

(For the Canadian Illustrated News.)  
**REVERIES OF A BACHELOR.**

It is a wild, cold blasty night in January. The "thaw" has been a success, and for a few days past we have enjoyed most mild and balmy weather. But the thermometer has fallen; the dark clouds, some hours ago, began to gather and hang ominously over the earth; the wind commenced, at first, to moan solemnly, but, as nightfall approached, it has burst out into a gale and sweeps invisibly about like the fabled genii of Eastern Romance; the snow begins to thicken the air, and is drifting about in gusts. A wild, old winter's night—one on which children love to gather close to the home fire-side, and cling tenderly to their mother's side—on which the poor realize that keen sense of danger, and apprehension of possible suffering—on which the selfish man gathers his skirts about him, and bolts the doors of his house and the avenues to his heart—on which the true Christian is softened by that earnest sympathy which more than anything illustrates whatever Godlike there is among men.

As usual, I am in my own quiet room. I have put down the blinds, drawn the curtains closely, piled in the cheerful coals, and am seated comfortably in my easy arm-chair. I hear the rude wind howling without, but I feel not its rigid blast; I listen to the gusts of snow hailing furiously against my windows, but it moves me not.

For fifteen long winters I have sat in this room. It has changed little all this time—far less, indeed, than its solitary occupant. He has quietly watched the thickening of these gray hairs, and the expanding of these insidious bald spots, and, at moments, is powerless to repress the vague apprehensions which follow the discovery of these evidences of increasing age. These moments of grim reflection will come, and 'gad, that is just the right kind of night for them! I have been persecuted by my thoughts all the evening, and, hang it, I am going to write them down. Perchance they may see the light, and give consolation for a moment to some other lonely bachelors any way. I have nothing better to do, and I am going to amuse myself by making a clean breast of it, just for my own satisfaction.

Let me see, when I was a respectable "mother's joy," and before I left for College, I was really immensely fond of "the girls," as we expressed it then. I was, in fact, distinguished by a weakness in this direction, and well do I remember now the joys, the hopes, the disappointments, the pleasures and chagrins that I could trace in those old days, to the relationship which I bore to various girls. Nearly all of them now are married, mothers, practical, matter-of-fact, trying to make money, and all this sort of thing. And then, at length, I went away to College. Gay old days those, replete with incidents, rich in adventures, teeming with romance. Even the reverses and petty sorrows of those days seem sacred in memory. They deepen into a richer roseate as life wears on, like the western clouds when sunset approaches. But those swift years, though always pleasant to think upon, and always recalling the sweetness of departed joys, with a tinge of the melancholy, as all pleasant memories wear, have no peculiar significance. Upon the face of the record appears no one grand isolated thing, which, like a haunting ghost, ever and anon rises up before you like a troubled dream, and which stares grimly at you though you shut your eyes ever so fast. Nothing like this. Some of the girls I knew so well then, and with whom many a pleasure was shared, have since died, and I only recall their memory with a gentle sigh, which, while full of sympathy, has not a grain of sorrow. Others are married, and all interest in them, has vanished as easily as the "snowflake on the river." All the survivors have given place to new found friends. They are only remembered in association with the days when their presence could give pleasure.

But who would have dreamed then that the "gay and dashing" Harry Ashbrook, the gayest waltzer, the foremost in summer picnics, the hero of moonlight walks, the pink of gallantry, that he, of all others, should now be a quiet, uncareful old bachelor, that he should be beyond the influence of woman's smiles and girlhood's innocent charms, while nearly all those who were then his contemporaries are respectable married men and the fathers of respectable families? Such is life and this is only the simple fact.

It is not uncommon to analyze the various classes of our people, and endeavour to ascertain where they come from. We thus may find that similar results are not unfrequently obtained from different causes. Thus in analyzing the inmates of a lunatic asylum, we find that while all are afflicted with a similar malady, it can be traced to vastly different causes. So with old bachelors, they all can assign separate and distinct reasons for their present condition. Among our catalogue of bachelors can be found those who have, by nature, the greatest fondness for woman's tender graces. Indeed, as a rule, they are not surly, crusty, selfish old dags; but rather those whose early experiences have been full of exciting love episodes. Ah me! How strangely and unconsciously do we all drift into our various states and conditions, only waking up some day to find where we are, like that unthinking boatman, who lays down the oar, forsakes the rudder, and basks unconsciously in the bottom of his boat! This is a sort of philosophical paragraph that does not properly belong to our musings.

