

Rowland Helen

A Guide to Men: Being Encore Reflections of a Bachelor Girl



Helen Rowland

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FOREWORD

A SMALL phial, I doubt not, could contain the attar of the epigrammatic literature of all time. Few of the perfumes of this diminutive form of wit and satire have survived. Pretty and scented vaporings, most of the thousands and thousands of them, that have died on the air of the foibles of their day.

Yet how the pungent ones can persist! The racy old odors, which are as new as *now*, that still hover about the political and amorous quips of the Greeks. The nose-crinkling ones of the French, more vinegar-acrid than perfumed, although a seventeenth-century proverb calls France "a monarchy tempered by epigrams." The didactic Teutonic ones, sharply corrosive.

The greatest evaporative of course of this form of *bon mot* is mere cleverness. Wit is the attar which endures. The wit of Pope and Catullus, Landor, Voltaire, Rousseau and Wilde.

That is what Rapin must have had in mind when he said that a man ought to be content if he succeeded in writing one really good epigram.

Helen Rowland stands pleasantly impeached for writing many. She has a whizz to her swiftly cynical arrow that entitles her to a place in the tournament.

She is not merely anagrammatical, scorns the couplet for the mere sake of the couplet, and has little time for the smiting word at any price.

In the entire history of epigrammatic expression there are few if any whose fame rests solely upon the brittle structure of the *bon mot*. Martial, about whose brilliant brevities can scarcely be said to hover the odor of sanctity, is, I suppose, remembered solely as a wielder of the barbed word.

Miss Rowland is balanced skilfully upon that same slender trapeze, doing a very deft bow-and-arrow act, her archery of a high order.

She wields a wicked bow, a kindly bow, a swift, a sure, a ductile bow.

Matrimony is her favorite target (so was it Bombo's and Herrick's and even political Parnell had his shot at it) and her little winged arrows are often biting pointed with philosophy, satire, wit and sometimes just a touch of good old home-brew American hokum.

For this wise woman with the high-spirited bow behind her arrow, these little pages speak eloquently.

FANNIE HURST.

OVERTURE

Would you your sweetheart's secret seek to spell?
There are so many little ways to tell!
A hair, perhaps, shall prove him false or true —
A single hair upon his coat lapel!

PRELUDE

THE sweetest part of a kiss is the moment just before taking.

Love is misery – sweetened with imagination, salted with tears, spiced with doubt, flavored with novelty, and swallowed with your eyes shut.

Marriage is the miracle that transforms a kiss from a pleasure into a duty, and a lie from a luxury into a necessity.

A husband is what is left of a lover, after the nerve has been extracted.

A man's heart is like a barber shop in which the cry is always, "NEXT!"

The discovery of rice-powder on his coat-lapel makes a college-boy swagger, a bachelor blush, and a married man tremble.

It takes one woman twenty years to make a man of her son – and another woman twenty minutes to make a fool of him.

By the time a man has discovered that he is in love with a woman, she is usually so fagged out waiting for the phenomenon, that she is ready to topple right over into his arms from sheer exhaustion.

A man always asks for "just one kiss" – because he knows that, if he can get that, the rest will come without asking.

Somehow, the moment a man has surrendered the key of his heart to a woman, he begins to think about changing the lock.

There are only two ages, at which a man faces the altar without a shudder; at twenty when he doesn't know what's happening to him – and at eighty when he doesn't care.

THE REFRAIN

THERE'S so much saint in the worst of them,
And so much devil in the best of them,
That a woman who's married to one of them,
Has nothing to learn of the rest of them.

**SOMEHOW, JUST AT THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MOMENT
WHEN A BACHELOR FANCIES THAT HE IS GOING
TO DIE FOR LOVE OF A WOMAN, ANOTHER WOMAN
ALWAYS COMES ALONG AND INTERRUPTS HIM**

BACHELORS

THE modern bachelor is like a blotting pad; he can soak up all the sentiment and flattery a woman has to offer him, without ever spilling a drop.

