[PUBLISHED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT.]

BERINTHIA

(A LONDON EPISODE.)

By ROBERT BUCHANAN.

It was clear to every one of the three that Berinthia was out of temper. She found it difficult, if not impossible, to keep the pose for many minutes together; she trembled, she shifted her feet, she showed her white teeth in a grin that did not at all resemble her usual smile, and every time that she was remonstrated with, her eyes flashed angrily. At last, unable to control herself any longer, she jumped down from the dais or platform, and moved towards the screen which was drawn across one corner of the studio and formed a sort of dressing or 'tiring room for the occasional use of "models."

"It's no use," she cried, "I'm off!"

And casting the shawl from her in the manner of one preparing to take a header into a swimming bath, she disappeared behind the screen.

"What the devil's the matter with you?" growled Belford, a bearded man of nearly forty, with a black patch over his left eye, a wooden pipe between his teeth and a Turkish fez stuck rakishly on his bald head.

"Never mind," answered Berinthia, now hidden from sight.

"Come back, confound you! I won't keep you another ten minutes," cried Belford, bending close to a large block on which he was drawing a black and white sketch for the wood engraver, and inspecting it critically with his one available eye.

This time there was no answer; so Belford, whose manners lacked the repose characteristic of the caste of Vere de Vere, glanced savagely round at his companions and uttered an imprecation.

He was the oldest of the three—the oldest and the cleverest. His two companions in art and impecuniosity, who sat at work with him in the studio, were Charles Somerset, a handsome, fair-haired young fellow of five and twenty, and George Constable Leroy, a man of about thirty, with a mild, good-humored face, fair hair thinning already at the top, "mutton chop" whiskers, and a shaven chin. Being very short-sighted, Leroy wore spectacles, which might have been literally rose-colored, so pleasant and amiable was the view which he took through them at all creation.

Belford was at work, as we have said, on a wood block, which he was executing for an illustrated magazine, and which was set before him on a small table. Somerset and Leroy sat before their easels, the former drawing in crayon, the latter sketching in oils. Belford was not only the oldest and the cleverest, but the shabbiest, wearing, in addition to the fez already described, an old dressing gown, ragged, torn and liberally splashed with paint. Leroy wore very seedy tweed trousers and painting jacket of velveteen; his collar and shirt front were frayed and dirty, and marked with coffee stains. Somerset, the swell of the trio, had a linen blouse thrown over his walking suit, and was smoking a cigar.

"What's the matter with her, Billie?" asked Somerset, laughing and looking at Belford.

"How the deuce do I know?" was the reply. "Infernal little cat! You fellows have spoiled her by humoring her whims and fancies."

"Poor little Berry!" murmured Leroy, blinking compassionately through his spectacles. "I suppose there's trouble at home."

"Then why doesn't she chuck it?" grunted Belford, glancing contemptuously with his bloodshot eye at Leroy. "Father's a drunkard, mother's worse. If she'd had any sense, she'd have left them long ago, the idiot." He added, as if tired of the subject, and addressing Somerset, "Here, youngster, come out and get some beer!"

The young man nodded, sprang up lightly, and ran out of the studio. Scarcely had he disapeared when Berinthia appeared in walking costume from behind the screen. In her thin cotton dress, very shabby cloth jacket, round hat with faded feathers, and an old pair of laced-up boots, she looked very different from the shapely lissome creature who had recently been posing on the dais, but even her unbecoming attire could not quite obscure her look of elfin-like grace and beauty. Her face, brown as a ripe pear with sun and wind, was framed in dark hair, cut short at the neck like the hair of a boy, her eyes were bright and keen under black eyebrows, her teeth white as the milk of the cocoanut, her mouth soft and full like that of a child. And indeed she was little more than a child in years, being only just seventeen years of age, although as old and knowing in the ways and wiles of Bohemia as Belford himself.

"I don't know what's the matter with me to-day," she observed apologetically. "I've got the 'fidgets.' I could't keep still."

"You never can keep still," growled Belford. You're like a monkey up a tree!"

She looked up, and her face broke into a smile.