I have been thinking over to-night the various steps by which my present position has been reached. I have put to myself the serious question: "How have I come to be a bachelor, while all the companions of early days are married and settled?" Unfortunately for the romance of this reverie, I have experienced no cruel shock, which has chilled my blood, frozen my heart, or plunged me into that strange and terrible state, where the sight of a woman is a source of anguish. Neither am I one of those heavenly mortals who carry about with them a sort of divine grief that they feel it a religious duty to nurse, and which they consider it treason to forget. Nothing of this kind at all. I am decidedly a commonplace, practical specimen of a bachelor. But the long train of circumstances leading to this result does come before me as I muse awhile on this winter evening. While I was dashing around among the gentle sex in early life, I never had any settled notions of life—never seriously contemplated matrimony. Romance and sentiment were a sublime joke; a mere passing whim; a necessary diversion. As I grew to manhood, and saw others about me of my own age marrying, one by one, I did bristle up a little, and resolved to make "some kind of an arrangement" in the matter. But, firstly, there seemed to be no particular opportunities presenting themselves. I had been accustomed to view all these little "affairs of the heart" as mere pleasanties; and I failed to discover any person that

could make anything more than a momentary impression. Once, and once only, it was otherwise. I did, at length, meet with a beautiful, earnest, pure-minded girl. She became everything to me. She reduced all my moonshiny notions of life to realities. I began to be in earnest. I grew to make every plan in life harmonize with an anticipated relationship with her and all my thoughts and hopes became centred in her. She returned my regard. We wasted many happy hours together, and formed our common plans. Then life seemed a sunshine indeed, and I set myself diligently to the real duties of life. I became practical, thought about houses and house-rent—about how much a year it would cost one to "live," and how to get it. This went on for awhile, and everything was as beautiful as a summer evening. But it did not last. It was all a dream. Clara was not false to me, but—well, she did link her destinies with somebody else; got tired of waiting for me, I suppose, and seized upon a golden opportunity that chanced to present itself. It was a legitimate case for a novelist's wail on "baseness," "infidelity," &c., &c., but, as a matter of real life, it was a mere everyday occurrence. It seemed to come about as naturally as possible. I felt a little sore about it for awhile; perhaps I may say that I repined some. I remember of feeling that I had lost something that could never be replaced; that a thousand hopes had been extinguished in a moment; that a multitude of bright castles had come sprawling to the ground in an instant; that a myriad of anticipated joys had been destroyed, and that life was a dreary, desolate blank. But these sad thoughts wore away as life wore on. Memory became more dimmed year by year, till now all this seems a mere play, like an evening at a theatre.

I made no further efforts. I betook myself to myself. I engaged this room, and made it my bachelor's quarters. I go to the club occasionally, but less and less every year. I grow more and more fond of being alone. This room is full of associations, and I draw myself up to the stove these cold nights, and when tired of reading I again light my pipe, and, I tell you, there are worse things than watching the blue smoke curling up gracefully before me. There is comfort in the weed. I have no one to bother me—no harassing cares—no vexatious complications—no disheartening inevitables. I am a good, quiet old fellow, and haven't an enemy on earth that I know of.

And so it must be to the end of the chapter; that is the one reflection that is unpleasant. I think, for a moment, of my early hopes, my young dreams. I see, in all of them, a pleasant, smiling face; a soft hand ever ready to soothe the troubled brow, to minister its gentle gifts when sorrow or affliction came; a sweet voice omnipotent to cheer; a pair of soft eyes all-powerful to charm; a little foot beside the grate, and two loving arms around my neck. *This now can never be.* And what is more maddening, if you allow yourself to dwell upon the idea, than lost opportunities and buried hopes? Ah, well! it is all over now. I won't think about it. There is many a poor fellow worse off than I am.

By the way, my fire is getting low. It's a terrible cold night; I must have some more coal. "James! James!"

"What is the matter with you, Joel?"

"Eh? Clara, eh? What's this—'tisn't morning, is it?"

"No, no, Joel. But you are awfully uneasy to-night. You have been tossing and tumbling about as if in a nightmare, and at last you commenced crying out so, that you nearly frightened me to death. Aren't you well?"

"O, by George, yes! as right as a book: and 'gad, Clara, I ain't sorry to wake up, either. I was having a terrible dream. I thought I was an old bachelor, and the night was cold and stormy. Queer, eh?—wasn't it?"

