

THE  
Ladies Pictorial Weekly.

FOR SALE BY NEWSDEALERS EVERYWHERE.

EDITED BY

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AND PUBLISHED BY

THE LADIES PICTORIAL CO.,

To whom all correspondence and remittances should be addressed.

BUILDING 192 King St. West, - - - Toronto, Canada

Terms for Canada and the United States, \$2.00 per year; \$1.25 for six months; 75cts. for three months; single copies, 5 cts.; \$1.00 extra per year for postage for other countries in the Postal Union.

Advertising, 10 cts. per agate line for each insertion, for display; reading notices 25 cts. per line.

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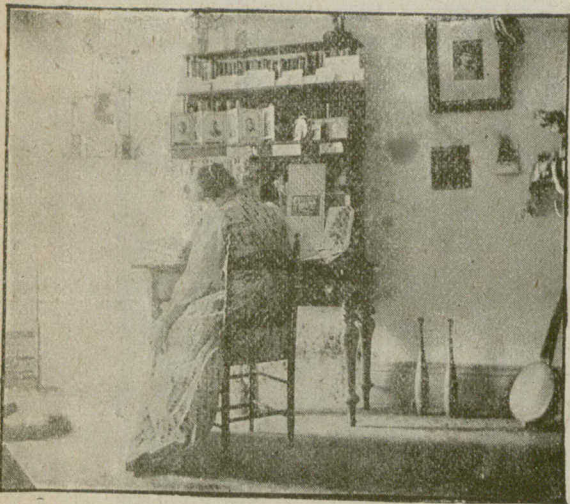
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"A newspaper office seems to attract every conceivable sort of person."  
—RUDYARD KIPLING.



It is a dismal proceeding at best to read through half-a-dozen comic papers. Yet that is what I did on a rainy day of this week. When I got through with the reading I was in as bad a state of protest as ever was an election or a bank note. How many "mother-in-law" jokes do you think I read? I counted, not out of curiosity, but in simple rage—only one hundred and thirty-two. I am aware that to make this article interesting I ought to run it up among the thousands, but this is a true story. There were four hundred and sixty-five jokes on darkies playing poker, thirty on broken-off engagements, seventy-five on the bichloride of gold cure, 672 on drunken men, 304 on Jews and pawn-shops, 188 on unhappy married people or divorces, 520 on waiting in restaurants, 800 on poets walking into editor's rooms with spring poems, 290 on pretty typewriters. Then there were some few hundred side-hits at society girls, dudes, precious infants, rustic innocence, malapropos remarks, Boston culture, would-be artists, barbers loquacity, sham beggars, crying babies, Irish bulls, house-cleaning, plumbers, goats, flannel shirts shrinking, women's new hats and tramps.

I dislike particularly the "mother-in-law" joke, and if one ever gets in this paper, it will be without my knowledge or consent. To begin with, I do not think the subject appropriate for joking. If there is one relationship more sacred and tender than another it is that of mother and daughter, and it is distressing to think of laughing at a joke which turns on—as such jokes invariably do—a straining of that relationship. I cannot believe that women laugh at this sort of thing. Either the sense of motherhood or of daughterhood is much too strong in a nice woman to permit of tearing at her heart-strings in this manner. No girl is going to see anything funny in a quarrel or a lack of affection between the man she is good enough to fling herself away on, and her own mother. No mother, certainly, can regard this sort of witticism with any degree of tenderness. The very suggestion of such a horrible state of affairs is unpleasant in the extreme.

What men think about it I don't know. They enjoy the jokes I suppose. I never pretend to understand men. They certainly see jokes where a woman never can—and does not want to. They are strange creatures. I suppose the comic papers are written for men. But couldn't someone start a funny paper for women, without a "mother-in-law" joke in it?

THE jokes on drunken men are not quite so bad. There is something funny in the conduct of a man the worse of liquor, no matter what other feelings have possession of your mind. If one

could forget the ludicrous object was a fellow-being and imagine him one of the lower animals the joke would be funnier. But it hurts one's pride to put him on a level with the rest of us. And then it is very different from seeing a drunken man in *propria persona*.

Most jokes have an element of pain in them and turn on some phase of human distress, whether it be degradation, poverty, troubles, personal injuries, rebuffs, fights or other calamities and the idea is, that we laugh at other people in trouble because we are, ourselves, free from it. Joking about measles or mumps when you have them is not to be tolerated. Likewise if your brother or father be a drunkard, you naturally fail to see anything excruciatingly funny in stories of other men as degraded. If your new flannel dress or skirt, as the case may be, has shrunk to a size for the Lilliputians, you are rather bored by jokes on that subject. But let the joke be on somebody else's troubles and you guffaw to your heart's content. It is a queer world.

