

VARIOUS

PUNCHINELLO, VOLUME
2, NO. 36, DECEMBER 3,
1870

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MAN AND WIVES

A TRAVESTY.

By MOSE SKINNER.

CHAPTER SECOND

LOVE

The Hon. MICHAEL LADLE and ARCHIBALD BLINKSOP were interrupted in their conversation by BELINDA, who sent off the former under pretence that the croquet players were waiting for him, or, as she expressed it, it was "his turn to mallet."

As soon as he was fairly out of sight, she turned to ARCHIBALD, and said; "Come with me."

"What for?" said ARCHIBALD, as she seized him by the arm

and hurried him into the shrubbery. "Recollect," he added, "that I am an orphan, with a constitution never robust."

She made no reply till they were screened from observation.

"You needn't be afraid, you little fool," she said. "Sit down on that stump."

ARCHIBALD tremblingly obeyed her.

She imprisoned his fluttering hand in hers, and smoothed his hair reassuringly.

"ARCHIE," she murmured; "*dear* ARCHIE."

"Oh, don't, *don't* talk that way," said ARCHIBALD. "You make me afraid of you."

"Afraid!" she returned. "And of *me*? Oh cruel, cruel ARCHIBALD. Is it for this that I have passed many a sleepless night, awaking unrefreshed with haggard orbs? Is it for this that I've pined away and refused meat victuals?"

She paused. Her heart was beating violently. She took from her pocket a copy of the *Ledger*, adjusted her eye-glasses, and continued:

"ARCHIBALD BLINKSOP, for weeks I have basked in the sunlight of your existence. Your celestial smile, shedding a tranquil calm o'er my perturbed spirit, has been my daily sustenance. Your ethereal form, beautiful as an houri, has, with its subtle fascination, enthralled and steeped in bliss my innermost soul, lifting me as it were into a purer, a holier existence. Your—"

"Oh-h," moaned the wretched ARCHIBALD, "*please* stop.

That's COBB, Jr. I *know* it is. When I was sea-sick on the canal, they read a chapter to me just like that, instead of giving me an emetic, and I was out of my head all next day."

"But you *do* love me, don't you, ARCHIBALD?—just a very small fragment, you know."

She seized him by the ear and kissed him twice.

"Come, own up now," said she, "that from the first moment you saw me, you have felt a sort of a spooney hankering, and a general looseness, including a desire to write poetry and use hair-oil, and wear pretty neckties; a sort of a feeling that your clothes don't fit you, and you can't bear the sight of gravy, and dote on lavender kids, and want to part your hair in the middle. *That's* being in love, ARCHIE. *That's*—"

At this juncture voices were heard calling for ARCHIBALD.

"Oh, do, *do* let me go," he pleaded.

BELINDA grasped him firmly by the collar. "Heaven knows," said she impressively, "that I have wooed you thus far in a spirit of the most delicate consideration. Now, I mean business, I want a husband, and by the Sixteenth Amendment, you don't stir from this spot, until you promise to marry me!"

"But—but—I don't want to get married," said ARCHIBALD; "I—I—ain't old enough."

She glared at him menacingly.

"Am I to understand then," she shrieked, "that you dare refuse me?" And she laughed hysterically.

"Oh, no, no. I wouldn't. Of course I wouldn't," groaned the

ghastly youth. "I'll promise *anything*, if you'll only let me go."

Thus it was, mid the hushed repose of that lovely June twilight, while all Nature seemed to pronounce a sweet benediction, that these loving hearts commingled. The soft hum of the June-bug seemed to have a sweeter sound, and the little fly walked unmolested across their foreheads, for they were betrothed.

CHAPTER THIRD.

WHERE THE WOODBINE TWINETH.

Notwithstanding the thrilling events enacted near by, that modest production of Nature, the woodbine, still continued to twine in all its pristine virginity. And meanwhile, JEFFRY MAULBOY is at the appointed rendezvous, waiting for ANN BRUMMET.

