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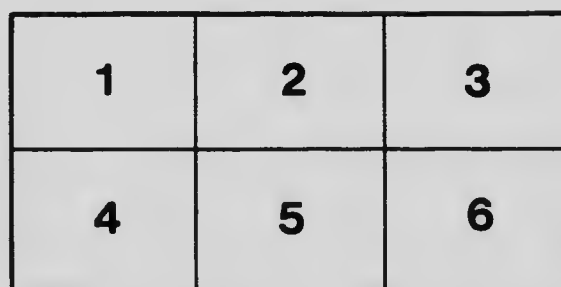
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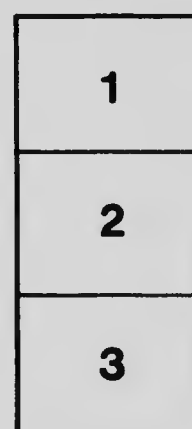
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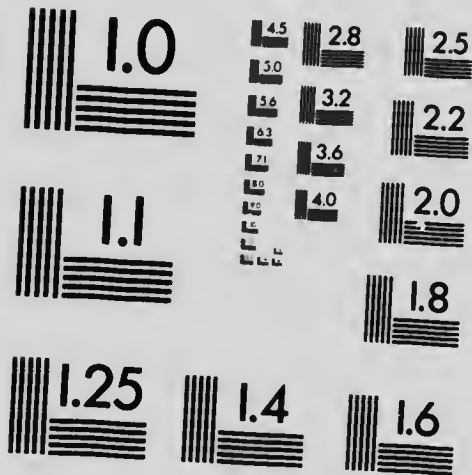
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BACHELORS





BACHELORS



*"The Bachelor most joyfully
In pleasant plight doth pass his daies,
Good-fellowship and companie
He doth maintain and keep alwaies."*

EVANS'S Old Ballads.

THERE is no character in the comedy of human life that is more difficult to play well than that of an old Bachelor. When a single gentleman, therefore, arrives at that critical period when he begins to consider it an impertinent question to be asked his age, I would advise him to look well to his ways. This period, it is true, is much later with some

BACHELORS

men than with others ; I have witnessed more than once the meeting of two wrinkled old lads of this kind, who had not seen each other for several years, and have been amused by the amicable exchange of compliments on each other's appearance that takes place on such occasions. There is always one invariable observation, "Why, bless my soul ! you look younger than when I last saw you !" Whenever a man's friends begin to compliment him about looking young, he may be sure that they think he is growing old.

I am led to make these remarks by the conduct of Master Simon and the general, who have become great cronies. As the former is the youngest by many years, he is regarded as quite a youthful gallant by the general, who moreover looks upon him as a man of great wit and prodigious acquirements. Master Simon is a family beau, and considered rather a young fellow by all the elderly ladies of the connection, for an old bachelor, in an old family connection,

BACHELORS

is something like an actor in a regular dramatic corps, who seems "to flourish in immortal youth," and will continue to play the Romeos and Rangers for half a century together.

Master Simon, too, is a little of the chameleon, and takes a different hue with every different companion: he is very attentive and officious, and somewhat sentimental, with Lady Lillycraft; copies out little namby-pamby ditties and love-songs for her, and draws quivers and doves and darts and Cupids to be worked in the corners of her pocket handkerchiefs. He indulges, however, in very considerable latitude with the other married ladies of the family, and has many sly pleasantries to whisper to them, that provoke an equivocal laugh and tap of the fan. But when he gets



BACHELORS

among young company, he is apt to put on the mad wag, and to talk in a very bachelor-like strain about the sex.

In this he has been encouraged by the example of the general, whom he looks up to as a man who has seen the world. The general, in fact, tells shocking stories after dinner, when the ladies have retired, which he gives as some of the choice things that are served up at the Mullagatawny Club, a knot of boon companions in London.

I saw him and Master Simon, an evening or two since, conversing with a buxom milk-maid in a meadow ; and from their elbowing each other now and then, and the general's shaking his shoulders, blowing up his cheeks, and breaking out into a short fit of irrepressible laughter, I had no doubt they were playing the mischief with the girl.