"That's right, Mr. Belford, scold away! I like it, and what's more, I deserve it!" Then drawing herself erect, and stretching out her arms towards a shaft of sunlight which broke in through the window of the studio, she added: "O lor', I wish I was a monkey, or a bird, or something of that sort! I'm sick and tired of being only a girl!"

She pronounced something "somethink" and girl "gel," but these are details on which we do not think it necessary to insist.

We should have explained, perhaps, that it was a quiet morning in the early sixties. Christmas close at hand, with all its merry sights and sounds. Outside in smoky Bloomsbury the snow was lying white on street and square, but in the great dismal studio, a cavernous apartment situated close to the mews and adjoining a dreary square, there was a sense of stuffiness and warmth. The place was rented by the three men in common, and consisted of the studio itself, and of two small cupboards or closets, which Belford and Leroy had converted into sleeping apartments. Somerset slept out in a bedroom over a livery stable.

All three were very poor, and were constantly occupied in what is figuratively known as "dining with Duke Humphry;" for it was (as we have said) the early sixties, as they have been called. Bohemia still existed, and neither art nor literature had yet attained their present commercial importance as fashionable professions.

Although all the three were nominally artists, William Belford alone was an artist born, not made; a great and neglected genius, doing job work just then for the small dealers and wood engravers, and painting pictures which were destined after his death to be regarded as masterpieces. At forty years of age he was still incorrigibly eccentric and indifferent to worldly success, superficially savage and cynical, but in reality the kindest and most unselfish of mortals. Somerset was little more than an ambitious amateur. Leroy combined the profession of painting with that of writing sketches for magazines and pieces for minor theaters. Like Belford, and unlike Somerset, he was a thorough Bohemian.

"I think, Berinthia," said Leroy, gently, "you want a holiday! You've been working too hard, and should be enjoying yourself, not working, this Christmas time."

"Bosh!" interrupted Belford, grinning savagely. "She wants a hiding! Her life's one long holiday, and she loafs and idles while honest folk are working. What are you going to be up to now?" he demanded, with a comic assumption of severity.

Berinthia, who appeared by this time to have recovered all her natural good temper, looked at him with laughing eyes.

"There's a swell wedding in Hanover Square," she replied. "I'm going to see it."

"And I suppose you wish you were the bride?" said the painter, sarcastically.

"Don't I, just!" cried Berinthia, winking at him with the utmost effrontery, and nodding her rougish head.

At that moment Somerset re-entered the studio, laden with a large pewter measure of half-and-half, procured at the neighboring public house.

"Bravo, Ganymede!" cried Belford, smacking his lips, while Somerset set down the measure on a paint-bedaubed table, and, going to a cupboard close by, brought out and filled a couple of tumblers. "Tumblers for you fellows," continued Belford. "I'll take mine 'au naturel'—in the pewter!"

Here there was a sudden interruption from Berinthia, who began in a clear, soft voice, albeit with an unmistakeable cockney accent, to troll the following lines:

"Here, boy, take this handful of brass,
Across to the Goose and the Gridiron pass;
Pay the coin on the counter out
And bring me a pint of foaming stout!
Put it in neither bottle nor jug,
Cannikin, mannikin, flagon or mug—
Into nothing at all, in short
Except the natural pewter quart!"

So singing, she had tripped toward the door, when Somerset called her back.

"Stop, Berry!" he cried, "I've got something for you!" and as she turned he pulled from the pocket of his jacket a brown stone bottle of ginger beer. "I know your tipple," he added, smiling, "and have brought you some of the right sort."

Berinthia thanked him with a smile and ran to the cupboard to fetch another glass, while he cut the string of the bottle and pulled out the cork.

"Your health, Monkey!" cried Belford, waving the pewter measure preparatory to taking a deep draught.

"Your's, Mr. Belford!" said Berinthia, lifting her glass of ginger beer and seating herself unceremoniously on the edge of the raised dais, while Somerset and Leroy, each with a glass in his hand, nodded to her gally.

"You'll be late for the wedding," continued Belford.

"Never mind," said the girl, sipping from her glass with rapture and rolling her black eyes. "Oh, ain't it lovely?"

"I say, Berry," asked Belford, after a pause, "who taught you that song?"

