

PROPOSALS OF MARRIAGE.

Mrs. Philip Markham. Philip Markham.
Miss Ethel Arnold. Frank Beverly.

(The four have just finished dinner at Mrs. Markham's, and are sitting over dessert.)

Beverly.—Now that I remember it, and have the opportunity of a quiet half hour, I want to ask you a question, Jenny. You married women ought to know something about it—

Mrs. Markham (interrupting).—It is some masculine fault or failing he is curious to hear my experience of, Ethel.

Beverly.—Perhaps it comes under that head. What I want to ask you is this: What do you consider the best way for a man to offer marriage to a woman? I have a friend—not usually an over-modest fellow, but now that he has fallen in love he is all at once helpless, concerned about his own deficiencies, full of hesitations. He wants to make proposals of marriage to a girl whom he believes to be not indifferent to him, but he has confided to me the insuperable difficulties which lie in the way of his accomplishing the feat at an auspicious moment. There is always some impediment, some provoking hindrance, to the circumstances being wholly propitious. I tell him to do it by letter, for in that case he can at least put himself in the proper state of mind and be free from any embarrassments or perplexities; but he says he is afraid of the letter reaching her at some moment when her fancy, instead of being thrilled with affection for him, is in a condition for cool rejection of his proffered love.

Mrs. M.—Oh, he is quite right not to propose by letter; that will never do. That is, if he has any idea of being accepted. It is a very good way of refusing a man, but I can't, for my life, imagine a girl's saying "I will" first on paper; can you, Ethel?

Miss Arnold (very indifferently).—I never thought anything about the subject.

Beverly (glancing at Miss Arnold, then looking away as he meets her eyes).—There is one thing I envy a woman for, and that is her ability successfully to disguise the fact that she considers marriage a part of her scheme of life.

Philip (chuckling).—Don't believe it, Beverly! That is, don't believe it about most girls. I liked that touch in "Middlemarch": nothing was ever so true. There was Lydgate holding Rosamond a little higher than the angels, and mistrusting that she could hardly stoop to endure to take up existence with a mortal man, when all the time that superfine creature had been coolly estimating what her wedding presents would be, the amount of his professional and private income, and how far she could make it go in compassing a certain elegance and style which she believed to be suitable for herself as his wife.

Mrs. M.—That was hardly fair in George Eliot. Anyway, she must hate her own sex, for she is always saying little, true, mean, rankling things about us. Beside, it is perfectly natural for any girl to be forecasting her married life. What else has she to think of? You men have your amusements and your business and your politics and things; we have only our lovers.

Miss A.—I beg your pardon, Jenny: I have a great many other things.

Mrs. M.—But you're so clever and so superior, dear Ethel, and you have your decorative art and your charities, and all that. Beside, you are the last girl left unmarried in our set, and have renounced such vanities. Now, when we first came out—

Philip.—Don't tell tales out of school, Jenny. I know that you confide to her everything about me. You're off the subject, as usual. Frank hasn't had an answer to his question yet. Now, of course you think I made my offer in the correct style. How was that? (Laughs.)

Mrs. M.—That won't bear talking about. Beverly.—Oh, I want to hear, Jenny. Tell me. That will be a practical demonstration.

Mrs. M.—Very well; I don't care. But I advise you not to offer it as an example to your friend. The truth is, Philip never proposed to me at all.

Beverly.—Then you offered yourself to him? Mrs. M.—No, I did not.

Beverly.—You understood each other, like a couple of birds?

Philip.—That was it, depend upon it. There is a great deal of foolish talk concerning proposals of marriage, as if they were a distinct form of words, a positive declaration, a statement in which definite propositions were offered, requiring a definite answer. Now, I take it that is not the way it is ever managed. I doubt if any man we know ever proposed to a woman in a cut-and-dried way.

Mrs. M. (shrewdly).—You know nothing at all about other men.

Miss A.—I think, Philip, that your experience has been unique. Don't fall, however, into hasty generalizations. Men do offer themselves in what you call a cut-and-dried manner.

Philip.—Well, I did not; did I, Jenny? What was it I said to you?

Mrs. M.—I told you I was going to dance the german with Teddy Armstrong. You said I was to do nothing of the sort—that I was engaged to you. I declared that I was not, and you retorted that I was not only engaged to dance with you, but to marry you.

Miss A.—What audacity!

Philip.—She liked it amazingly. I put my arm about her and kissed her, and all my troubles in that line were over.

Beverly (seriously).—Lucky fellow!

Philip.—Tell your friend that faint heart never won fair lady.

Miss A.—Once when I was looking over the advertisement columns in a newspaper to find the date of a steamer's sailing I caught sight of the word, in large letters, "Proposals," and I glanced at it to see what it meant—

Mrs. M. (aside).—You see, Frank, even Ethel takes some interest in the general idea.

