

**A
BACHELOR MAID**

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A Bachelor Maid by Mrs. Burton Harrison & Irving R. Wiles

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MRS. BURTON HARRISON & IRVING R. WILES

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“IT NEEDED ONLY THIS!” SHE CRIED.” (SEE PAGE 118.)

A BACHELOR MAID

BY MRS. BURTON HARRISON

AUTHOR OF "CROW'S NEST AND BELHAVEN TALES," "SWEET BELLS
OUT OF TUNE," ETC.



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

IRVING R. WILES



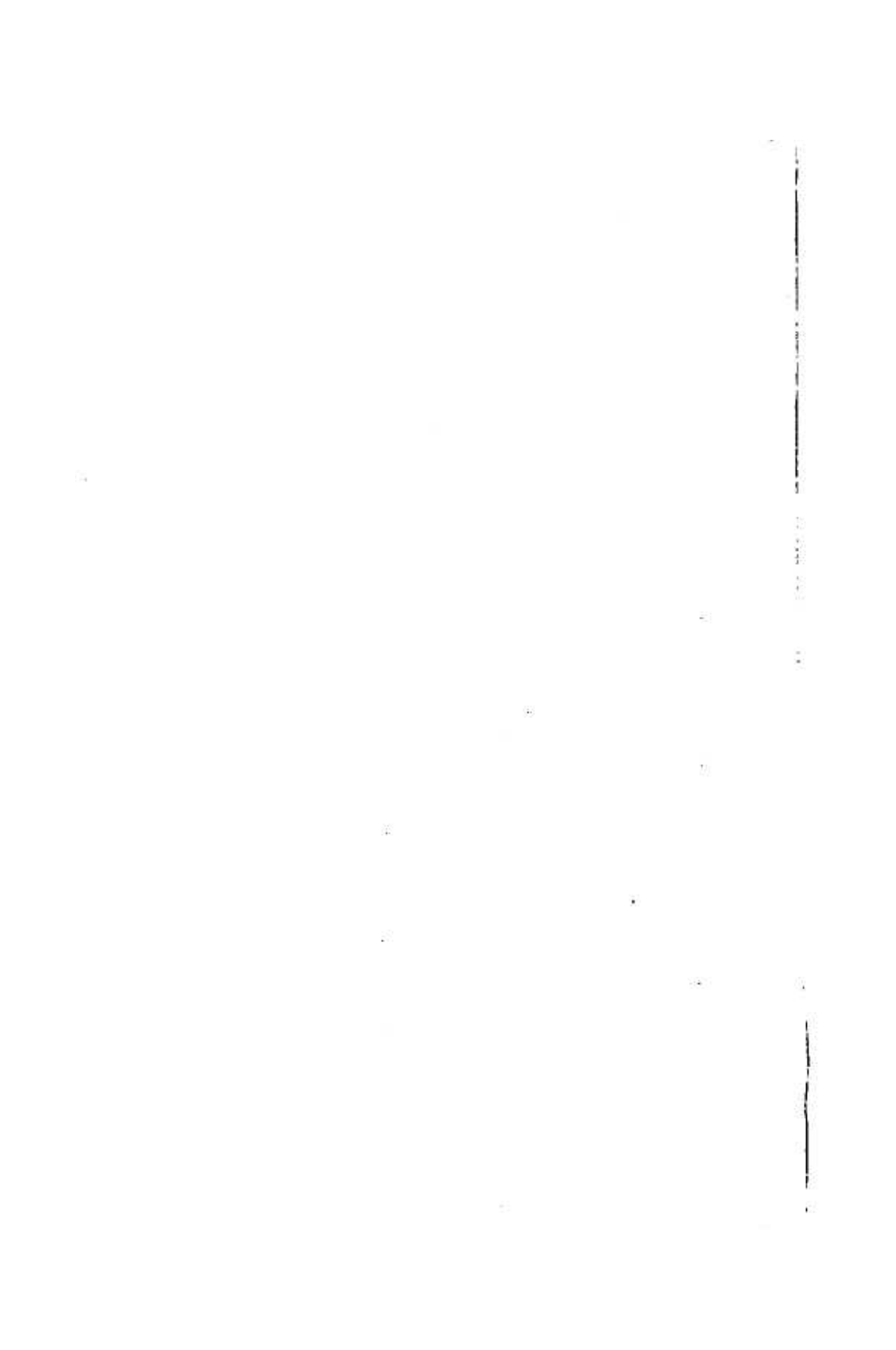
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A BACHELOR MAID