"What song?"

"The one you were singing a moment ago."

Berinthia smiled and glanced at Leroy, who blinked comically.

"I did," he said, blushing.

"Oh, you did, did you?" observed Belford. "I was wondering where the monkey had picked it up. Do you know who wrote it? Of course you don't. Old Maginn; and it's a burlesque of the 'Leather Bottel!' "

"I was aware of the fact," replied Leroy. "I found it in an old number of Blackwood's Magazine."

"Nice sort of song to teach a kid like that," grunted the cynic.

"I ain't a kid, Mr. Belford!" cried Berinthia, indignantly. "I'm a young woman!"

"Of course you are, Berry," said Somerset, laughing; "and a clinking fine young woman, too, as I am ready to swear—witness my sign and seal!"

"I know you're chaffing," she said, "but as long as I can earn a bit of money for mother and keep myself respectable I don't mind. I'm not like some of the girls who sit to gentlemen, and it ain't everybody I'd sit to at all, for that matter!"

She finished her glass of ginger beer, sprang to her feet, and, humming the tune of Weber's "Last Waltz," then very popular as an organ tune, began tripping quietly towards the door; then, turning suddenly and dropping a profound courtesy, she saluted the three with mock dignity, laughed lightly and disappeared.

II.

Berintha Lambert was the only daughter of a poor and unworthy couple, who had suffered her to grow up like a wild seed on their dingy hearth until such time as she was able to shift in some measure for herself. Both her father and mother had been, and were, models by profession and rogues by natural instinct and disposition—the father a loafing drunken scoundrel with the head of a handsome Italian brigand, the mother a dark-eyed semi-savage Italian girl, who had first come to London in company with an organ-grinder, and had afterwards drifted into the studios, where her swarthy beauty was greatly in request among artists who affected foreign subjects generally and Scriptural ones particularly. Late in life when her good looks were fast disappearing, the woman had cast her lot with the idle scamp who was now her husband, and Berinthia was the result of the union.

Berinthia's first introduction to art was made when she was a baby in her mother's arms; and before she was eighteen months old she had gained the glory of being hung on "the line" at the academy, as the black-eyed infant in a study by John Phillip, called "Spanish Mother and Child." Later on she figured again and again on canvas as a swarthy child, saintly or unsaintly, English or Eastern, and by the time she was fifteen years of age, she was as familiar with the studios as if she had been born and bred there, as indeed was almost the case.

At sixteen years old, she had so developed in budding womanhood and beauty, that she might easily have passed for eighteen or nineteen. Rather under than over the middle height, exquisitely knit, perfect in shape, slender without thinness, with admirable feet and hands, she combined the lithe supple vigor of a youth with the softness and delicacy of a girl. Hair as black as the raven's wing, eyes brilliant, yet black as sloes, a merry mobile mouth, sun-tanned cheeks completed her resemblance of the old Greek type of athletic maidenhood. She was as alert and bright as a young faun, and as gamesome as an elf. In a word, she was an English "gamine," with all the health and all the audacity of her class, plus a degree of physical beauty not often to be found in our sunless streets.

Accustomed from earliest girlhood to the life of the studio, she pursued her profession as a model without the slightest "arriere pensee," and in thoroughly careless and business-like spirit. Where there was no feeling of indelicacy there could be no shame, and, to speak frankly, Berinthia was as pureminded and honest a girl as could be found within the sound of Bow Bells. Her purity was the more impregnable, in so far as it was not founded on ignorance or inexperience. She knew the seamy side of life thoroughly—she had been familiar, both at home and abroad, with all that is evil and ugly in our modern civilization, she heard the "argot" of vice even in her cradle.

Her father was a drunken satyr, who had struck her when a child, and who cursed her when she was too old to be beaten. Her mother had developed into a scolding hag, ready at any moment to sell her child to the highest bidder, but otherwise quite indifferent to her comings and goings. In spite of all this, Berinthia remained uncontaminated, frank, fearless, audacious and fully capable of being her own protector even in the most questionable society.

