

SCOTCHMAN AND OBSERVER

Devoted to the Mechanical, Agricultural, Moral, and Political Interests of the Carolinas.

VOL. I.

"With or without offence to friends or foes, We sketch the world exactly as it goes."

NO 24

PUBLISHED WEEKLY: LAURINBURG, N. C., TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1873. 2.00 PER ANNUM IN ADVANCE

Scotchman and Observer,

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY
D. McNEILL, EDITORS
J. B. McDONALD, AND
D. T. HARGROVE, PROPRIETORS.

RATES OF SUBSCRIPTION:
One Copy 12 Months—In Advance... \$2.00
One Copy 6 Months " " " " " 1.25
One Copy 3 Months " " " " " .75

RATES OF ADVERTISING:
One inch one insertion... \$1.00
One " two insertions... 1.50
One " three " " " " 2.00
One " four " " " " " 3.00
Quarter of a column, one insertion... 5.00
Half column one insertion... 9.00
One " " " " " " " 15.00
Marriage Notices and Deaths not exceeding one square inserted free.

Liberal deductions made in yearly, half yearly and quarterly advertisements.
The cash must be paid on demand for all advertisements inserted in this paper.
Communications to receive prompt attention, must be addressed to

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Managing Editor, SCOTCHMAN AND OBSERVER,
Laurinburg, N. C.

The Masked Fiancee:

The Clever Ruse of a Woman.

A TALE OF THE TIMES OF THE GREAT NAPOLEON.

It was the Carnival season in Paris, and Colonel Eugene Merville, an attaché of the great Napoleon's staff, who had won his way to distinction by his own sabre, found himself at the masked ball in the French Opera House. Better adapted in his tastes to the field than the parlor, he flirted but little with the gay figures that covered the floor, and joined but seldom in the giddy waltz. But at last, while standing thoughtfully, and regarding the assembled throng with a vacant eye, his attention was suddenly aroused by the appearance of a person in a white satin domino, the universal elegance of whose figure, manner and bearing, convinced all that her face and mind must be equal to her person in grace and loveliness.

Though in so mixed an assembly, still there was a dignity and reserve in the manner of the white domino, that rather repulsed the idea of a familiar address, and it was sometime before the young soldier found courage to speak to her.

Some alarm being given there was a violent rush of the throng toward the door, where, unless assisted, the lady would have materially suffered. Eugene Merville offered his arm, and with his broad shoulders and stout frame kept off the danger. It was a delightful moment, the lady spoke the purest French, was witty, fanciful and captivating.

Ah! lady, pray raise that mask, and reveal to me the charms of feature that must accompany so sweet a voice and so graceful a form as you possess?

You would, perhaps, be disappointed.

No, I am sure not.

Are you so very confident?

Yes, I feel that you are beautiful—it cannot be otherwise.

Don't be too sure of that, replied the domino. Have you never heard of the Irish poet Moore's story of the veiled prophet of Khorasan—how when he disclosed his countenance, its hideous aspect killed his beloved one? How do you know that I shall not turn out a veiled prophet of Khorasan?

Ah, lady, your every word convinces me to the contrary, replied the enraptured soldier, whose heart began to feel as it had never felt before, he was already in love.

She eludes his efforts at discovery but permits him to hand her to her carriage, which drives off in the darkness, and though he throws himself upon his fleetest horse he is unable to overtake her.

The young French Colonel becomes moody, he has lost his heart, and knows not what to do. He wanders thither

and thither, shuns his former places, of amusement, avoid his military companions, and, in short, is miserable as a lover can well be thus disappointed.

One night just after he had left his hotel on foot, a figure, muffled to the very ears, stopped him.

Well, monsieur, what would you with me? asked the soldier.

You would know the name of the white domino? was the reply.

I would indeed, replied the officer hastily. How can it be done?

Follow me.

To the end of the earth, if it will bring me to her.

But you must be blindfolded.

Very well.

Step into this vehicle.

I am at your command.

And away rattled the youthful soldier and his companion.

This may be a trick, reasoned Eugene Merville, but I have no fear of personal violence. I am armed with this trusty sabre, and can take care of myself.

But there was no cause for fear since he soon found the vehicle had stopped, and he was led, blindfolded, into the house. When the bandage was removed from his eyes, he found himself in a richly furnished boudoir, and before him stood the white domino, just as he had met her at the masked ball. To fall upon his knees and tell her how much he thought of her since their separation, that his thoughts had never left her, that he loved her devotedly, was as natural as to breathe, he did so gallantly and sincerely.

Shall I believe all you say?

Let me prove it by any test you may put upon me.

Know, then, that the feelings you avow are mutual. Nay, unloose your arm from my waist—I have something more to say.

Talk on forever, lady! Your voice is music to my years.