A confirmed bachelor is so sure of his ability to dodge, that he is willing to amuse every pretty girl he meets, by handing her a rope and daring her to catch him.

A bachelor is a large body of egotism, completely surrounded by caution and fortified at all points by suspicion. His chief products are wild oats and cynicism; his chief industry is dodging matrimony; his undeviating policy "Protection!" and his watch-word, "Give me liberty or give me death!"

The average bachelor is so afraid of falling into matrimony, nowadays, that he sprinkles the path of love with ashes instead of with roses.

The care with which a bachelor chaperones himself would inspire even the duenna of a fashionable boarding school with envy.

A bachelor's idea of "safety first" consists in getting tangled up with a lot of women in order to avoid getting tied up to one.

He is an altruist who refrains from devoting himself to one woman in order that he may scatter sweetness and light amongst the multitude.

There is nothing quite so intriguing to a bachelor as flirting with the "*idea of marriage*" – with his fingers crossed. He just loves to "consider marrying" in the abstract and to go about pitying himself for being so "lonely."

There are three kinds of bachelors: the kind that must be driven into matrimony with a whip; the kind that must be coaxed with sugar; and the kind that must be blindfolded and backed into the shafts.

If you want to be chosen to brighten a bachelor's life, first make it dark and dreary; so long as women are willing to make his existence one long sweet song, naturally he isn't anxious to exchange it for a lullaby.

When a man actually asks a girl to marry him in these days of bachelor comforts and the deification of single-blessedness, she has a revelation of human unselfishness that stands as the eighth wonder of the world.

That tired expression on a bachelor's face is not so often the result of brain-fag from an overworked mind as of heart-fag from overworking the emotions.

Lovers look at life through rose-colored curtains; old bachelors see it through a fog.

Somehow, a bachelor never quite gets over the idea that he is a thing of beauty and a boy forever!

A bachelor fancies that it is his wonderful sixty-horse will-power that keeps him from marrying, whereas it is nothing but his little one-horse *won't-power*.

One consolation in marrying a bachelor over forty is that he has fought so long and so hard to escape the hook that there is no more fight left in him.

Never give up hope as long as a bachelor declares definitely, "No woman can *get* me!" Wait until he is so sure of his immunity that he sighs regretfully, "No woman will *have* me!"

The "vicious circle" in a bachelor's opinion, is the platinum one on a woman's third finger.

A Bachelor of Arts is one who makes love to a lot of women, and yet has the art to remain a bachelor.

FIRST INTERLUDE

IN the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns – and turns – and turns!

There are lots of "sure cures" for love, but the quickest and surest is —*another love*.

If there were only two women and one man in the world, the man would marry the brunette and then spend the rest of his life peeping over her shoulder and trying to flirt with the blonde.

A woman always embalms the corpse of a dead love; a man wisely cremates it, and plants a new love in the ashes.

A fool and her money are soon courted.

A woman's pity for a man who loves her against her will may be akin to love; but a man's pity for a woman who loves him without his permission is a twin brother to boredom.

Marriage is the miracle which affords a woman a chance to gratify her vanity, pacify her family, mortify her rivals, and electrify her friends, all at the same time. Marriage is sweet!

Love is what incites the caveman to drag a woman around by the hair and makes the civilized man permit a woman to drag *him* around by the nose.

The heart of a woman is a secret sanctuary where she is constantly burning incense and candles before a succession of idols of clay.

Nowadays, a man's faith in women and heaven seems to disappear with his milk-teeth and to reappear again with his false teeth.

To most men "repentance" is merely the interval between the headache and the next temptation.

Most bachelors regard the "flower of love" as a species of poison ivy.

Even Satan could find a woman to call him "Dearie," if he would simply tell her that all he needed was "a beautiful woman's uplifting influence."

A man may be guilty of stealing a girl's heart, but he always feels hurt and indignant if she refuses to take it back again after he has finished with it.

Woman's love – a mirror in which a man beholds himself glorified, magnified and deified.