More than once, as she increased in personal beauty, temptation came to her, but it slipped off her shoulders as water slips off a duck's back. She could defend herself against all comers; if need be, with teeth and nails. Those who imagined that she was an easy conquest had occasion to remember that a tiger cat might have been as easily played with. Yet she was no prude, and her conversation was now and then appallingly free and easy. Up to a certain point she was "bonne camarade," even to the extent of a kiss or a playful embrace; beyond that point she was a vestal virgin.

We are all of us—the greatest and the least—lost and saved by our ideals, and Berinthia was no exception to the rule. Under her wild and reckless manner, her gamesome audacity, her free and easy Bohemianism, she cherished a dream, which had come to her very early in life, and had been awakened at first, no doubt, by her childish admiration for the genteel ways and manners of certain artists. This dream was, to express it in her own language, that she should marry, if ever she married at all, "a gentleman!"

Now what Berinthia meant by the word "gentleman" was not, perhaps, what we mean, though it was very much what is meant by a very large portion of humanity. A "gentleman," in Berinthia's eyes, was one who was well educated, who dressed nicely, who wore clean linen, good boots and gloves, and was polite to the fair sex. For, above all things in the world, Berinthia disliked what she described as "common people"—people like her father and mother, and the thousands of coarse creatures who surrounded her in the London streets. Elegant persons like Mr. Somerset, persons who were refined to the finger tips, were her admiration. Yes, her mind was made up, and nothing would change it; she would marry a "gentleman," no matter how poor, and she herself would become that paragon of paragons, a "lady."

Of course, it was only a dream, and in some respects a very foolish one; yet it had this good result—it saved poor Berinthia from ideals even more ignoble, and it kept her pure and clean in her hard fight for bread. Wherever she went she saw before her the picture of the unknown cavalier who was to lift her, figuratively speaking, on the crupper of his steed and gallop away with her into fairyland, where the well-dressed people came from. It never occurred to her that he would despise her for earning her living as she did, as an artist's model. Her heart was pure, and he would know it. The greatest lady in the land had not a keener sense of purity than Berinthia.

Sometimes in the innocence of her heart, she talked about her fancy to her friends at the studio. Of course they chaffed her, but all the same she saw that they thought none the worse of her. Mr. Leroy particularly was very kind. He would talk to her quite seriously, lend her nice books, recite "poetry" to her, and laboriously try to improve her mind.

Unfortunately, Leroy had one great failing—a too great liking for the cup which cheers and inebriates. He got tipsy twice or three times a week, and became utterly irresponsible. Even in his cups, however, he was the most amiable creature in the world, and, as his acquaintances expressed it, "nobody's enemy but his own."

A few months after the scene in the studio, with which our story opened, came Easter Monday, the spring bank holiday; and among those who drifted out of town with the crowd were Somerset and Leroy. Belford, who hated holidays, stayed at home hard at work as usual.

The two artists took the train to Teddington, and walked thence to Bushey Park, where the colonnades of horse-chestnuts were in full bloom, and which was thronged with holiday makers from the great city. It was a bright and sunny day, the grass was green as emerald, the air clear and sparkling like champagne, the whole scene frankly pagan like a glimpse of old Arcady. Men and girls danced and romped, babies sprawled on the grass, while the crowded omnibuses rolled along the dusty road between the chestnuts, followed by the city clerk in his hired dog cart and the coster on his donkey tray.

"Pan was there, and Faunus too,
All the romping sylvan crew!
Nature's Moenade flocking mad
From the city dark and sad,
Finding once again the free
Sunshine and its jollitie!
Gaily twanged the fiddle string,
Men and girls played kiss-in-ring,
Fountains leapt against the sun,
Roses bloomed and children played,
All the world was full of fun,
Lovers cuddled in the shade!"

Out at the Hampton Court end of the park they strolled, and elbowing their way through the throng in front of the "King's Arms," halted at the bar for what Mr. Richard Swiveller called "a modest quencher." Then sallying forth they entered the court gardens and watched the throng which was swarming, thick as bees, in and out of the maze.

Suddenly Somerset gripped Leroy by the arm, and uttered an exclamation.

"By Jove, look there!"

