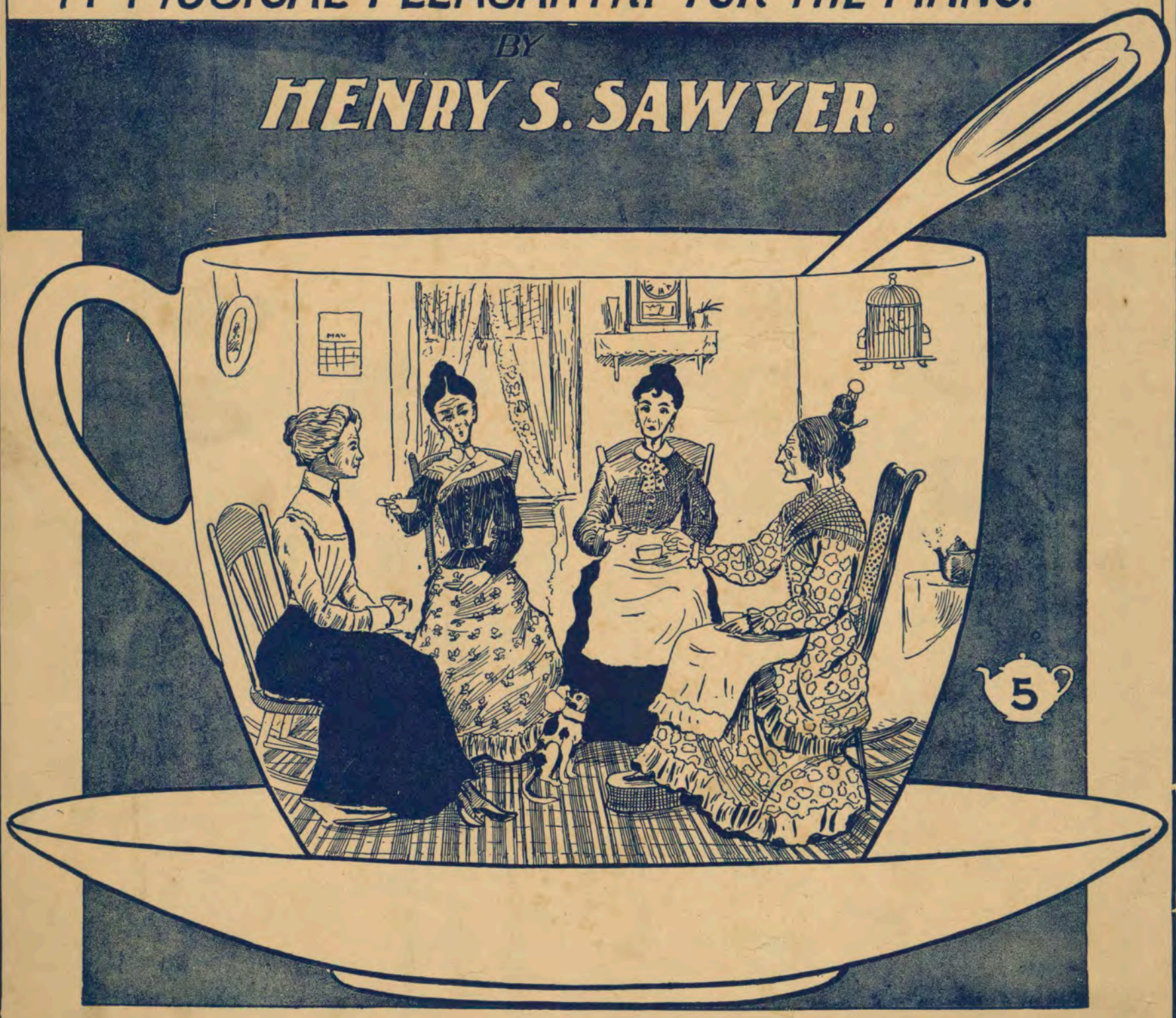
THE OLD MAIDS' TEA PARTY

A MUSICAL PLEASANTRY FOR THE PIANO.

BY

HENRY S. SAWYER.



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The Old Maids' Tea Party

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRESENTING THIS PIECE IN COSTUME.