I



R. JUSTICE IRVING was in the act of putting on his overcoat to leave the Antediluvian Club. He was feeling reasonably cheerful, for he had beaten his favorite adversary, Bob Crouch, at billiards; so cheerful, indeed, that he made a mental note of a fleeting resolve to give Crouch, to console him, the next appointment he should have of a commissioner in lunacy.

It was, therefore, a smiling countenance his honor turned upon a young man already equipped for the street, who came to offer him a hand with his coat.

"Ha, Gordon! That you? Have n't seen you before this evening."

"No; I have just come in, hoping to catch you — and to walk home with you, if I may."

"Glad of your company, my dear boy," the judge said, as they emerged under the sparkling heaven of a mild winter's night in New York. "Wanted to speak to you about the sale of Romaine's books. What the deuce he means by selling them, I can't make out. Twenty good years of a man's life put into a collection that can't be beat for choiceness, and here

they are to be scattered for a freak. You must manage to be there, my dear lad; there are one or two tidbits my mouth has been watering for this age. You must appear for me, as usual, and mind you secure them, if I am to die in peace. And I've got a copy of the new Prayer-Book, édition de luxe, to show you, with a story attached to it as good, almost, as my luck in getting it half price. Did n't see you at the Grolier last night, by the way. Were you and Marion quarreling, as usual, at our house? Can't think where that daughter of mine gets her way of flying off the handle about little things not quite to her taste."

"She has flown off the handle for good and all, so far as I am concerned," said the young lawyer. "She has broken our engagement."

"Broken—your—oh—good heaven, Gordon, you are thirty years old—you are not taken in by stuff like that? Broken—the girl's mad; I always said so; that woman's college I was fool enough to send her to—to 'finish her education,' forsooth!—has put more silly rot into her head than it ever did ideas. Ever since she quitted it, four years ago, she has gone on following one fad after the other, till I'm thankful she has n't brought me to be an open laughing-stock before the town. And what this means, I don't believe anybody knows. She took you of her own free will; you've been engaged a year; and I had every hope of seeing her married, and settled, and out of mischief, in the spring—and—" here his honor emitted a naughty word, and struck his stick upon the pavement so fiercely that a policeman, acciden-

tally in his place upon the block, looked around with languid interest to see what was "up"—"she *shall* marry you in the spring, or I'll know the reason why."

"Marion would not be the prize I have thought her," said the young man, modestly, "if she could be forced into marrying against her will."

"What's her will! What does a girl know about what she wants, and what she does n't want?" pursued the irate father. "If there's anything on God's earth troublesome to deal with at the breakfast-table, or on the witness-stand, it's a woman. Troublesome! Exasperating! *Devilish!* If ever I lost my temper, it would be with the whimwhams miscalled woman's ideas. This age is going to pot with 'em. The creatures write (and, what's worse, print!), and howl and shriek on platforms, and struggle for equality with us in a perfectly diagnsting way. It's some one of that gang that's got hold of Marion, you may depend; that's persuaded her she has a mission above matrimony. If that were the case, and I had my way, I'd like to sentence the offender to be ducked as a common scold."

Gordon had foreseen the effect of his communication. He waited quietly, adjusting his long strides to the somewhat shorter and heavier ones of his senior, until the first access of anger had talked itself out, and then took up the tale in the same even, self-controlled voice in which he had begun it.

"I don't suppose it's worth while for me to tell you how long I've wanted Marion. She is five-and-twenty now; I took my love for her into the law-school with me, and have never wavered in it since."