count's genuflections, he laid his huge hand upon his breast and made a profound obeisance.

"Celine, my child, would you like to be married?" asked the count.

"I am very happy here, dear papa," replied Celine.

"Ask her if she could fancy me for a husband?" said the straight forward knight, shuffling awkwardly near the count.

"All in good time, most honored chevalier," returned the count. "I would first that you learned from her own lips of her rare excellence with the needle, as well as in pasty and confectations."

"Sir count, I prithee vex me not with such trifles," said the knight; "but just ask the damsel if she is willing to be my wife."

"Celine," said her father "this valiant knight saved my life at Agincourt—how would you feel disposed to accept him for a husband?"

"A barbarian Englishman?" exclaimed Celine!

"What does she say?" again impatiently demanded the knight, drawing nearer and twitching at the count's doublet. "Will she consent, do you think?"

"All in good time, most honored chevalier—all in good time," said the count; "I am pleading your cause with her."

"What does he ask, papa?" inquired Celine.

"Only that you would consent to become his wife to effect my release."

The color, faint at first, rose to her cheek, deepening over neck and brow, as bending her beautiful head with coquettish modesty behind her aunt's chair, she raised her little soft white hand to draw down her novice vail, through the transparent fabric of whose meshes she considered the stalwart proportions of the knight before her. Very soon her decision was made.

"Papa, I would rather be the English knight's *chateleine* than stay here shut up in the nunnery," said Celine.

"What does the damsel say?" again interrupted the impatient knight.

"She consents to be your wife," replied the count; "so you can marry her whenever it so pleases you."

Then, sir count, it pleases me that the rite be performed immediately," said the impatient knight.

"Honored chevalier," replied the count, "a demoiselle of Lady Celine Vidal's rank cannot wed, as might a peasant's daughter, without fitting preparation of wedding garments. Let her, therefore, tarry here till such be prepared."

"Wedding gear, forsooth!" cried our hero. "Have not I enow of such trumpery? Chests full of kirtles and farthingales, rich and rare enough to deck a duchess—my share of the spoils of rifled Norman castles! I put them by to save me outlay in case I should meet a damsel to my liking; and now they will save all delay, seeing they are of all sorts and sizes."

When her father explained this to the Lady Celine, truth compels us to say that she made not the slightest objection; nor when on his return to England, Sir Norman Webster presented her at court, then held in Whitehall, did the fair and noble bride feel in the slightest degree scandalized at the manner in which her costly apparel, worn on the occasion, was obtained.

The weaver's apprentice might have sought in vain, despite his great wealth and high military achievements, among the high-born beauties of England for an alliance. But wedded to a noble Norman bride, her high descent, backed by his acquired riches and splendid military reputation, gave such a position to their descendants that they afterward intermarried with the noblest families of the land. And to this day few, very few, of their widely spread descendants know that their ancient name and crest was won by a weaver's apprentice, or that they owed their origin to the manner in which Count Vidal paid his ransom.

SHE BOUGHT IT.—Aunt Anarky wanted a dress.

Pattern after pattern, and bolt after bolt were hauled down, but not one to suit her taste.

As last the clerk, desperately resolved to sell her the next piece, or die. "Twas the ugliest pattern in the store."

Aunt Anarky eyed it. She lifted her broad brown nose disdainfully in the air. "Whew! Dat is uglier 'n pison! My gal Blazy Ann she saunt fur a putty dress. You reckon she'd dispensiate to chuch in sich tarrified lookin' stuffs dat?"

"Your daughter? Is it possible you have a grown daughter? Why, I did not think you were more than sixteen yourself!"

She smilingly displayed several inches of gleaming white ivory and bought the dress.

—Grant's nomination in 1880 seems to be a foregone conclusion.