This selection can be turned into a sort of sketch in pantomime as shown below, and can be given either in a parlor, school-room, or on a regular stage. Let several ladies (at least four, and more when practicable) dress in the costumes of old maids, and let one in particular (she who is to sing the song) represent a woman about seventy-five or eighty years old. The more old-fashioned the costumes, the better the effect. One of the maids (not the eldest one) is seated in view as the music commences, and receives the different ones as they arrive. As the first movement in the music ends, the ladies can seat themselves in convenient groups and go through the motions or form of gossiping, becoming more and more animated until they "pause for breath," as indicated in the music. This gives a chance for some one to ask the "eldest old maid" to sing for them, and for her to do so at the proper place. At the conclusion of the song the ladies group themselves for the minuet, and dance it according to the instructions given below (If an amusing effect is preferred to the strict form of the dance, grotesque motions can be substituted at pleasure, but the bow, or courtesy, at the end of every eight measures should be observed.) At the end of the dance, either the music imitating the sound of a bell can be played, or a real bell rung by some one out of sight; and then the maids, in couples, can march around in time to the music, finally departing for an imaginary dining-room. Where a stage is available, a real table can be prepared at the rear of the stage behind a screen or one of the curtains while the earlier part of the performance is going on; and at the ringing of the bell the curtain can be raised or the scenes shifted, and "tea" can be served.

The whole of this little act (except the song) can be done in pantomime, or, if preferred, real dialogue, suited to the locality can easily be improvised for the occasion.

HOW TO DANCE THE MINUET.

The minuet is danced in couples, and any number of couples can take part. The rules governing one couple govern all the rest.

THE POSITION.

The partners should stand side by side, and far enough apart to allow one of them to hold the other's hand about as high as their heads. The gentleman (or the lady representing the gentleman) should be at the lady's right, and his left hand (palm upwards) should hold her right hand so that her's curves easily from the wrist. The lady's left hand catches her gown at full arm's length, her hand drooping gracefully from the wrist. During the dance the partners' glances should be directed towards each other, the body swaying backward so as to give a decided graceful curve to the back. The poise of the head and the elegance of carriage have as much significance as the stately step.

THE BOW OR COURTESY.

At the preliminary chord, or at the end of the brief introductory bars, the partners should release hands, and, stepping backwards so as to be opposite each other, draw one foot back of the other in a semi-circle so as to bend the knee and bow to each other as low as can be done gracefully, resuming their original position immediately afterwards. This courtesy should be repeated at the end of every eighth measure (as shown later on), and should be the *concluding* figure in the minuet.

THE DANCE.

First, take partner's hand; then, on the first beat of the measure, throw the left foot forward onto the ball of the foot, keeping the knee rigid, and (with a slight springing undulating movement) drawing the right foot towards the left with two short pauses corresponding to the second and third beats of the measure. On the first beat of the second measure, throw the *right* foot forward as above shown, finishing the counts with the *left* foot; and so on, commencing the measures with each foot alternately. On the last beat of the eighth measure, release hands and make courtesy as above shown; then turn and join opposite hands (gentleman at lady's *left*), and begin the dance again, this time commencing with the *right* foot. Be careful to avoid *hopping*, as this detracts greatly from the beauty of the dance.

THE MUSIC.

Great care must be taken to play the music of the minuet in a slow, dignified manner, and to make not only a retard on every eighth measure, but almost a complete pause on the last count, so as to allow full time for the courtesy, which, thus observed, forms one of the prettiest and most characteristic features of the minuet.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE OLD MAIDS' COSTUMES.

THE ELDEST OLD MAID.

This character can wear an old-fashioned silk skirt made with the polonaise; a waist of old style with fancy kerchief fixed about the neck; hair powdered gray and done up, with ringlets hanging all around the forehead and back of head. Any old-fashioned hat or bonnet, with over-shoes, two or three shawls and reticule; face make-up in crow feet and wrinkles.

THE OLD MAID AT HOME.

This old lady (who can represent the hostess) should have her hair powdered and done up in a Grecian knot high on the head, skirt with the fullness in gathers all around the waist band and ruffles on bottom; any waist with large kerchief around the shoulders and crossed in front; wear short, white apron, have knitting and a cat which she either carries or holds in her lap; face made up to suit the character.

THE TRAVELING OLD MAID.

Have this lady wear any suitable dress with a large, long winter cloak, and perhaps a shawl which she can either wear or carry on her arm; wear poke bonnet; carry a hand-bag containing everything imaginable needed in ing, such as snuff-box, smelling salts, curling irons, handkerchiefs, etc., carry also a bird cage and an old green umbrella.

THE UP-TO-DATE-OLD MAID.

The lady who assumes this interesting character can have great scope for the display of taste or striking effect. Her hair could be parted in the middle, combed low over the ears and crimped, with perhaps a few ringlets; she could wear a green skirt with red waist, or of any other two bright, odd colors. Her head wear should be in keeping with her supposedly up-to-date appearance, and her face should be powdered to give the effect of artificial youth.

These costumes can be varied to suit the convenience or taste of those who take part, and the characters (except those of the hostess and the eldest old maid, which are necessary to the plot) changed also, if preferred. The eldest old maid, as representing the time when the minuet was more in vogue than now, can if preferred, wear a gown with a Watteau back *en train*, this being specially suitable for that dance.