Leroy blinked and saw, appearing out of the maze, the face and form of Berinthia. She wore a pretty cotton gown, a hat with feathers, and in her hand she carried a bunch of blooming lilac. Her look was radiant, and she was hanging on the arm of a young man! So absorbed was she in the contemplation of her companion and in her own abundant happiness, that she did not notice her two friends of the studio, who drew aside quietly as she approached.

The young man was stylishly dressed in the fashion of the period, a white hat, white waistcoat, peg-top trousers, and frock coat with a rose in the buttonhole. His hair was fair, his mustache still fairer, and his face somewhat sickly and insipid. He wore lilac-colored gloves, and swung a malacca cane.

"Who the deuce has has she picked up?" asked Somerset, smiling.

"Possibly the long-expected one!" mildly suggested Leroy.

"Looks like a counter-jumper!" muttered Somerset.

Curious to ascertain what had brought Berinthia there, they followed the pair at a respectful distance.

"Look how she hangs on his arm!" said Somerset. "How admiringly she looks up into his face! He must be Prince Charming after all!"

Presently they lost the pair in the crowd thronging the gardens, nor did they catch sight of them again, though they looked everywhere for them. Late that evening the artists returned to Bloomsbury, Leroy mildly tipsy as usual, Somerset full of life and spirits.

A whole week passed, and Berinthia did not appear at the studio. This was so unusual that the three were not a little astonished. At last one morning, some ten days after the rencontre at Hampton Court, Berinthia walked in and greeted them with a smiling nod.

"The prodigal returned!" cried Somerset. "Where on earth have you been hiding?"

"I haven't been hiding anywhere," replied the maiden; "I've been at home."

"Quite sure? O Berry, I've had dreadful dreams about you! We dreamed—I dreamed, Billie dreamed, Leroy dreamed—that you'd been and gone and done it!"

"Done what?" asked Berinthia.

"Got married," replied the young man.

Berinthia blushed crimson.

"You're only chaffing," she cried, looking nervously toward Leroy.

"No, Berry, I'm quite serious," said Somerset, still in the same bantering tone. "In our dreams about you, my dear, we saw the resplendent one as large as life. Shall I describe him to you? Golden hair and mustache, white hat, lilac gloves, a malacca cane! O Berry, Berry!"

Berinthia turned from red to pale, while her eyes opened wide in amazement. Then, meeting the laughing eyes of her tormentor, she rapidly recovered her self-possession.

"Somebody's been telling on me," she cried. "Well, I don't care! You'd have had to know it some day or other, I suppose. Yes, Mr. Leroy," she continued, addressing the individual whom she knew by experience to be the least sarcastic and most sympathetic, "I'm engaged; and that's why I've come to say that I can't sit for you any more."

"Why not?" growled Belford, the cynic, looking up from his work, and glaring at her with his Cyclopean eye.

"Because!" said Berinthia. Then she paused, blushed and simpered.

"I see," interrupted Somerset, "Prince Charming objects."

"That ain't his name," returned Berinthia, slyly. "But he thinks it ain't proper for an engaged young lady to sit to artists. P'raps it ain't. At any rate, he's very particular."

There was a long silence, during which Berinthia went over to Leroy, and, standing close to him, watched him as he worked at a nearly finished picture. Presently he glanced round to her, and said quietly:

"Who is he, Berry?"

"O, Mr. Leroy, he's a gentleman—a real gentleman! You'd know that if you only saw him!"

"Has he any profession? Does he do any work?" inquired Leroy, gently.

"No, Mr. Leroy," replied Berinthia. "He's got property; and he dresses beautiful! And mother's mad with me for wanting to have him. She says he's no good; but I'm going to marry him, for all that!"

"Soon?"

"I don't know. As soon as he likes. The sooner the better."

"I wish," said Leroy, thoughtfully, 'you'd bring him along and introduce him. I—I should like to see your choice. You know, Berry, I've always been interested in you, and——"

"I know that, Mr. Leroy," cried Berinthia, placing her hand softly on his shoulder, "but I can't bring him; I daren't bring him! Mr. Somerset would chaff me before him; and he's dreadfully proud. Besides, I'm sure he wouldn't come! He don't like artists."

Somerset, overhearing the remark, burst into a peal of laughter.