"I am afraid that meeting at the Freemason's has had something to do with it."

"Nonsense, child. Don't be absurd! 'Twas the wind, dear. Don't you hear it? It is blowing a gale."

And I was right. "'Twas the wind, and nothing more."

JOEL PHIPPS.

#### GOOD OMENS.

To come suddenly upon a couple of magpies, to pick up a pin lying with head towards you, to find—of course without seeking—a four-leaved clover, or a bit of old iron, is matter for rejoicing: if the iron take the shape of a rusty nail or an old horse-shoe the omen is so much the more fortunate. Absent minded and careless dressers are likely to be often in luck's way. To put on any garment wrong-side out, provided we are not neat enough to spoil the charm, is an infallible prognostic that something is about to happen which will profit the sloven greatly. Trouble will never come near folks whose eyebrows meet. Ladies with overmuch down, gentlemen with overmuch hair upon their arms and hands carry about them nature's own guarantee that they are born to be rich some day, as rich as those happy individuals whose front teeth are set wide apart. Steel belongings, such as keys and knives, get rusty by instinct, spite of all pains to keep them clean and bright, when some kind-hearted soul is laying up riches for their owner's benefit. To find a spider upon one's clothes indicates some money is coming to us. The appearance of a white speck upon a finger-nail warns the owner of the finger a gift is on its way; and the same pleasant notification is made by the itching of the palm of the right hand, but in that case it is best to make assurance doubly sure, and rub the said palm against wood, then "it is sure to be good." It is not pleasant to stumble upstairs, but there is some consolation for sore shins in knowing that a wedding will come off in the house ere twelve months have passed by, even if the stumbler has no hope of being a party concerned in the event. Should a spinster or a bachelor be inadvertently placed between a married pair at the dinner-table, he or she will taste the sweets of connubial bliss before the year is out. A maiden who has constant ill-luck at the card-table will play the game of life with greater success partnered with a good husband. Happy will be the bride the sun shines on; and if a hen cackles in her new home as she crosses its threshold, she will be a happy mother as well as a contented wife. The odd notion prevails in some parts of France that when two marriages take place at the same time the bride who first leaves the church will have a boy for her first child. Hail the first hearing of the cuckoo's voice with thankfulness if he salutes you upon your right hand—then his greeting is an assurance you will make your way in the world, and attain the highest object of your ambition; and begrudge not a sip of good liquor to the bux, curious, thirsty fly, dropping into your glass, but welcome the intruder as heartily, if not as poetically, as Oldys did—he brings good luck to the glass and the drinker too.

#### THE WAYS OF GENIUS.

Ben Jonson, though he was the son of a bricklayer, made himself a thoroughly good Latin and Greek scholar. He read the best Latin books, and the commentaries which illustrated them; he wrote two plays on subjects taken from Roman history. Very striking subjects they were. The hero of one was Catiline, who tried to overthrow the social order of the Republic; the hero of the other was Sejanus, who represents, by his grandeur and his fall, the very character and spirit of the Empire in the days of Tiberius. In dealing with these subjects, Ben Jonson had the help of two of the greatest Roman authors, both of them possessing remarkable powers of narration, one of them a man of earnest character, subtle insight, deep reflection. Though few men in his day understood these authors, and the government and circumstances of Rome, better than Jonson, though he was a skilful and experienced play-writer, most readers are glad when they have got Catiline and Sejanus fairly done with. They do not find that they have received any distinct impressions from them of Roman life; to learn what it was they must go to the authors whom he has copied. Shakespeare wrote three plays on Roman subjects,—*Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*. He knew very little of Latin, and the materials he had to work with were a tolerable translation of Livy's History, and a capital one of Plutarch's Lives. With no aid but these, and his knowledge of Warwickshire peasants, and London citizens, he has taught us more of Romans—he has made us more at home in their city, and at their firesides, than the best historians who lived upon the soil are able to do. Jonson studied their books; Shakespeare made friends of them. He did just the same with our old Chronicles. He read of King John, of Richard II., of John of Gaunt, of Harry of Lancaster, of Hotspur, and Owen Glendower, of the good Humphrey of Gloster and the dark Cardinal Beaufort, of Wolsey and of Catherine. He read of them, and they stood up before him, real armed men, or graceful sorrowing women. Instead of being dead letters they all became living persons; not appearing in solitary grandeur, but forming groups; not each with a fixed immovable nature, but acted upon and educated by all the circumstances of their times; not dwelling in an imaginary world, but warmed by the sun of Italy, or pinched by the chilly nights of Denmark—essentially men such as are to be found in all countries and in all ages, and therefore exhibiting all the varieties of temperament and constitution which belong to each age, and to each country.

