## A BACHELOR HUSBAND

By RUBY M. AYRES Author of "Richard Chatterton," Etc. Copyright, 1926, by W. J. Watt & Co.

THIS BEGINS THE STORY

Marie Chester and Christopher

Lewless were raised together, and when her father died they married; she because she loved him; he because he liked her and needed the money the marriage brought him. When Marie learned from outsiders, en her honeymoon, why he had married her she told him she did not love him and that he might continue to be the Bachelor Husband his friends insisted he always would be. It grieved her to see that he was relieved rather than otherwise. A friend of Chris saves her from drowning and a Mrs. Heriot, a dangerous woman, hints to Chris that Dakers, known as Feathers, has fallen in love with the girl whose life he saved. But the shaft goes wild for Chris is not jealous. He and Mrs. Heriot go golfing together and she beats him. THIS BEGINS THE STORY

AND HERE IT CONTINUES "WHAT a triumph!" she said mockingly when they sat down to rest on a grassy slope. "You're not

playing well today, Chris." She had always called him by his She had always called him by his christian name. She w. one of those women who call all men by their Christian names without first being invited than names without first bein Christian name. She w. one of those

actually wish to remarry, because if she did so she would lose the money left her by her husband, but all the same, she did not like to see her men friends monopolized and married by other women. She was thinking of her husband now, as she sat, chin on hand, staring down at Chris, sprawled beside

her on the grass.

Duncan Heriot had died in India Duncan Heriot had died in India while his wife was in England, and he had died of too much drink and an enlarged liver. As she looked at Chris, with his handsome face and long, lithe figure, she was mentally contrasting him with the short, stubby man whom she had married solely for his money.

She liked Chris for the same reason that he liked her. They had many tastes in common and seldom bored tastes in common and seldom bored

She was a year or two older than he, but she was still a young woman, and had it not been for the money question she would have done her best to marry him; but she knew that Chris had no money, and life without money was to Mrs. Heriot very much as a motorcar would be without its engine. So she had launched the craft of Plato between them, and comforted herself with the thought that he was not a marrying man.

It had been a real shock to her to hear of his wedding. She had been very anxious to meet his wife and find out for herself why he had so suddenly changed his mind.

Her quick eyes had already discovered that it had not been for love! She had made a life study of the opposite sex, and she knew without any telling that She was a year or two older than he.

and she knew without any telling that there was another reason for which she

"Quite romantic, from all ac-"Oh, I don't know. I've known her all my life-we were brought up to-

ther."
"Really!" She opened her eyes and ran downstairs.

de. "Cousins or something?" she The lounge was almost deserted. Most "No. Marie's father adopted me." Chris rose to his feet and yawned.

He knew that he was being pumped.
"Shall we play another round?" he "Of course." She was a little cha-She had imagined that their

friendship was on too secure a basis to permit of such a decided snubbing. played badly, as she always did when she was annoyed, and Chris won easily. "You threw that away deliberately,"

be challenged her.
She laughed. 'Did I? Perhaps I

did. You annoyed me."
"In what way?"
"I thought we were friends, and when I ventured to be interested in your marriage you snubbed me abominably."
Her even were plaintive as they met Her eyes were plaintive as they met his, and, manlike, Chris felt slightly

Mrs. Heriot was a much-sought-after woman, and he knew that she had always shown a distinct preference for his society.

"I did not think you would be inmeeted," he said lamely. "And there
is nothing to tell if you are looking

"That is what you say," she de-clared. "But that is so like a man— hever will admit it when he cares for a

time, and, as she said, they had always been good friends.

Will be a kindness if you will let me pretend that I'm only going to please you."

half seriously. for whom I would have given up my 'Oh, you are a dear,' she said tachelor freedom! There, will that fled away before he could answer.

The wished to goodness she would would not have forgotten. She knew would not have forgotten. She knew shrewd enough to detect the sting beforgot a thing that he wished to remem-

ther sugary words, and all his of misery in her throat as she hurriedly changed her frock. the glow of affectionate warmth. Chris was very punctilious about the most unselfish child I've dressing for dinner. It was one of his er met." he said impulsively.

the pigtail and wistful eyes who had waited on him hand and foot all his hard ware realized that Marle was a woman, at least in the hard and thoughts, there might have them; but as if were well.

Hut tonight even he struggled into a dinner jacket, and half-strangled himself in a high collar in honor of Marie. At dinner Chris chaffed him mercilessly across the space that divided their tables.

"You'll be putting brilliantine on tables.

"You'll be putting brilliantine or them; but as it was—well, everything your hair next," he said. "Not that it want Madge that she was "ever so "I think his hair looks very nice." a better understanding between Aunt Madge that she was "ever so

it was just as they reached the hotel sain that Mrs. Heriot said with a sen-timental sigh: "Perfect, perfect banker, isn't it? Glorious days, and— ch, did you notice the moon last night?" Feathers smiled grimly, meeting her Chris stood quite still. With a shock eyes. e rullt he remembered Marie's little reto him and his own forgetfulness.