She comes.

But why that glazed expression, and that convulsive twitching of the lips?

She is chewing gum.

"Hilloa, JEFF," said she. "Mean thing. Been here a whole day, and not a single word about my new overskirt. How does it hang behind?"

What reply does this cruel, this heartless man make?

He took a chew of tobacco, and said:

"Oh, bother your overskirt. Is that the 'something very particular' you wanted to see me for?"

"Oh no," she replied; "I forgot." She looked cautiously round, and added:

"Say, JEFF, folks are talking about us awfully."

"Let 'em talk," was the rejoinder.

"Oh, yes," she replied. "Of course *you* don't care. The more a man is talked about the better he likes it, and the more he's thought of. But it's death to a woman."

"Well, I don't care any way," said JEFFRY.

"Yes you do care too," she replied. S'posen it should get to the ears of that rich widow you're engaged to. 'Twould be all up with you *there*, sure, JEFF. She ain't burdened with principle, the Lord knows, but she's got jealousy enough to break the match short off, and kill you besides, if she hears of it.

"And she'll hear of it anyhow, if they keep up their infernal clack," said he fiercely. "I'd like to choke the whole confounded pack."

"The talk would all die out," said ANN slowly, "if I should go away."

"Any fool can see that," replied he. "What do you mean?"

"I've been thinking of going," she continued, "for six months. I'm a poor relation, and Mrs. LADLE hates me. And as for BELINDA, she has so many good clothes, I can't take any comfort seeing her round."

"Where to?" inquired JEFFRY incredulously.

"Oh, anywhere," she replied. "I can dance a jig, you know. I'll go to New York, and let myself as the 'Eminent and Graceful Queen of Terpsichore, imported from Paris at a cost of Forty Thousand Dollars in Gold.' And then I'll make a tour of the New

England States. Or I'll learn to play the banjo and get off slang phrases, and then I'll appear as 'The Beautiful and Gifted Artist, ANNETTA BRUMMETTA, who has, by her guileless vivacity, charmed our most Fashionable Circles.' Or I'll go as Assistant Teacher in a Select Boarding School for Young Ladies. I ain't proud, you know."

JEFFRY grinned. "Let me advise you," said he, "to go right off to-morrow. I'll help you pack your trunk inside of an hour, if you say so."

"That ain't the point," she retorted sharply. "I ain't got rid of so easily as *that*, I tell you."

"What do you mean by that?" he inquired, with a scowl.

"I mean just this," she returned. "I won't go at all if you don't do what's right by me. If you'll agree to my terms I'll go, and not without."

"Your *terms*!" said he, with a sneer. "Well, that *is* a go. What may your 'terms' be?" he continued, derisively.

"Marriage," replied she; "private if you say so, and a remittance of fifty dollars a month for six months."

He laughed in her face. "Marry *you*? Well, I guess not," said he. "Do you take me for an idiot?"

"You ain't obliged to stick by it," she continued. "We're in Indiana, ain't we? We'll take a minister and a lawyer along with us. While the minister is marrying us, the lawyer can be at work on the divorce papers. When you are JEFFRY MAULBOY again, a single man, and I'm once more ANN BRUMMET.

spinster, I'll go away and never trouble you again. There's no risk. I go in ANN BRUMMET, and come out ANN BRUMMET, all inside of two hours, and there's nobody to tell of it. The lawyer and minister are used to it, you see, and the secret's safe with *them*."

JEFFRY MAULBOY took an unusually large chew of tobacco, and thought it all over.

"I won't do it," he finally said.

"All right, then," she replied; "I'll write to Mrs. CUPID and tell her the whole story, and I'll stay here besides. It'll be hard enough on me for a while if I go, and harder still if I stay; but I'll do it to *spite you*. I'll break off your match with Mrs. CUPID if I *do* stay, now mark my words."