Would you marry me, knowing no more of me than you now do?

Yes, if you were to go to the very alter masked! he replied.

Then I will test you.

How, lady?

For one year be faithful to the love you have professed, and I will then be yours—as truly as Heaven shall spare my life.

Oh, cruel suspense!

You demur?

Nay, dearest lady, I shall fulfill your injunctions as I promised.

If, at the expiration of a year, you do not hear from me, then the contract shall be null and void. Take this halfring, and when I supply the broken portion I will be yours.

He kissed the little emblem, swore again and again to be faithful, and pressing her hand to his lips, bade her adieu.

He was conducted away as mysteriously as he had been brought thither, nor could he by any possible means discover where he had been, his companion rejecting all bribes and even refusing to answer the simplest questions.

Months roll on. Col. Merville is true to his vow, and happy in the anticipation of love. Suddenly he was ordered on an embassy to Vienna, the gayest of all the European capitals, about the time that Napoleon was planning to marry the Archduchess Maria Louisa. The young Colonel is handsome, manly and already distinguished in arms, and of course becomes at once a great favorite at court, every effort being made by the women to captivate him, but in vain, he is constant and true to his vow.

But his heart is not made of stone. The very fact that he had entertained such tender feelings for the white domino had doubtless made him more susceptible than before.

At last he met the young Baroness Caroline Von Waldroff, and in spite of

his vows she captivates him, and he secretly curses the engagement which he had so blindly made at Paris. She seems to wonder at what she believes to be his devotion—and yet the distance he maintains! The truth was, that his sense of honor was so great that, though he felt he loved the young baroness, and even she returned his affection, still he had given his word, and it was sacred.

The satin domino is no longer the ideal of his heart, but assumes the most repulsive form in his imagination, and becomes in place of his good angel, his evil genius.

Well, time rolls on. He is to return in a few days. It is once more the carnival season, and in Vienna, too, that gay city. He joins in the festivities of the masked ball, and wonder fills his brain, when, about the middle of the evening, the white domino steals before him in the same white satin dress he had seen her wear a year before at the French Opera House in Paris.

I come, Colonel Eugene Merville, to hold you to your promise, she said, laying her hand lightly upon his arm.

Is this a reality or a dream? asked the amazed soldier.

Confé, follow me, and you shall see that it is a reality, continued the mask, pleasantly.

I will.

Have you been faithful to your promise? asked the domino, as they retired into a saloon.

Most truly, lady, in act; but, alas! I fear not in heart.

Indeed!

It is too true, lady, that I have seen and loved another—though my vow to you has kept me from saying so to her.

And who is it that you thus love?

I will be frank with you, and you will keep my secret?

Most religiously.

It is the Baroness of Von Waldroff, he said with a sigh.

And you really love her?

Alas! only too dearly, said the young soldier sadly.

Nevertheless, I must hold you to your promise. Here is the other half of the ring—can you produce its mate?

Here it is, said Merville.

Then I, too, keep my promise! said the domino, raising her mask, and showing to his astonished and delighted view the face of the Baroness of Waldroff.

She had seen and loved him for his manly spirit and character, and having found by inquiry that he was worthy of her love, she had very adroitly managed this delicate intrigue and had tested him—and now bestowed upon him her wealth, title and affection.

They were married with great pomp, and accompanied the Archduchess to Paris, Napoleon, to crown the happiness of his favorite, made him at once a general of division.

A PEACEFUL HOME.—A house is no home which holds a grumbling father, a scolding mother, a dissipated son, a lazy daughter, and a bad tempered child. It may be built of marble, surrounded by garden, park, and fountains—carpets of extravagant costliness may cover its floors—pictures of rarest merit may adorn its walls, its tables may abound with dainties the most luxurious—its every ordering may be complete, but yet it will not be a 'home,' to make it such there must be a change of inmates.

A gentleman having a horse that ran away and broke his wife's neck, a neighbor sought to buy the animal as a means of divorce. No, no, said his owner—I intend to marry again myself before long.

Our American Girls.