When more than four take part, the extra costumes can easily be made to suit the fancy and convenience of the parties.

THE OLD MAIDS' TEA-PARTY.

A Musical Pleasantry for the Piano.

By HENRY S. SAWYER.

Introduction.

Moderato.

An old maid sits knitting, awaiting the arrival of her guests.

The arrival of the old maids

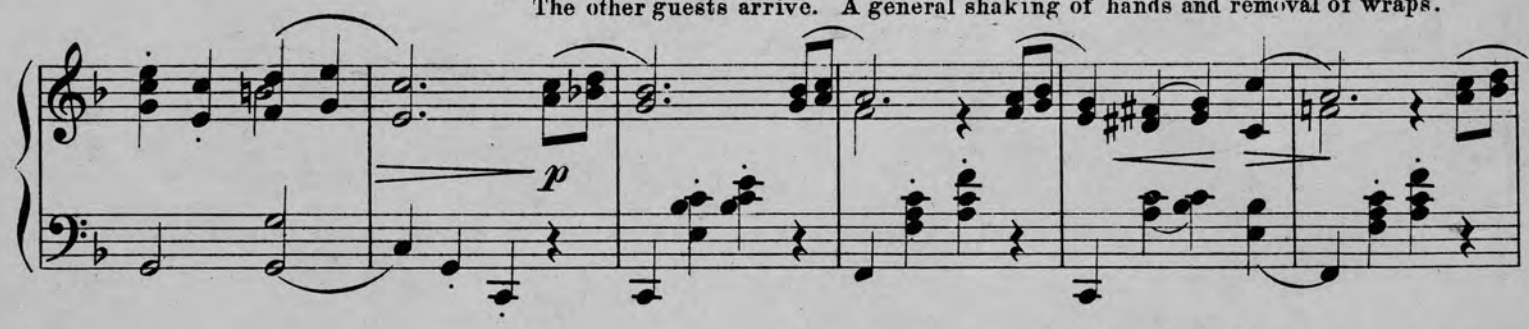
Not too fast.

A knock at the door. The hostess admits

the first arrival, and helps her remove her wraps.

The eldest old maid arrives, and is taken care of in the same manner.

The other guests arrive. A general shaking of hands and removal of wraps.



They all sit down in convenient groups.

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4 **A little gossip.**

Allegretto moderato.

The maids begin to go through the motions of gossiping.

p (*Commence moderately fast.*)

They draw closer together and become more and more animated.

mf
(*Play a little faster.*)

They begin to grow excited, and each

f (*Play still faster.*)

tries to outdo her neighbor in talkativeness.

The hostess asks the eldest old maid to favor the guests with a song, which she does as follows, the maids listening with rapt attention.

They get out of breath, and pause from sheer exhaustion.

p

all - en - tan - do.

Ped. ✻

A song by the eldest old maid.

p Moderato.

1. I am pleased, dear friends, to be here to - night At this good old - fash - ioned
2. Lat - er on in years, while I still looked young—O, but those were palm - y

p

Nods of approval from the old maids.

mp

tea, And I'm glad - der still we did not in - vite An - y men to spoil our glee. I re-
days! — I was court - ed long by a man who sung Of my sweet and win-ning ways. But a -

mp

mem - ber well, six - ty years a - go, How a fiend in young man's clothes Broke his
las! one day, I near lost my life As we trudged thro' a drench - ing rain; From be -

troth with me, at the eve - ning's glow For a girl with a twist - ed nose.
hind a stump popped his an - gry wife— And I nev - er saw that man a - gain!

REFRAIN.

mf

So I say, dear friends, let us mer - ry be, Let us drink our tea in peace; Let us

mf

(While the refrain is being sung the second time, the hostess clears a space for dancing.)

cresc. *f*

Applause by the old maids.

1 2

swear from men to be ev - er free, For they're nothing but a lot of geese. geese.

cresc. *f*

The ancient minuet.

Introduction.

They all take their positions for the minuet. (See directions opposite first page of music.)

mf

(Courtesy.)

rit.

The dance.

p *a tempo.*

(Courtesy.)

rit. *a tempo.*

(Courtesy.)

rit. *a tempo.* *f* *p*

(Courtesy.)

f

rit.

a tempo.

p

(Courtesy.)

rit.

f

The supper bell rings, and the maids form in line in couples, marching around the room in time to the music, the hostess and the eldest old maid in the lead.

Grand march to the tea-table.

March time.

mf

f

ff

mf

ff

They enter the dining-room.

sfz

TRY THIS ON YOUR PIANO.

Irish Beauties

Two-Step.

Moderato **PERCY WENRICH**

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