

OF INTEREST TO WOMEN.

SHALL GIRLS PROPOSE?

A CLEVER and well-known author, under the nom de plume of "A Speculative Bachelor," has written a book entitled, "Shall Girls Propose?" Apart from the delightful sense of humor which pervades the little work in most portions, says Will Bostwick Franklin in the New York Sunday Mercury, the evident seriousness with which certain aspects of the subject are touched upon seems strangely significant.

Is it really true, as has been averred, that we are on the brink of a great revolution in certain unwritten laws of custom? Are our girls, strong, helpful, courageous, self-reliant, yet gentle withal, and, as a rule, oh, so womanly! to set an example at which the old world may pause wonder-stricken—and end by following? In other words, shall the proposal of marriage, which for so many centuries has fallen solely from the lips of man to maid, now become reversible and the man asked in all sincerity by the maid to walk with her in bonds hymeneal till death do them part? Are the fiats of tradition to be thus set at naught and the conventionalities of romance violated? Is the poetic and fancied leap year privilege of the fair sex to become a stern reality? Must the plot of the future novel be based on the theory that woman must woo and win the hero and not the hero the woman? The possibilities of the case are simply astounding and carry one away on a torrent of speculative fancy impossible to describe in cold type.

There can be but little fear of mistake, however, on the part of the girl who determines to propose. A woman's intuitions are generally correct and prove her greatest safeguard. In love affairs she is never very uncertain on what ground her feet are treading, and the knowledge proves an efficient weapon. The time and the place will always be apropos and the words fitly chosen. As an illustration of this one recalls that touching scene in Mrs. Edwards' charming novel of English life, "Stephen Lawrence, Yeoman." Hero and heroine are about to part and for the last time. He loves her passionately, devotedly, and yet fancying himself a little lower in the social scale than she, dares not ask her to join he

lot with his. Suddenly, when hope has almost fled, she turns and with outstretched hands and with a look in her eyes that only a dullard could misinterpret cries, "Stephen, why should you go?" "She had stooped to conquer," says the author—"stooped and won the happiness of her life." Shall girls propose?

A SAMPLE CASE.

When the old gentleman saw her coming into the office he smiled, for she was petite and plump and fair to the eye.

"Is this Mr. Harry Heartley's father?" she inquired, addressing him.

"It is, miss," responded the old gent, rising and offering her a chair with a bow.

"Then I came to see you, sir, about your son," she said simply.

"My son?" and the father looked disturbed.

"Yes, sir, your son Harry, It is concerning a matter in which I am personally interested."

"What," glowered the father, "has that young rascal been—"

"I beg your pardon," she interrupted, "Harry is all right. I love him and he loves me, and I have asked him to be my husband. He has agreed to it, and now I am here to get your consent to our union. Do I get it?" and her tone had the ring of determination around it.

It was fifteen minutes before Harry's father recovered consciousness, but when he did he kissed the leap year damsel and she went away rejoicing.

HOPE DEFERRED.

The light burned dimly as she braided her tresses and abstractedly regarded her shadowy outlines reflected in the mirror. It was not a young face that she saw, but rather a countenance upon which anxiety of long standing and repeated disappointments had left their impress. It was the face of one who had loved often perhaps and had lost at every trip. With a tremulous sigh she made fast the ends of her plaited hair and turned to the final task of the day—the critical search of the room, with particular attention, to the territory comprised under the bed.

At first her manner was perfunctory. Presently it was animated in a marked degree. Like a startled deer she sud-

denly fled to the farthest corner of the room and stood there trembling.

"Great heavens!" she gasped, "a man."

"Please, ma'am, don't holler. I ain't took nothing yet, so help me Christopher." The voice that struggled faintly from beneath the couch had in it a sepulchral suggestion of terror.

"Arter all these years," she murmured softly but intensely, and with a certain coy exultation, "during—"

"Don't make a noise, ma'am, and I'll scoot."

It sounded as if the owner of the voice under the bed was about to come forth.

"During which not a night has passed that I did not look—"

"Keep quiet and I'm off, I swear." Two feet and a hand of heroic mould were thrust into sight.

"Under the bed to see if a man were there, only—"

"I beg for mercy, ma'am."

Other anatomical features had followed the feet and hand.

"Only to find nothing each and every time until to-night—"

"I was drove to it, ma'am."

A large specimen of manhood was crouching pitifully in the dim gaslight.

"To-night the expectations of years are realized, and—"

"Think of my starving family, ma'am, and let me escape, I beg."

"What?"

The look of timid triumph that had invested her worn features changed on the instant to one of horrid malignity.

"Family," she repeated, in cold, steely tones. "Then you are married?"

"I am, ma'am."

With a sudden spring she threw herself into the middle of the apartment, her frame quivering with anger.

"You have trifled with me."

Her eyes shot very darts of fire at the crouching figure.

"Wow! Police! Help! Murder!"

They found her prostrated as if by fright, and her friends often remarked upon the singular vindictiveness she displayed toward the poor, abject, half-starved thief, who was found crouching in terror near her. Not even the misery of the poor man's innocent family had any effect upon her, except to render her the more implacable.

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