The angry blood rushed to his face. He hated to feel that perhaps he had disappointed her.

He left Mrs. Heriot in the lounge and went straight up to his wife's room. She was not there, but a book which he knew she had been reading was lying open on her dressing table and a little open on her dressing-table and a little pair of white shoes stood neatly together

on the rug.

Chris rubbed the back of his head with a curiously boyish lock of his head with a curiously boyish lock of embarrassment. It seemed odd to think that he and little Marie Celeste were really husband and wife! He cast a furtive look at himself in her mirror. He did not look much like a married man, he thought, and laughed as he took up the book which Merie had been really. book which Marie had been reading. It was a book of poems, and Chris made a little grimace. He had never read a poem in his life, but his eyes fell now on some of the lines which had been faintly underscored with a pencil:

"What shall I be at fifty, Should nature keep me alive— If I find the world so bitter When I am but twenty-five?"

He read the words through twice with

finding the world bitter when she had just written home to Aunt Madge that she was quite happy.

He had the book still in his hand

when the door opened and Marie came in. She caught her breath when she

saw her husband.

"You, Chris!"

"Yes, I thought you were in." He turned round, holding out the book.

"Are you reading this?"

"Yes." She tried to take it from

"Yes." She tried to take it from him, but he avoided her. "Did you underline that verse?"

He saw the color flicker into her face, but she laughed as she bent over the

book and read the words he indicated.
"Did I? Of course not. It's a
pretty poem. It's Tennyson's 'Maud,'
you know." Chris knew nothing about
Tennyson's "Maud," but he was relieved to hear the natural way in which his wife spoke. He shut the book and threw it down carelessly.

Yes, I think so." "See you downstairs, then?"
"Yes."

must seek.

"You know," she said, abruptly, "I
was ever so surprised to hear that you
were married?"
"Were you?" Christ tilted his hat
further over his eyes. "Most people
were, I think. Poor old Feathers was
absolutely disgusted."
"It was very sudden, wasn't it?" she
pursued. "Quite romantic, from all ac-

CHAPTER VII When the links of love are parted.

Directly Chris had gone Marie opened

st deserted. Most of the visitors were dressing for dinner, but Feathers was lounging against the open swing door which led into the garden

His hands were deep thrust into his pockets and he was looking out over the sea with moody eyes. Marie ran up to him breathlessly. Mr. Dakers-

He turned at once. "Yes." He no-iced the flushed agitation of her face. 'Is anything the matter?" he asked in swift concern.

"Yes! I mean no! Oh, it's nothing much, at any rate, but—but I told Chris you were going to take me to a concert tonight, that you had got two tickets "She broke off agitickets only to rush on again. "Of tatedly, only to rush on again. "Of course, I know you're not! I only just said it, but—but if he asks you oh, you wouldn't mind not telling him, would you?" Feathers looked utterly mystified, but

she was too much in earnest for him to smile, so he said quietly:

"There is rather a good show on the pier, so I'm told. I'll get some tickets and we'll go."

She flushed all over her face and her

She flushed an over ...
lips quivered.
''I know it's horrid of me, and I can't explain; there isn't any need for you to take me at all, really, but but I knew Chris wanted to play billiards.'' She broke off, she play billiards.'' She broke off, she intended. Chris colored a little. He could not magine what it was she wanted him to tay.

"You've always been such a confirmed backelor." she went on. "I am beginning to think that your wife must be a very wonderful woman to have so completely metamorphosed you."

Chris frowned. He resented this gross-examination, even while he was half inclined to think it unreasonable of him to do so. After all, he had known Mrs. Heriot some considerable time, and, as she said, they had always

I can tell you one thing," he said
Seriously. "And that is, that my slipped her hand into his with a long only woman in the world sigh of relief.
would have given up my "Oh, you are a dear." she said, and

Mrs. Heriot smiled sweetly. She al-"How sweet of you! How very meet!" she murmured. "Of course, have always said what a particularly that he had only suggested it as reparation for his forgetfulness of last night, and her paide would not allow her to accept.

"I suppose it is," said Chris blunt"I suppose it is," said Chris blunt"I suppose to goodness she would would not have forgetten. She knew would not have forgetten. She knew would not have forgetten.

pet snobberies, so Feathers declared, for he was still a child to him. It was, Feathers himself had a fine disregard of old that he still could not dissociate appearances and of what people thought.

But tonight even he struggled into a But tonight even he struggled into a

said Marie Celeste. She did not think

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says it's all very well to talk about refunding all the Government bonds when they come due, but where's the Government to get the money?