Miss A.—It was a statement about some bridge or something to be built, and after various specifications of what sort of proposals were to be entertained, set a date until which time sealed proposals would be received. Now, it occurred to me that it would not be a bad idea if a woman who contemplated marriage, and had several suitors to choose between, were to announce that for the ensuing month she would receive sealed proposals setting forth the claims of these men and the inducements they had to offer.

Mrs. M.—No names given?

Beverly.—Not until the month was up; she would deliberate about the matter. I can imagine how my proposal would run. Condition, bachelor; age, thirty-eight; means, five thousand a year—more sometimes, generally and at present less; temper, bad; morals, so-so; object in life, to find as much fault with it as possible; inducements to offer, none at all; reasons for desiring marriage, (glances at Miss Arnold, who looks a little annoyed, and breaks off).—

Mrs. M.—Of course, she wouldn't have you, Frank.

Beverly (glumly).—Of course she wouldn't.

Miss A.—Jenny, I was in hopes that you would have given Mr. Beverly some practical advice for his friend.

Mrs. M.—I did give him a little negative advice—that is, not to make his proposal by letter.

Beverly.—Come, now! There is one piece of practical wisdom: he is to offer himself by word of mouth.

Mrs. M.—He certainly is. I can imagine no poorer method than Ethel's sealed proposals. No; let him speak to her not only with his words, but with his eyes, with all his looks, with the tones of his voice. The very way he stands and sits may declare a man a lover.

Beverly.—Oh, you want a man to go about cross-gartered and melancholy.

Mrs. M.—Quite the reverse. No woman wants a lover who has not pride enough in her to do his best to win her. The more spirit he shows the better his chances are. Every one of us loves a Lochinvar.

Beverly.—Oh, no doubt; I know that we men hate him.

Miss A.—Now, I don't love a Lochinvar. That sort of man, who has always been a conquering hero, and take it for granted he is to go on succeeding, would have no chance at all with me.

Beverly (with animation).—I am sure of it.

Miss A.—I don't pretend to be a representative woman, but, so far as I am concerned, the man who shows too much skill in love-making places himself at an extreme disadvantage. There are arts in which the first crude attempt is worth more than the *chef d'œuvre*. No doubt it is always very pleasing in a certain way to meet a clever, experienced man who understands the art of saying pretty things skillfully. It becomes then a question of cleverness, and the woman has a right to amuse herself by receiving practical speeches and seeming to accept them. I have heard that when poor old Aaron Burr lay on his death-bed some lady said to him: "Colonel Burr, what is your favourite colour for a woman's eyes?" His sight had dimmed and he could see nothing, but he answered: "Dear madame, the colour of yours." Now, there may be a sort of hackneyed, artificial woman who finds something she likes in this worn-out gallantry, but for my part I prefer the bluntest, roughest, crudest conversation to anything of this sort from those dreary old cynics of the world.

Philip.—You see how it is, Frank. It is not an exact science. What is one woman's meat is another woman's poison. Jenny here liked a young Lochinvar, "with one touch to her hand and one word to her ear," while Ethel will have no such easy methods. Her lover must be a serious personage.

Miss A.—I don't know that you are right. I am certain of but one thing, and that is that he must be in earnest.

Mrs. M.—No danger but that he will be, Ethel dear. Now another point, Frank, which you must impress upon your friend is this: he must take the lady of his love at the right moment.

Beverly.—How is he to know when that time comes? That is just one of the points which vexes him most cruelly.

Mrs. M.—He ought to know by instinct. It should be at a moment when they had been feeling something together—a play or music or a fine sunset or the charm of a wonderful picture—anything which fuses the soul of one in the soul of the other.

Philip.—Good heavens, Jenny! how did you ever come to know about fusing one soul in another? Don't grow transcendental, but talk common sense.

Mrs. M.—Then there are moods when a woman feels like having somebody make love to her. Don't you remember Rosalind?—"Come woo me, woo me, for now I am in holiday humour, and like enough to consent."

Beverly.—Ay, like enough to consent, or like enough to find an opportunity for a little coquetry. She will take his heart and play

with it, I suppose. Still, it's a shame to begrudge women their little hour of power; 'tis the meagre compensation for their dreary lives.

Miss A.—Yes, a man's idea of it. The compensation! Perhaps, Mr. Beverly, when you are telling your friend Jenny's good advice you will add an item of mine.

(The four have risen and are walking toward the parlour, Beverly accompanying Miss A.)

Beverly.—With pleasure. However, I ought to tell you, Miss Arnold, the friend is apocryphal: I am the man in love—I am in love with you. The declaration has been on my lips for a month. In vain I try to assure myself that I had better be silent—that you care nothing for me. Now, then, for your advice if you let me tell you first how ardently I love you.

Mrs. M. (turning round).—What a nice talk we have had to-night about proposals! Let us choose another subject for next week when you come.

Miss A.—Very well, Jenny.

Mrs. M.—What shall it be?