As I looked at them through a hedge, I could not but think they would have made a tolerable group for a modern picture of Susannah and



BACHELORS

the two elders. It is true, the girl seemed in no wise alarmed at the force of the enemy ; and I question, had either of them been alone,



whether she would not have been more than they would have ventured to encounter. Such veteran roisters are daring wags when together, and will put any female to the blush with their jokes ; but they are as quiet as lambs

BACHELORS

when they fall singly into the clutches of a fine woman.

In spite of the general's years, he evidently is a little vain of his person, and ambitious of conquests. I have observed him on Sunday in church eyeing the country girls most suspiciously, and have seen him leer upon them with a downright amorous look even when he has been gallanting Lady Lillycraft with great ceremony through the churchyard. The general, in fact, is a veteran in the service of Cupid rather than of Mars, having signalled himself in all the garrison towns and country quarters, and seen service in every ballroom of England. Not a celebrated beauty but he has laid siege to; and if his word may be taken in a matter wherein no man is apt to be over-veracious, it is incredible what success he has had with the fair. At present he is like a worn-out warrior, retired from service, but who still cocks his beaver with a military air, and talks stoutly of fighting

BACHELORS

whenever he comes within the smell of gunpowder.

I have heard him speak his mind very freely



over his bottle about the folly of the captain in taking a wife, as he thinks a young soldier should care for nothing but his "bottle and kind landlady." But, in fact, he says the service on the Continent has had a sad effect upon the young men: they have been ruined by light wines and French quadrilles. "They've nothing," he says, "of the spirit of the old service. There are none of your six-bottle men left, that were the souls of a mess dinner."

BACHELORS

As to a bachelor, the general affirms that he is a free and easy man, with no baggage to take care of but his portmanteau: but, as Major Pendergast says, a married man, with his wife hanging on his arm, always puts him in mind of a chamber candlestick with its extinguisher hitched to it. I should not mind all this if it were merely confined to the general; but I fear he will be the ruin of my friend Master Simon, who already begins to echo his heresies, and to talk in the style of a gentleman that has seen life and lived upon the town. Indeed, the general seems to have taken Master Simon in hand, and talks of showing him the lions when he comes to town, and of introducing him to a knot of choice spirits at the Mullagatawny Club; which, I understand, is composed of old nabobs, officers in the Company's employ, and other "men of Ind," that have seen service in the East, and returned home burnt out with curry and touched with the liver complaint. They have their regular

BACHELORS

club, where they eat mullagatawny soup, smoke the hookah, talk about Tippoo Saib, Seringapatam and tiger-hunting, and are tediously agreeable in each other's company.



A BACHELOR'S



CONFESSIONS

A BACHELOR'S CONFESSIONS

"I'll live a private, pensive, single life."

The Collier of Croydon.

I WAS sitting in my room, a morning or two since, reading, when some one tapped at the door, and Master Simon entered. He had an usually fresh appearance; he had put on a bright green riding-coat, with a bunch of violets in the button-hole, and had the air of an old bachelor trying to rejuvenate himself. He had not, however, his usual briskness and vivacity, but loitered about the room with somewhat of absence of manner, humming the old song—"Go, lovely rose, tell her that wastes her time and me"; and then, leaning against the window, and looking upon the

A BACHELOR'S CONFESSIONS

landscape, he uttered a very audible sigh. As I had not been accustomed to see Master Simon in a pensive mood, I thought there might be some vexation preying on his mind, and I endeavoured to introduce a cheerful strain of conversation ; but he was not in the vein to follow it up, and proposed that we should take a walk.

It was a beautiful morning, of that soft vernal temperature that seems to thaw all the frost out of one's blood, and to set all nature in a ferment. The very fishes felt its influence : the cautious trout ventured out of his dark hole to seek his mate, the roach and the dace rose up to the surface of the brook to bask in the sunshine, and the amorous frog piped from among the rushes. If ever an oyster can really fall in love, as has been said or sung, it must be on such a morning.

The weather certainly had its effect, even upon Master Simon, for he seemed obstinately bent upon the pensive mood. Instead of

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A BACHELOR'S CONFESSIONS

stepping briskly along, smacking his dog-whip, whistling quaint ditties, or telling sporting anecdotes, he leaned on my arm, and talked about the approaching nuptials; from whence he made several digressions upon the character of womankind, touched a little upon the tender passion, and made sundry very excellent though rather trite observations upon disappointments in love. It was evident that he had something on his mind which he wished to impart, but felt awkward in approaching it. I was curious to see to what this strain would lead, but I was determined not to assist him. Indeed, I mischievously pretended to turn the conversation, and talked of his usual topics—dogs, horses, and hunting; but he was very brief in his replies, and invariably got back, by hook or by crook, into the sentimental vein.

