

## 70 — ON BACHELORS AND SPINSTERS

But marriage, if comfortable, is at all heroic. It certainly narrows and damps the spirits of generous men. In marriage a man becomes slack and selfish, and undergoes a fatty degeneration of his moral being. The air of the fireside withers out all the fine wildings of the husband's heart. He is so comfortable and happy that he begins to prefer comfort and happiness to everything else on earth, his wife included. *Yesterday he would have shared his last shilling; to-day "his first duty is to his family" and is fulfilled in large measure by laying down vintages and husbanding the health of an invaluable parent. Twenty years ago this man was equally capable of crime or heroism; now he is fit for neither.* His soul is asleep and you may speak without constraint; you will not wake him. It is not for nothing that Don Quixote was a bachelor and Marcus Aurelius married ill. For women, there is less of this danger. Marriage is of so much use to a woman, opens out to her so much more of life, and puts her in the way of so much more freedom, and usefulness, that whether she marry ill or well, she can hardly miss some benefit.

**R. L. Stevenson**