Always try to be the "guiding star" of a man's life, but never make the mistake of fancying that you are his whole planetary system.

A woman must keep her conscience, her complexion and her reputation snow-white. But a man is satisfied if he can just manage to keep his so that they comply with the pure food laws.

Art is inspiring, but you can't run your fingers through its hair; a career is absorbing, but you can't tie ribbons on the curls of your brain-children; work is ennobling, but, alas, it hasn't got a shoulder to cry on!

When a girl refuses to kiss a man he is never disconcerted; he is merely astonished that she could be so blind to her own feelings.

A summer resort is a place where a girl spends half her time in making herself alluring – and the other half in yearning for something to "lure."

When a girl marries a man she is sadly aware that all his old sweethearts are wondering *how* she did it, and that all her old sweethearts are wondering *why*.

Marriage will never be safe until we stop making it an "ideal" and begin trying to make it a square deal.

Just before marriage a man's coat lapel acquires that grayish look which comes from the constant contact with face powder, but it's wonderful how soon it brightens up and gets back its natural color after the wedding.

Love is like appendicitis; you never know when nor how it is going to strike you – the only difference being that, after one attack of appendicitis, your curiosity is perfectly satisfied.

No matter how many men have tried to flirt with her, a girl will step cheerfully up to the altar in the firm belief that she has found the one perfect human being in trousers who will never look at another woman.

After marriage, a woman's sight becomes so keen that she can see right through her husband without looking at him, and a man's so dull that he can look right through his wife without seeing her.

A man recuperates so much more quickly from his remorse than a woman does from her indignation that by the time she has forgiven him he is tired of being good and ready to sin again.

Before marriage, a man will go home and lie awake all night thinking about something you said; after marriage, he'll go to sleep before you finish saying it.

A man can never understand how a woman gets so much joy out of leading him all the way to the threshold of love and then sweetly closing the door in his face.

Solitaire – the married woman's game.

A man's greatest conquest is self-conquest; his greatest possession, self-possession; and his greatest love – Oh, well, you fill in the rest.

Why does a man take it for granted that a girl who flirts with him wants him to kiss her – when, nine times out of ten, she only wants him to *want* to kiss her?

Plunging into a hasty marriage in order to escape from a foolish entanglement is like rushing under a trolley car in order to escape from a taxicab.

Nowadays a girl's favorite way of committing suicide for love of a man, is to marry him and worry herself to death over him.

A good wife is always her husband's "guide, philosopher and friend"; also his guardian, digestion, conscience, time-table and valet.

A man never knows how to say goodbye; a woman never knows *when* to say it.

A woman's greatest "right" is the right husband.

A woman might forgive a man for all his sins; it's that stained-glass attitude with which he decides to "give them up" when he is tired of them that exasperates her so.

**A MAN DOESN'T WANT A WIFE WHO PLACES HIM ON A PEDESTAL
OR KEEPS HIM ON A FOOTSTOOL, BUT ONE WHO WILL TAKE
HIM AS A MERE MAN – AND LET HIM GO ON BEING "MERE"**

TRUE LOVE – HOW TO KNOW IT

TRUE LOVE is nothing but friendship, highly intensified, flavored with sentiment, spiced with passion, and sprinkled with the stardust of romance.

True Love can be no deeper than your capacity for friendship, no higher than your ideals, and no broader than the scope of your vision.

True Love, in the cave man, is expressed by a desire to beat a woman, and to pull her around by the hair.

True Love, in the Broadwayite, is expressed by an insatiable craving to *buy things* for a woman.

True Love, in a husband, is expressed by his willingness to give his wife anything, from the tenderest piece of steak to a divorce, if it will make her happy.

True Love, in any man, is the essence of unselfishness; and the most selfish thing in the world. It is the selfishness that transcends selfishness; the vanity that puts egotism in the shade.

True Love, in a bachelor, is exemplified by his willingness to marry a woman – against all his instincts, his sense of self-preservation, and his better judgment.