At length we came to a clump of trees that overhung a whispering brook, with a rustic bench at their feet. The trees were grievously

A BACHELOR'S CONFESSIONS

scored with letters and devices, which had grown out of all shape and size by the growth of the bark ; and it appeared that this grove had served as a kind of register of the family loves from time immemorial. Here Master Simon made a pause, pulled up a tuft of flowers, threw them one by one into the water, and at length, turning somewhat abruptly upon me, asked me if I had ever been in love. I confess the question startled me a little, as I am not over-fond of making confessions of my amorous follies, and above all should never dream of choosing my friend Master Simon for a confidant. He did not wait, however, for a reply ; the inquiry was merely a prelude to a confession on his own part, and after several circumlocutions and whimsical preambles, he fairly disburdened himself of a very tolerable story of his having been crossed in love.

The reader will, very probably, suppose that it related to the gay widow who jilted

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A BACHELOR'S CONFESSIONS

him not long since at Doncaster races. No such thing. It was about a sentimental passion that he once had for a most beautiful young lady, who wrote poetry and played on the harp. He used to serenade her; and indeed he described several tender and gallant scenes, in which he was evidently picturing himself in his mind's eye as some elegant hero of romance, though, unfortunately for the tale, I only saw him as he stood before me, a dapper little old bachelor, with a face like an apple that has dried with the bloom on it.

What were the particulars of this tender tale I have already forgotten; indeed I listened to it with a heart like a very pebble stone, having hard work to repress a smile while Master Simon was putting on the amorous swain, uttering every now and then a sigh, and endeavouring to look sentimental and melancholy.

All that I recollect is, that the lady, according to his account, was certainly a little touched;

A BACHELOR'S CONFESSIONS

for she used to accept all the music that he copied for her harp, and all the patterns that he drew for her dresses : and he began to flatter himself, after a long course of delicate attentions, that he was gradually fanning up a gentle flame in her heart, when she suddenly accepted the hand of a rich, boisterous, fox-hunting baronet, without either music or sentiment, who carried her by storm after a fortnight's courtship.

Master Simon could not help concluding by some observation about "modest merit," and the power of gold over the sex. As a remembrance of his passion, he pointed out a heart carved on the bark of one of the trees, but which, in the process of time, had grown out into a large excrescence ; and he showed me a lock of her hair, which he wore in a true lover's knot in a large gold brooch.

I have seldom met with an old bachelor that had not, at some time or other, his nonsensical moment, when he would become tender



A BACHELOR'S CONFESSIONS

and sentimental, talk about the concerns of the heart, and have some confession of a delicate nature to make. Almost every man



has some little trait of romance in his life, which he looks back to with fondness, and about which he is apt to grow garrulous occasionally. He recollects himself as he was at the time, young and gamesome, and forgets that his hearers have no other idea of the hero of the tale but such as he may appear at the

A BACHELOR'S CONFESSIONS

time of telling it—peradventure a withered, whimsical, spindle-shanked old gentleman. With married men, it is true, this is not so frequently the case ; their amorous romance is apt to decline after marriage—why, I cannot for the life of me imagine—but with a bachelor, though it may slumber, it never dies. It is always liable to break out again in transient flashes, and never so much as on a spring morning in the country ; or on a winter evening when seated in his solitary chamber, stirring up the fire and talking of matrimony.

The moment that Master Simon had gone through his confession, and, to use the common phrase, “had made a clean breast of it,” he became quite himself again. He had settled the point which had been worrying his mind, and doubtless considered himself established as a man of sentiment in my opinion. Before we had finished our morning’s stroll, he was singing as blithe as a grasshopper, whistling to his dogs, and telling droll stories ; and I

A BACHELOR'S CONFESSIONS

recollect that he was particularly facetious that day at dinner on the subject of matrimony, and uttered several excellent jokes, not to be found in Joe Miller, that made the bride-elect blush and look down, but set all the old gentlemen at the table in a roar, and absolutely brought tears into the general's eyes.