#### News of the Week.

**THE DOMINION.**—The Wakefield Cave near Ottawa was visited by the Governor-General and Countess of Dufferin, Miss Campbell, of Montreal, Mr. Hamilton, A. D. C., Lieut. Ward, Mr. Moodie, late Secretary to Sir Hastings Doyle, and Dr. Grant. The party had a very pleasant trip, and during the exploration the ladies entered heartily into all the excitement and hardships of the occasion. The Dominion Board of Trade held its annual meeting at Ottawa this week.

**GREAT BRITAIN.**—The official list of the new Ministry is as follows: First Lord of the Treasury, Benjamin Disraeli; Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Northcote; First Lord of the Admiralty, George Ward Hunt; Secretary of State for the Home Department, Richard Assheton Cross; Secretary of State for the Foreign Department, Earl Derby; Secretary of State for the Colonial Department, Earl Carnarvon; Secretary of State for War, Gathorne Hardy; Secretary of State for India, Marquis of Salisbury; Lord High Chancellor, Lord Cairns; Lord Privy Seal, Earl Malmesbury; Lord President of the Council, Duke of Richmond; Postmaster-General, Lord John Manners. The Indian Government states that it has now sufficient grain to meet any demand from the distressed districts. The *Pall Mall Gazette* says the British forces took possession of Coomassie on the 29th January, and will commence their return march on the 2nd February. Dr. Beke, the great English Traveller, reports that he has found the true Mount Sinai, which is at an altitude of 5,000 feet above the level of the sea. Dr. Isaac Butt, Member for Limerick to the new Parliament, in addressing a meeting of the Home Rule Association at Dublin, said there would be 83 supporters of the movement in the Parliament, and expressed his opinion that Disraeli's government would not last beyond three sessions. Private advices from London confirm the statement that three regiments of British troops are under orders for Canada. The *Times* says that the country must not be surprised to see Mr. Gladstone decline the guidance of his party, and retire from public life. The election returns being now completed, the House of Commons stands as follows: Conservatives, 348; Liberals and Home Rulers, 302.—Rev. Mr. Moffat, English Missionary to South Africa, doubts the correctness of the reports concerning Dr. Livingstone's death. The Foreign Office likewise entertains some doubt.

**UNITED STATES.**—A reciprocity treaty is about to be arranged between the Sandwich Islands and the United States. Forged Western Union Telegraph Bonds to the extent of \$100,000 have been placed on the London market. A petition, signed by over 350 of the largest steel consumers in the United States, has been forwarded to Congress, the object of which is a reduced and specific duty on steel. A Pittsburgh despatch says producers and refiners have formed a ring to raise the price of petroleum. A Brooklyn jury has awarded a boy \$2,000 damages for injuries by a horse-car through the driver's negligence. Three thousand women of New York city have offered their services to the conductors of the Union Temperance Prayer Meeting against the liquor traffic. The leading manufacturers of Baltimore have memorialized the Secretary of the Treasury, protesting against the eight hour law which he has laid before the House.

**FRANCE.**—The Duc de Broglie has issued an order to Prefects to watch citizens who leave for Chislehurst to do homage to the Prince Imperial on his attaining his majority.

**RUSSIA.**—At a dinner at St. Petersburg, given by the Czar to his Royal guests, he said the Queen of England, the Emperors of Germany and Austria, and himself would preserve the peace of the world.

**CUBA.**—Despatches from the interior of the island say that many Cubans have left the towns and cities to join the patriot ranks rather than submit to the Captain-General's recent proclamation. Advice from Havana states that a battle was fought between General Bosconow and the insurgents under Lucia, near Naranjo. The engagement lasted seven hours, and resulted in the defeat of the insurgents. Reports from Havana give the insurgents a victory over a Spanish column of 1,200 men, their loss in killed and wounded being about 600.

**JAPAN.**—Political disturbances are imminent in Japan, and civil war is said to be a likely occurrence.

**SPAIN.**—General Moriones, fudging the Carlist forces round Bilbao stronger than he anticipated, has retired, and Bilbao has sent a deputation to the besiegers to negotiate for a capitulation.