JEFFRY MAULBOY walked back and forth, and emitted the choicest string of curses that his extensive and valuable collection enabled him to cull. At last he stopped in front of her, and said savagely:

"I'll do it. But if you ever lisp a word to any living soul till I'm safely married to CUPID, I'll kill you, dead sure. Do you hear that?"

"When and how is the thing to be done?" he growled again.

"The sooner the better," was ANN'S reply. "If you don't hear from me by to-morrow noon, go to the Half-way House at Forney's Crag. That's all *you've* got to do. I'll have the lawyer and minister both there. *You'd* better be there too. That's all I say."

Alone in his room, JEFFRY admitted that ANN had been too

smart for him.

"And I'm mighty afraid that, somehow or other, the old she-dragon will get the best of me yet in this infernal business," he soliloquized. "Anyhow, I'll sleep on it," and he went to bed.

He got up in the morning, firmly resolved to break his engagement with ANN.

"She was only bluffing me last night," he said. "She daren't tell CUPID." But he didn't feel easy for all that.

After breakfast he took his hat and started out.

"Where are you bound, JEFF?" inquired ARCHIBALD.

"Anywhere," was the reply. "Come along."

JEFFRY was awful dull company, so Archibald thought. He took very large chews of tobacco, and expectorated freely into the eyes of the small boys whom they chanced to meet, and if he didn't make a good shot, he swore awfully. Once he went away across a field on purpose to kick a very small dog, and ARCHIBALD waited for him.

"Why, JEFFRY," said ARCHIBALD, "what ails you? You're awfully down in the mouth this morning."

"And so you'd be if you was in my boots," was the reply.

And then he up and told ARCHIBALD the whole story.

The latter was so thoroughly dumbfounded that a decently-smart boy could have blown him over without any apparent effort.

"Why, JEFF," said he, "only to think of it. Ain't it awful? And ANN BRUMMET, too; ain't I glad it ain't me, though."

"That's no way to console a fellow, you fool," said JEFFRY. "You'd better offer to help me out of the scrape."

"Why, so I will, of course," said ARCHIBALD. "If I hadn't saved your life, of course you wouldn't have got into it; and so I feel bound, you know, to see you out of it. What shall I do?"

"Why, just go over to the Half-way House, and tell ANN I can't come. Tell her I've got the small-pox, or broke my leg, or my old man's dying—or anything, so that she understands I can't come."

"You'd better give me a letter," said ARCHIBALD, "and I'll slip it under her door and run off. I never could remember all that, I should be so flustered, you know."

"No," replied JEFFRY, "I shan't give you any letter. I ain't fool enough to commit myself to any woman in black and white."

"Well," replied ARCHIBALD drearily, "just as you say. Oh, what a knowing man the Hon. MICHAEL is! He said you'd make me pay that debt of saving your life, sooner or later, and it's turned out sooner. But I'll go, JEFFRY, if I can get away from BELINDA. She tags me round everywhere, and wants to court me all the time. Ain't it dreadful? What time shall I go?"

"Three o'clock," answered JEFFRY. "Tell her I'd come if I could but I can't *anyhow*. Be sure and tell her *that*, and anything else you've a mind to."

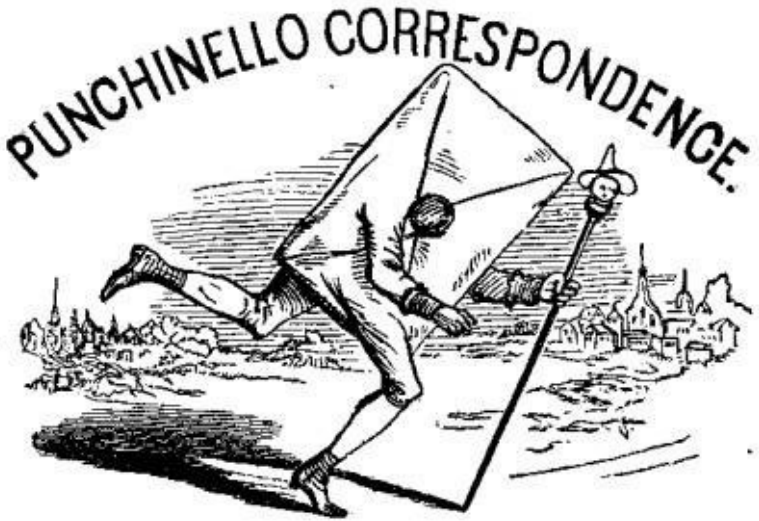
(To be continued.)