Woman transplanted from the Old World to the New, our American girls growing up in the free atmosphere of America, present a type peculiarly their own. While European nations shut their girls up in conventual privacy lest they should be sullied by contact with the world, our girls walk abroad—nor do they lose the purity of their own fresh hearts by the knowledge which they gain of actual life. We trust them to form their own acquaintances, and to entertain them—and there is nowhere else to be found the young girl who, while she is free to receive attention, is so well able to repel with dignity any presumption. She marks out her own limits. She is left to decide her life for herself; and is not considered as a piece of property to be retained or alienated by her parents. With a charming freedom she combines a certain womanly reserve which is not any outside mannerism, but the result of the inward conviction, which all American life forces on her, that she is considered an independent and responsible agent. If she be unbalanced, the excess is on the side of liberty, showing to the educator the tendency which his preventive measures ought to take. Such girls we must rule through winning their conviction on the side of right. They will not blindly obey what seems to them arbitrary rules, or, if they do, the natural exuberance of life checked in one direction will spread itself out in another, in a lawlessness and foolish bravado which we shall find it impossible to control. Any set, formal rules, any regulations as to uniform dress, are directly opposed to the spirit of our institutions, and can at best secure but a formal compliance for the time, a result which can not be considered as any part of a real education. The work of the teacher must always look beyond the present, aiming as it does at permanent and not temporary results, and must, in America, appeal directly and indirectly to self-control. The educator has in his hands, as the result of our climate, government, and society, an exquisitely sensitive and nervously developed organism, a spirit which knows its rights, and will assert and maintain them an effervescent girl-life which is to be reduced to a gracious womanhood, but without impairing its individuality. Is it not manifest that no system based on European life can be adequate to the skillful solution of such a problem? Our American girls, if treated in school as it is perfectly correct to treat French and German girls, are thwarted and perverted into something which has all the faults of the German and French girl, without her excellencies. Our work is for a peculiar class, under peculiar circumstances, and we must model it anew for our necessities. We have the finest material the world has ever produced, and the best chances for its development. Our girls' schools ought to send forth the finest women that have ever blessed and beautified the world, the strongest and truest wives, the wisest and tenderest mothers, the most intelligent and worthy citizens, and there ought to be no places as pure, healthful, and inspiring as the homes presided over by American women. If we do not find these results, the fault must be that of their education.

COMPLETE IN CHRIST.—A person who had long practiced many austerities, without finding any comfort or change of heart, was once complaining of this state to a certain bishop. Alas! said he, self will and self-righteousness follow everywhere. Only tell me when you think I shall learn to leave self. Will it be by study, or prayer, or good works? I think, replied the bishop, that the place where you lose self will be that where you find your Saviour,

How Young Men Fail.

There is Alfred Sutton home with his family, to live on the old folks, said one neighbor to another. It seems hard, after all his father has done to fit him for business, and the capital he invested to start him so fairly. It is surprising he has turned out so poorly. He is a steady young man, no bad habits, so far as I know—he has a good education, and was always considered smart, but he doesn't succeed in anything. I am told he has tried a number of different kinds of business, and sunk money every time. What can be the trouble with Alfred, I should like to know, for I don't want my boy to take his turn.

Alfred is smart enough, said the other, and has education enough, but he lacks the one element of success. He never wants to give a dollar's worth of work for a dollar of money, and there is no other way for a young man to make his fortune. All the men who have succeeded, honestly or dishonestly, in making money, have had to work for it, the sharpest sometimes the hardest of all. Alfred wishes to see his train in motion and let it take care of itself. No wonder it soon ran off the track, and a smash-up was the result. Teach your boy, friend Archer, to work with a will when he does work. Give him play enough to make him healthy and happy, but let him learn early that work is the business of life. Patient, self-denying work is the price of success. Ease and indolence eat away not capital only, but, worse still, all of man's nerve power. Present gratification tends to put off duty until to-morrow or next week. It is getting to be a rare thing for the sons of rich men to die rich. Too often they squander in a half-score years what their fathers were a lifetime in accumulating. I wish I could ring it in the ears of every aspiring young man that work, hard work, of head and hands, is the price of success.—Country Gentleman

NEVER RELINQUISH PRINCIPLE.—The lady in Millais' famous picture would fain save her lover's life from the massacre of Bartholomew, by binding the popish badge around his arm—he kisses her for her love, but firmly removes the badge. So when the dearest friends we have, out of mistaken tenderness, would persuade us to avoid persecution by relinquishing principle, and doing as others do, we should thank them for their love, but with unflinching decision refuse to be numbered with the world. Moses must have loved Pharaoh's daughter for her kindness, but he refused to be called her son.—Feathers for Arrows.

A TEST.—Speaking of the influence of a good character reminds me of a remark I heard in the horse-car the other day. Two ladies were talking to gether of some one who had recently died, and one of them said, her voice trembling as she spoke, He never had good thing nor ever had a pleasure that he didn't want to share it with everybody about him! It made me feel condemned and ashamed. Oh! if we all did so. I thought—even in a small village like ours—what a pleasurable commotion would prevail! And straightway there came into my mind an idea, or picture, of a pleasant water, with tiny bits of things continually dropping into it, starting tiny ripples which circled and widened over the whole. Imagine, now, the sea of humanity—or at least such a pond of humanity as goes to the making up of a neighborhood—and imagine little kindnesses dropping into it all the time—each starting its little circle of good feeling. Oh! how the circles would widen into each other, and that a pleasant ripple would be kept up all over the pond!