"AND is it that you have seen the 'highlanders' parade," asked madame, as I fixed her in my easiest chair.

I answered in the affirmative. "I find it very dreadful" this sweetest-faced lady went on. "Oh! I see 'em in the park and I say to Henri, 'Drive away home quick, fast, and he say that he wish to see 'em and I have to stay. But oh, it is very bad, and she shook her head. I love madame with all my heart but I can never go back on anything Scotch." So I pointed out the beauty of their uniforms and wanted to know why she disliked our new regiment, the brave highlanders. She however gave me to understand, with gentle insistence, that she really could not enter into her reasons.

"Good gracious!" I said, is it the kilts you object to?

I had to explain what the kilts were.

"Ah no!" and her gentle gravity became almost dignity, "I do not object to anything they have on."

"I see" I said thoughtfully, and a long silence crept out of the pigeon-holes.

But madame was too valuable a *raconteur* to be allowed to remain silent and I soon got her talking again. I wish I could give her accent on paper, but it is too indefinitely foreign to be even suggested. Her English is good and with her singularly pure, clear voice, and faint, French accent, she is charming to listen to. Her sentences are carefully worked out and she takes pains to speak slowly with the result that one feels her words are studied and that one would like it a little better if she kept to the broken English so many of her compatriots use. I give her story as nearly as I can remember it.

"It was long ago and Marie left me for only one year. She went to visit a friend from the same convent where my Marie had been, yes, a school-friend and I did not see her for one whole year and then she come back very thin and pale, and when I ask her what is the matter, she just smile sad-like and say:

"Nothing at all."

But I know better and I just watch every day. By-and-bye she get a letter and there is a man's hand-writing on the envelope and I say to myself: My child have a lover, and she keeps a secret from me—her mother, and I feel very sad but she say nothing and I watch again. She is still sad and quiet and I think horrible things in my heart about the man—I know not who he is.

But one day he come and say to her: "Marie, why you not write me?" and she smile very sad and say to him, that I am her mother, and he bow very low to me and say: "Madame, I love your daughter. She promise to marry me, and when I write and ask when I may come to ask her mother for her, she never answer my letter." Then he stride very fierce about the room and I sit down shaking all over and feeling bad, very bad. Then Marie come to me and she say that "she love me only" and the man he say:

"What for you say, you love me?" and Marie she just hold her hands to her ears, and will not listen to him. I think she must be crazy and I speak hard to her. But she just walk out of the room and bye-and-bye the man go away and say he come back at night. Then Marie she tell me that there is another man too, and she do not know which she likes the best and she say that it is making her pale and thin. Then I am very angry with her, and I say that she must marry one that I, her mother, shall choose. But she cry and say she do not know what to do. When one of them, she say, is there she like the other best. But that night both the men came, one after the other, and I am distracted but Marie is cool. She say: "Perhaps I can tell better if they are both here at the same time." "But my child," and Madame rises from the chair, "it is late and I must go."

"Oh Madame!" I say, almost in tears, "you must tell me the rest." "Ah! no. It is very late. I have not time now," she said, as I help her on with her wraps.

"Oh! but Madame—" I was afraid to urge her. She expects such deference."

"Tell me, anyway, which one she married."

"She shook her head gently. 'It is too long a story. And the time,' I reluctantly assisted her in her departure. No entreaties had any effect upon her.

"Perhaps some other day," she said smiling as I saw her to her carriage and as she drove away I made one more effort. Then leaning out of the carriage Madame threw a kiss to me and I heard the words:

"Next week."

Madge Robertson

Written for the LADIES' PICTORIAL WEEKLY.

Our English Letter.

(From our own Correspondent.)

LONDON, May 10th, 1892.