"He don't like artists!" he repeated scornfully. "What a swell he must be!"

"No mistake!" cried Berinthia, with a toss of the head.

Several weeks passed and Berinthia did not reappear. The three often thought of her and spoke of her, for they missed her sunny presence and elf-like ways. At last one day Leroy received the following letter, written in a round uneducated hand and bearing the Manchester post mark.

"Dear Mr. Leroy:

"This comes hoping you are well, and to tell you that I was married last Monday and have gone with my husband into the country. He's just what I told you, a 'gentleman' every inch of him, and I'm that proud and happy I could cry for joy. Give my love to Mr. Somerset and Mr. Belford, not forgetting yourself, and believe me,

"Your grateful and affectionte,
"BERINTHIA TOMKINS.

"P. S.—He's a real gentleman, and his manners are lovely!"

Leroy read the letter aloud—not without a certain emotion.

"Tomkins!" shouted Somerset. "O, Phoebus, what a name! Berinthia Tomkins!"

"Poor Berry!" said Leroy with a sigh. "I only hope that her marriage will turn out all right!"

III.

More than a year had passed away, the Christmas season was come again, and the three had neither seen nor heard of her who had been the very life and soul of the studio. Not a single line had come to tell them of her doings, and whether she was happy or unhappy, prosperous or the reverse.

In the meantime, all of the three had thriven more or less. Somerset had inherited a little money from a wealthy relation, Leroy had written a successful historical play for an eminent tragedian, and had received for the same the princely sum of £500, while Belford, taken up by an enthusiastic clique of art-critics, was gradually being recognized as a masterly painter. Nothing was changed, however, in their habits of life, which were still thoroughly and fearlessly Bohemian.

Winter had come, and with its bleak winds and snowdrifts, ushering in the time of peace on earth and good will to men. Late on Christmas Eve the three sat before the fire, which was blazing brightly. They had been to the theater to see the production of Leroy's play, which had been received with acclamation, and they were celebrating the occasion. A kettle boiled upon the fire, glasses stood ready, and Somerset had just drawn a bottle of Scotch whisky.

Suddenly they heard a soft knock at the studio door, which opened on the snowy by-street adjoining the mews. "Come in," they cried, but no one entered. Then the sound was repeated and some one seemed to be trying to turn the handle of the door.

"Who the devil is it?" cried Belford.

"The cat, I suppose."

Silence followed and they were just filling their glasses and preparing to drink "A Merry Christmas" and success to the play, when Leroy started and held up a finger.

"There's some one there, after all!" he said. "I'll go and see!"

He walked somewhat unsteadily across the room and opened the door. The wind swept in with great flakes of snow, but all around was darkness. Then suddenly, as he peered out into the night, he saw something black lying on the ground, just beyond the threshold. He stooped down to inspect it more closely, and saw, to his amazement, that it was the figure of a woman.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed. "Here, you fellows, bring a light and lend a hand."

Belford took up the lamp from the table, while Somerset ran to join Leroy and to assist him to raise the woman, who appeared to have fainted. They lifted her up and carried her into the studio—a limp lump of rags, soaked to the skin with melted snow and covered with a thin shawl, beneath which her hands clutched something in desperation. Belford held up the lamp and flashed the light upon her face. Then all three uttered an exclamation, for they recognized Berinthia.

Berinthia, but how changed! Worn and thin and pale as if she had just risen from a sickbed; her dress poor and ragged, her eyes closed, her mouth bleeding and open, and in her arms, clutching tight to her bosom, a little sleeping baby, the dark and elfin miniature of herself.

She had fainted outright, and it was some little time before they could bring her to; but they placed her in an arm chair before the fire they chafed her cold, thin hands, and they forced spirits and water down her throat, till at last consciousness returned. When she came to herself and recognized where she was, she began to sob, hysterically, clutching Leroy by the arm, and hiding her face against his coat-sleeve, while with her other hand she held her child.

Yes, the child was hers, but her "gentleman," her Prince Charming, where was he? Before the night was out, and when they had soothed away her excitement and made her comfortable by the fire, she told them the whole sad story.

