

The Bachelor's Confession.

I live in a French flat. Of course there are objections to French flats. So there are to most things.

I cannot afford a hotel, and I detest a boarding house. A bachelor of 30 odd, who has been at the mercy of boarding house keepers all his days, can understand that.

So when I engaged a suite of rooms—third floor in a French flat edifice—and arranged my household goods therein, with a fine outlook over a green dot in front, and the glimmer of the Palisades far away in the rear, I considered myself quite well off.

What is my profession? I haven't any in particular. I am an artist and draw a little daily, in front of my easel. I contribute to the press, and write when the divine afflatus seizes me. I read law when I feel like it, and draw a regular income from a snug little property left me by an uncle in India.

Consequently I was able to decorate my quarters very prettily with Bagdad rugs, old China dragons, black and gold Japanese screens and pictures I had picked up at a bargain.

And when the fire was burning cheerfully on the hearth, that first rainy May evening, the student lamp shined softly on the red carved table, and the waiter of a neighboring restaurant had brought in my frugal dinner of a broiled bird, a mound of currant jelly, a slice of roast beef, etc., I consider myself pretty comfortable.

"Upon the whole," said I to myself, "I rather approve of French flats."

I rang the bell.

The janitor, a respectful decent sort of fellow, in a round jacket and carpet slippers, answered the summons.

"Janitor," said I, "who occupies the floor above?"

"Nobody, sir," the man answered.

"Last party moved out yesterday; new party moves in to-morrow."

"A large family?" said I rather dubiously.

"Bless your heart, sir," said the man, "no family at all. It is a single lady and is coming."

At this I congratulated myself more and more.

"I shall have a prospect of a little money, I think," I said, and I ate my dinner in a fine parlour.

The single lady moved in the morning. She must have moved in when I was selecting some new mill boards and color tubes for the summer sketches and going to make; for when I returned, fondly expecting to enter my kingdom of peace and serenity, everything was changed.

There was a banging and pounding overhead, a thumping and hammering—sound as if some middle-aged giant hob-nailed shoes, was enjoying herself vigorously.

I went for the janitor.

"Is the house coming down?" I asked in a rage.

"It's the new tenant movin' in, sir," said he.

"Does her furniture consist entirely of Herring's safes and square pianos?" I asked.

"There are two pianos, sir," said he.

"She's musical."

"The deuce she is!" replied I. "Two pianos! And does she play on both of them?"

"Don't know, sir, I'm sure," replied the man, with a distressed expression of countenance.

I endured the noise until midnight, and then I sent up the janitor's wife.

"The third floor's compliments to the fourth, and would like to know if this thing is going to go on all night."

Down came the woman again.

"Fourth floor's compliments to the third floor, and wishes to know if he expects people to be settled without a noise."

The next day the piano—only one however—commenced. I was elaborating a skeleton for a scientific essay, and it disturbed me seriously. I endured it as long as I possibly could, and then I had recourse to the janitor's wife.

"Third floor's compliments to the fourth floor, and will feel obliged if she will favor me with a little peace and quietness, long enough to do some necessary writing."

There was no reply, but the music ceased abruptly.

But that evening when I was beginning to solace myself with a little violin practice in the twilight, tap, tap, tap, came the janitor's wife at my door.

"Fourth floor's compliments to the third floor, and will feel obliged if he will favor her with a little peace and quietness long enough to write a letter."

How I hated that woman!

So we lived for a month, exchanging constant missiles of warfare. I could cheerfully have given up that French flat and gone back to boarding, only unluckily I had engaged it for a year. The fourth floor elocutionized, and had friends to select private readings, whose names were deeper than Hamlet's and more dangerous than that of Charlotte Corday. She was charitable, and had dances of heavy-booted girls there twice a week to sing hymns and learn to sew. A single lady, indeed. If she had been a

quadruple lady she could not have made more noise, or enjoyed the making of it more.

At the end of a month, however, an accident happened which turned the current of my whole life.

I went on a picnic. I don't often go to affairs of that kind; but this was an especially select affair, gotten up by my friend, Harold Webster.

I went, and there met Barbara Willis and fell straightway in love with her. She wasn't exactly too young, but neither am I—and to my taste a fall blown rose is sweeter than a bud, wherever you may find it growing. She was dark-eyed, with full, cherry lips, satin brown hair, and a complexion as fresh as roses and ivory. We talked—our ideas coincided exactly. It seemed as if our souls were two looking glasses to mirror each other's.

"Miss Willis," cried I, "why is it that we have never met before? I feel as if we were old, old friends."

As I spoke I gently pressed her hand, and she smiled such unutterable things. I went to my friend Webster, who was making up quadrilles on the upper deck. We were accompanied by an excellent brass band.

"Harold," said I, "I can never thank you enough for introducing me to that angel."

"Do you mean Barbara Willis?" said he.

"Well, I think she is rather a fine girl."

"We grew confidential as we sat together on the promenade deck and watched the moonlight ripple over the surface of the tides."

"A bachelor's life is but half a life," Miss Willis, said I.

"I can readily imagine that," she said softly.

"I live in a flat," confessed I.

"Do you?" said Barbara (the sweet old English name was just like her).

"Why how strange? So do I."

"Isn't it dreadful?"

"Horrid!" said she, closing her rosy lips as if she meant it.

"And there's a female dragon occupying the floor above me, and tormenting me out of my life."

"Well, if this isn't a remarkable coincidence," said Barbara. "There's a detestable old crab of a bachelor under me who takes all the pleasure out of my existence."

"Should two lives be thus blighted?" said I, emphatically.

"I—I don't think they should," said Barbara, enthusiastically, looking intently at the bouquet of pansies she held in hand.

It was past midnight when the boat landed. Harold Webster came up.

"I promised to see you home Miss Willis," said he, rubbing his hands briskly.

"You need not trouble yourself, Webster," said I. "I shall be most happy."

I called a hack; I helped the divine Barbara in, feeling more and more as if I were walking in cloudland.

"Where shall I drive to?" said the man.

"No. 69, Ravenal," said she, "fourth floor."

"What!" cried I. "Nor the Fernando flats?"

"Exactly," said she.

"Why, that's where I live."

"Are you on the third floor?" she cried out, breathless.

"Are you on the fourth?" I counter-questioned.

"But you are not a crab at all."

"Nor are you a dragon. On the contrary—"

But what matters it what we said? Things were altered at the very beginning. I took my violin upstairs the next day and helped my divine Barbara out with a sonata of Beethoven's. I suggested a new educational theory for the hob-nailed classes. I listened enchanted to her recitation of Tennyson's "Brook"; and at the quarter's end we were to be married—Barbara and I.

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Express.	Mixed.	Mixed.	Express.
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