True Love, in a born flirt, is evidenced by his inability to think of any *other woman*, while he is kissing a particular one.

True Love, in an author, is demonstrated by his self-restraint, in refusing to make "copy" out of a love affair.

True Love, in a college boy, is expressed by his ability to think of somebody besides himself for a whole hour at a time.

It is the flash of light, by which one sees clearly that to do for another, give to another, and sacrifice for another, will get one the most happiness out of life.

True Love, in the poet, is expressed in soul kisses, and by his inability to do any work for days at a time.

We speak of "falling in love," as though it were a pit or an abyss; but True Love is the light on the mountain-top, to which we must eternally climb.

True Love is a relic of the Victorian Age.

It still exists, here and there, like the buffalo; but in the face of eugenics, feminism, and the growing masculine determination not to marry, it may some day have to take a place beside the Dinosaur in the Public Museum.

VARIATIONS

FLIRTATION is a duel in which the combatants cross lies, sighs and eyes – and the coolest heart wins.

Falling in love consists merely in uncorking the imagination and bottling the common-sense.

In the medley of love a man's soul sings a sonata, while his heart plays a waltz and his pulse beats to rag-time.

Better be a strong man's "rib" than a weak man's "backbone."

True love isn't the kind that endures through long years of absence, but the kind that endures through long years of propinquity.

A man seldom thinks of marrying when he meets his ideal woman; he waits until he gets the marrying fever and then idealizes the first woman he happens to meet.

Love is what tempts a man to tell foolish lies to a woman and a woman to tell the fool truth to a man.

It took seven hundred guesses for Solomon to find out what kind of a wife he wanted; and even then he seems to have had his doubts.

The only thing more astonishing than the length of time a man's love will subsist on nothing is the celerity with which it is surfeited the moment it has any encouragement to feed on.

Even when a man knows that he wants to marry a woman, she has to prove it to him with a diagram before he is really convinced of it.

A man is so apt to mistake his love of experiment for love of a woman that half the time he doesn't know which is which.

Why is it that a man never thinks he has tasted the cup of joy unless he has splashed it all over himself, as though it were his morning bath?

A man is so versatile that he can read his newspaper with one set of brain-cells while he carries on a conversation with his wife with another set.

A girl hides her emotions under a veil of modesty, a spinster under a cloak of cynicism, a wife under a mantle of tact, and a widow under a cloud of mystery – and then women wonder why they are "misunderstood."

Proposing is a sort of acrobatic feat, in which a man must hang on to his nerve with one hand and to the girl with the other. If he lets go of either, he is lost.

In love, as in poker, men play just to *play*– and then proceed to throw away what has been easily won, without any thought of its value. Thus gamblers so often die in poverty and Lotharios in loneliness.

Nowadays, a truly chivalrous girl will "lie like a lady" in order to protect a trusting man's vanity.

The woman who fascinates a man is not the one who looks up to him as the sun of her existence, but the one who merely looks down on him as one of the footlights.

Don't doubt a man when he says, "I never loved like *this* before." Each time a man falls in love with so much more ease and facility that he doesn't recognize it as the same old emotion at all.

The first time a man lies to his wife he is surprised to discover how easy it is to do it. After that he is surprised to find out how hard it is *not* to do it.

A man always speaks of having "given" his heart to a woman as though he had done something generous and noble; whereas, nine times out of ten, she probably had to wrench it from him.

About the only things in connection with his wife for which a man shows any respect after a few years of marriage are her reputation and her toothbrush.

BLONDES

NEXT to a mouse or a rich widow, there is nothing on earth that a normal girl dreads so much as a blonde.

No matter how many brunettes a man may have married from time to time you can always be perfectly sure that there has been a blonde in his life.

A woman with dark hair and eyes may make men admire her, but in order to make one of them *propose* she must blondine her temperament down to the roots.

The dusky Cleopatra may have succeeded in making fools of a few men, but it took a dizzy little blonde like Helen of Troy to make a lot of men make fools of *themselves*.

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