She had gone into the country with her husband, and for a long time they had been happy together, though she was always puzzled to find out where he got his money. He spent the days at home in her company, and seldom went out except at night. When she questioned him as to his doings, he always answered her angrily and bade her mind her own business. As the months passed on, his manner to her grew more and more indifferent, and at last, in a fit of passion, he struck her. From that time forward their life was a miserable one, and all she had to look for at the man's hands was the coarse words and blows.

She could have borne all that, she said, for the sake of the little one that was coming; but worse was to follow. One night her husband informed her, coolly and deliberately, that he was going to leave her, and had no intention of returning to her again; that he was, in fact, about to leave England, and try his fortune in America. He told her at the same time that the police were after him, and that his real profession, or occupation, was that of a fashionable thief, or swell mobsman! Before she could recover from her horror and amazement, he had gone, taking with him every farthing they possessed.

Before the night was out the police appeared in pursuit of him, but they were too late. From that time forward she had heard nothing of him, and she had no doubt that he had left both her and his native country forever.

We should weary the reader if we described in detail the sufferings and privations of the deserted woman, still little more than a child. Her infant had been born in a provincial workhouse, and afterwards, in despair, she made her way to London, only to be driven contemptuously into the streets by her drunken father. Finally, in sheer desperation, she had made her way to the old studio on that snowy Christmas eve.

Thanks to the kindness and sympathy of the three, poor Berinthia was rescued from utter shame and misery, but her old bright looks were gone, and she had changed prematurely into a weary woman. What became of her afterwards and of her little one is another story, not to be told now. Enough to say that she recovered from her first disillusion and was reserved for a life of tolerable happiness. In spite of her bitter experience she never failed to think with a certain tenderness of her Prince Charming, of whom she never again heard, and always when the three inveighed against him as a ruffian and a scoundrel, she would say very pitifully:

"Ah, but you didn't know him! He was such a perfect gentleman!"

HUMOR OF THE DAY.

In Maine.

Puck.

Tourist—Healthy village, is it?

Native—Why, if this wasn't a Prohibition State the drug stores might as well close up.

Of Course: How Could She?

Life.

He—How could you lead me on, when you knew all the time I was in love with you.

"Why, if you hadn't been, how could I have done it?"

A Shade the Worst of It.

Puck.

Potts—Pykeer haunts the race tracks in the hope of winning a fortune.

Taylor—Haunts, does he? Well, he hasn't a ghost of a show.

Won't Pay that Indemnity.

Detroit Free Press.

"They call him the unspeakable Turk," ventured Bainbridge.

"Yes, and he won't even let his money talk," added Goldsborough.

Too Young.

Philadelphia Press.

"Ah! If I were younger," sighed the wealthy old man, "I might hope to win you."

"Yes; or, say, ten years older," she replied dreamily, for he was only a little over sixty and still quite robust.

What Was Needed.

Puck.

Mother—Perhaps the young man needs a little encouragement.

Daughter—Yes, mamma! I wish you would keep out of sight more while he is here.

Strategy.

Cleveland Plain Dealer.

"Yes, I encourage my typewritter to chew gum."

"Why do you do that?"

"It tires her jaws so much that she can't talk."

And She Took the Cake.

Judge.

Little Girl—I want a cake of soap.

Drug Clerk—Have it scented?

Little Girl—No, I won't have it sented. I'll take it wit' me. We only live around de corner.

A Valuable Lesson.

Chicago Post.

"And what does the story of the prodigal son teach us?" asked the teacher.

"It teaches us how to get the fatted calf," was the prompt reply of that bad boy at the foot of the class.

Signs and Tokens.

Chicago News.

"We'll have a rain this afternoon."

"Does the Weather Bureau say so?"

"No; but those folks next door have gone to the country and left all their upstairs windows wide open."

Little Jimmy's Guess.

Detroit Free Press.

"What does it mean, Tommy," the Sunday school teacher asked, "where it says, 'They rent their clothes?' "

"I suppose they couldn't afford to buy them," replied Tommy.

A Foolish Bird.

Puck.

The Robin—Say, Twitters, a boy with a catapult came near sniping me this morning.

The Sparrow—Serves you right! Haven't I advised you time and again to dye that red front khaki color?

OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

It is said there are fewer divorces among the Chickasaws than with any other race of people.

The aging of timber, which formerly required long storage, is now completed by electricity in a few hours.

Dried orange peel, allowed to smolder on a piece of red-hot iron or an old shovel, will kill any bad odor and leave a fragrant one behind.

Methodists have 142 American missionaries in China, Presbyterians 209, and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions 110.

A West Australian exploring party that recently arrived at Oodnadata reported that there had not been a drop of rain for two years in the region traversed.

The United States never coined gold pieces of a higher denomination than $20. Some years ago a jeweler at San Francisco struck gold pieces of the value of $50, but that was on private account.

Department stores in St. Paul and Minneapolis provide bicycle stands, with a boy in attendance, who checks wheels free, whether the rider intends to visit that particular store or not. Indeed, a bicycle may be so housed all day.

Two hundred and ninety millions of dollars for poultry, the proceeds of one year, compared with $100,000,000 for hogs for the same time, tells with emphasis the enormous magnitude of the poultry business. We are still importers of eggs.

The city of New York takes care of its blind residents who are also poor. Every year $50 or thereabouts is given to each indigent blind person who applies for assistance, provided the applicant is found to be in need of assistance. This year nearly seven hundred applications have been made.

The Board of County Commissioners of Wichita county, Kansas, has just abolished the poorhouse, there being no more paupers in the county. One old soldier is the only dependent person in the county, and he is being carred for by popular subscription.

One of the most important industries of the Bahama islands is the gathering of pink pearls. It is the only place in the world where these pearls are found. The pearls, when perfect, bring very high prices, it is said, ranging from $50 to $5,000.

Health specialists say a pound of lean beef and a quart of whole milk contain about the same amount of nourishment, but the meat, although it costs more, is more valuable for food, as it contains the nutrients in more suitable proportion.

A postage stamp collection has been sold in England for $150,000, which is believed to be the largest philatelic transaction on record. The collection was that of the European stamps of Mr. Castle, of Brighton, a vice president of the London Philatelic Society.

The strongest men of the three manliest races in the present world are nonflesh eating—the Turanian mountaineers, the dingo tribes of Senegambia and the Schleswig-Holstein Bauern, who furnish the heaviest soldiers for the German army and the ablest seamen for the Hamburg navy.

Every stranger who enters the White House is counted by an automatic register. The instrument is held in the hand of one of the watchmen stationed at the door, and for every visitor he pushes the button. Congressmen, senators, members of the Cabinet and newspapermen are not counted.

The five civilized tribes of Indian Territory—the Creeks, the Chickasaws, the Choctaws, the Cherokees and the Seminoles—are no longer a savage race. They have an excellent system of schools, and are eager for education. Their costumes are those of the European, and the white man is his model.

Indians are making rapid strides in the paths of education. The Chickasaws have five colleges and the Creeks have ten. The Choctaws have no colleges, but have 160 common schools in which the higher branches are taught. The expenses of educating the Indians are borne by the federal government.

Among the Japanese the rikisha men, with muscles like steel bands, will whirl their seated passengers over the ground at the speed of a horse's trot, forty miles a day, for days together. Their diet consists of rice, vegetables and occasionally a little fish. The Lascars, on a similar diet, make the best seamen in the world.

The waterways of the Chinese empire are infested with pirates and banditti who swoop down upon inoffensive merchantmen, kill and plunder and hie themselves back into the mountain fastnesses. These gangs exist throughout China, and their practices are winked at by the local officials who profit by the crimes.

The popular notion that "fish is a brain food" is a mistake, for eminent physiologists tell us that fish no more than any other nitrogenous food contributes to brain growth and development. All nitrogenous foods, such as fish, meat, eggs and so on, repair the waste tissues of the body, but fish is of no more importance than the others.

The Germans are said to be making knives, pincushions, match boxes and other knicknacks out of their native woods, to be sent to England for sale after the Boer war is over. The finished articles are inscribed, "Made of wood grown at Ladysmith," "The Modder," "Belmont," "Graspan," "Kimberley," "Mafeking" and even "Pretoria."