I am just off to Scarborough and York, so you must not expect a very long letter this week. We are all wishing the Easter holidays had come a week or so earlier this year for, alas! all that fine, warm weather has departed and we seem to have returned to mid-winter—cold winds and incessant rain. Certainly the weather we have had lately was too good to last. Would you believe it (?) on some days the temperature was hotter than the average in July and August for the last two years. The sudden change in the weather seems very general; even the sunny south of France has had much rain, and the Queen and other royal visitors have not been able to enjoy their usual walks and drives. The Prince of Wales seems to have benefitted less than all the other members of his family by their stay at Cap Martin. He seems quite unable to get over his trouble, and although it is three months since his son's death the Prince feels it still as keenly as ever. It can, I think, hardly be wondered at that he continues to brood on his trouble. You see, now he is debarred from all society but that of his family circle, and is thrown completely on his own resources. From his earliest years of manhood he has been accustomed to a perpetual round of engagements of duty or pleasure; every hour of every day has been filled up, and he has had little time to rest, and still less to think. This terrible grief comes, and his life seems a blank—no engagements, no amusements, no society, nothing to distract his sad thoughts. Small wonder that he nurses his grief! The Duke and Duchess of Fife are travelling in Italy, and, strange as it may seem, the Duchess sees most, if not all, of the ancient cities for the first time. She is reported to be delighted with her tour, and to be looking very well and happy. Prince Alfred of Edinburgh is now convalescent, but I am sorry to hear he has some internal weakness and is never likely to be very robust. How delicate most of the Queen's grandsons seem to be. I read the other day that five out of seventeen have died. Princess Royal lost two sons, Princess Alice one, Princess Christian one and the Prince of Wales one. Of the twenty-two granddaughters only one, Princess Alice's little daughter, has died. Do you know the Queen really possesses a real, bona-fide old-fashioned birthday book?—not an autograph album—and it is one of the most gracious marks of Her Majesty's favor to anyone who has been presented to her to be asked to sign their name in this interesting book. What a delightful book it must be! All the names contained therein must be more or less famous in one way or another. Among the latest signatures are those of the Crimean veterans to whom Her Majesty gave an audience the other day at Hyeres. I am devoutly glad I am not a lady-in-waiting at the German court, for—just imagine it!—not only has the German Empress given up novel-reading herself, on religious grounds, but she has actually laid commands upon the women of her court to abstain from this delightful pastime also. How unlike our dear Queen! She is uncommonly fond of a good novel and likes the new ones to be read to her as soon as they come out. Talking about books reminds me of what a week I have spent among magazines and periodicals of all descriptions. A friend asked me for advice as to the best magazine to take in; so in duty bound I was obliged to look over—well, I really do not know how many; I was going to say hundreds. The name of the monthly and weekly magazines is really legion, and I think that I am not exaggerating when I say that every week sees the birth of at least one new one. I fear many of them are very short-lived, and it is a fact not to be wondered at, for although this is undoubtedly a reading age it is only the best and the cheapest which can succeed and become popular. We want so much for our money in this nineteenth century! Of course there is always a rush for the first numbers of anything new in the way of periodicals, and we hear that such and such one is going to be a grand success; but we fickle people find that quite the latest venture contains more news, or is more amusingly written. I heard of a new illustrated paper which has recently appeared, the first number of which cost the proprietors £30,000, and, alas, it is already reported to be a failure. I have come across some very delightful articles in many of the magazines; several which I am sure would interest you greatly. In *Black and White* there is now appearing a really clever thing, "The Great War of 1892"; it is wonderfully realistic, and I find it often hard to believe that it is only an imaginary war which is described. In *The Gentlewoman* there is a very extraordinary serial story, "The Fate of Fenella"; the tale itself is not much, but it is certainly a literary curiosity, each chapter being written by a different well-known author. I have been reading an article by Mrs. Lynn Linton, entitled "Is Modesty Decaying," or rather "The Decay of Modesty in Women." It is a very sweeping denunciation of the whole sex with regard to modesty. You know I am an ardent admirer of Mrs. Linton, her novels and essays, but I must confess I am somewhat disgusted at this article of hers. She is altogether too unjust to her sisters. I only wish I could have time to tell you some of her hard words; I hope you may have an opportunity of reading the article for yourself some day. I was quite rejoiced to find in another paper a very clever answer to Mrs. Linton, written by Mrs. Arthur Stannaed, the renowned authoress of "Bootles' Baby." She certainly takes up the cudgels in behalf of her sisters to some effect, and it is very amusing to read the two sides of the story. I have lately been to some splendid concerts and performances of sacred music. Every year it is becoming more and more the fashion in Lent to give these performances in the churches in London. Stainer's "Crucifixion" and Gounod's "Mors et Vita" are the most general, of course, and in some of the West End Churches they have been rendered splendidly with an orchestra, full choir and professional soloists. Every Sunday