PIGEON ENGLISH

Certainly newspaper writers are given to making very remarkable statements. In describing General CHANGARNIER, a newspaper lately informed us that "he stoops his head, which is sprinkled over with a few gray hairs when walking." Now, if the general's head be sprinkled when walking, we may fairly infer that the gray hairs, unless brushed off, remain upon it when it stands still. We are additionally mystified by the further statement—still with reference to the same officer—that "he enjoys the personal demeanor of the French people to a remarkable degree." This we are very much delighted to hear, although we have not the slightest idea what it means.

Corroborative

A late item of war news states that "the Prussians have advanced to Dole," while from several other sources we learn that the Prussians have come to Grief.



ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

Ambergris.—Can you give me the motto of the City of Strasbourg?

Answer.—We cannot at this moment recall the Flemish version of it, but it means, in English, "We make our own Pies."

Katrina Shwachenzittern.—We have had some difficulty in deciphering your manuscript. Your grievance, however, seems to be that one of your boarders, an Alsatian, keeps a ten-pound brass cannon in his bedroom, and fires a grand salvo with it whenever a French victory is announced. This, of course, is very foolish. The best way of putting a stop to it would be for your German boarders to keep guns of even larger calibre in their rooms, and fire the Frenchman down. You will then have a perfect right to charge all your boarders for extra fires.

Ney.—Please explain two things about the war. First: How did the Mobile Guard come to leave Mobile? Second: Is *Francs-Tireurs* the French for FRANK BUTLER'S black-and-tan terriers?

Answer.—We cannot perceive much difference between NEY and BRAY.

Artichoke.—You are mistaken in supposing total deafness to be an indispensable qualification in a candidate for the position of prompter to a theatre.

Flippertygibbet.—How is the belligerent attitude of the

Russian Bear likely to affect the New York money market?

Answer.—Turn a rushin' bear into any market, and see what the result will be.

Paterfamilias.—I am the unhappy father of three brace of twins, and wish to dispose of one out of each brace. Can you advise me in the matter?

Answer.—If you don't mind being put in the Lockup, perhaps you had better apply to "Dr." LOOKUP.

Sad-you-See.—We cannot sympathize with you in your wail about the markets being "flat." Wait a while, patiently, and they will come "round."

Peter Dole.—Your questions about cooking turkeys for Thanksgiving Day are so multitudinous, that we can only reply to them generally. In Europe it is the usage for Crowned Heads and their families, only, to eat sausages with their turkey; and, if ever the true story of the Man with the Iron Mask comes to be unveiled, it is more than likely that the mystery will be found to hinge upon that fact.

A PRESIDENTIAL FLOUT

According to the Washington special despatches to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the President has tendered a Cabinet appointment to several distinguished members of the Union League of that city. Either from excessive modesty, however, or, as is probable, from prudent doubts as to their ability to fill the position, all of these gentlemen have declined to accept the offer.

It is surmised that the object of the President's recent visit to Philadelphia (ostensibly to see his old friend, Mr. BORIE), was to examine the roll of the League, comprising two thousand members, for the purpose of selecting one who might serve on a pinch to fill the office in question.

This was a bitter stroke of satire on the part of Mr. GRANT, since it is generally understood in Philadelphia, that, outside the ranks of the Mutual Admiration Society to which we have referred, there are no brains to be found among the Republicans of Philadelphia.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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