Beverly (beaming).—Engagements of marriage.

Mrs. M. (staring at him).—Why, what a delightful piece of advice Ethel must have given you to put you in such superlative good-humor!

Beverly.—She did! she did!—L. H., in *Lippincott's Magazine*.

HOW IT CAME ABOUT.

"But you certainly encouraged him, Annie."

"No, Mary; you are mistaken. I did not exactly encourage him. I always admired him as a friend, but did not encourage him as a lover."

"Why, Annie, you corresponded with him, while he was in the army, over three years!"

"I only wrote to him because I knew he was away from home, friends, and kindred, and because I knew he was brave and patriotic."

"Were those your only reasons, Annie?"

And Mary Gay looked her cousin earnestly in the face.

"I don't believe you know your own mind, Annie. I believe you love Doctor Grant, but are infatuated with Mr. Grinstead. Look how anxious you were about him while he was away, even though he was only a surgeon, and not in much danger."

And, half-laughingly, half-seriously, Mary Gay left her cousin, and Annie Harris sat and thought. Did she, or did she not, love Doctor Grant? She certainly admired him; but then he was so haughty he could never love with the devotion of Mr. Grinstead. But yet she could not help feeling miserable to think that she had rejected—yes, absolutely rejected him.

One hour afterwards her mother came to her.

"Why, Annie," exclaimed Mrs. Harris, "asleep! Wake up, and see your new dress that you are to wear to-night."

"My dress—is it here? Oh, mother, I believe I'll not go!"

"Not go? Why, child, you must! The party to-night will be the most brilliant of the season."

Annie saw that by refusing to go she would offend her mother; so she went, accompanied by Mr. Grinstead.

Grinstead's height was about five feet eight inches; his hair, short, black, and curly, and his eyes black and sparkling. He was young—just twenty-two—and his merry laugh and frolicsome humour made him a favourite wherever he went. He was in one of his liveliest moods that night, yet his mirth did not have the same effect upon Annie as it usually had. She was sad, very sad, and wonderfully absent-minded.

Doctor Grant was at the party when Annie arrived; and, for the first time in her life, she felt jealous as she watched him and his pretty cousin, Estelle White, dancing together.

Some ladies who did not dance, but who did occasionally gossip, were sitting behind Annie. One of them was saying, "What a noble-looking gentleman Doctor Grant is! And his cousin Estelle is so pretty, and just as good as she is pretty. What a nice match they would make!" "Yes," replied the other; "I have heard the doctor loves her devotedly. I should not be surprised if they were already engaged."

"What is the matter with you to-night, Miss Annie?" laughed Mr. Grinstead; "you have thrown the whole set into confusion by your inattention."

Annie bit her lips in vexation, then began to dance in earnest, and throughout the evening no one had a merrier laugh than she.

Doctor Grant was supremely indifferent—seemed scarcely conscious of her presence; and Annie, as she watched him, thought she had never known him look half so handsome.

Three months had passed since the night of the party, and Annie had not spoken to the doctor. Mr. Grinstead had proposed, and had been rejected, as his wit had become insufferable to Annie. Mr. Harris was alarmed that his daughter, considered the belle and beauty of the circles in which she moved, was becoming indifferent to all the pleasures and amusements in which she had heretofore taken such an interest. He declared she needed change of society, so he ordered preparations to be made to go to Scarborough.

A few days after she was settled in an hotel at that fashionable resort, she started out to take a walk, as it was evening, and the day had been very warm. She had spent several seasons

there before, and knew just where to find the most retired walks. She had no timid fears, but proceeded on her way alone. Pretty soon a rough voice exclaimed, "Not so fast, miss! Wait, and you shall have company!"

Annie looked round; no one was in sight except a foppish-looking person, who, from his red-looking eyes, appeared to be partially intoxicated. She immediately started to run, and, to her surprise, the man ran also. She had, even from a child, been considered a fast runner, and in a few minutes knew she had out-distanced her pursuer, for she could not hear his footsteps. She looked round, and at some distance from her he lay prostrate upon the ground, apparently unable to rise. She was now far away from the hotel, and there was but one way to reach it, and that was to pass the drunken man.

She heard a carriage coming, and, as it approached her, its occupant raised his hat, when, to her surprise, she saw that it was Doctor Grant.

He was about to drive on, but she stopped him.

"I beg your pardon, doctor, but I wish you would be so kind as to take me to the hotel. I am afraid to pass that man lying yonder, as he is intoxicated."

There was no alternative; and as the doctor helped her into the carriage, he saw she was very much excited. She explained to him how she came so far from the hotel, and of the insult that had been offered her; then words failed her, and she remained silent until she reached the hotel.

The doctor assisted her to alight, and with great difficulty she reached her room. Excited and completely exhausted she threw herself upon the bed, and a few minutes afterwards, when a servant entered the room, she saw that her mistress had fainted.

For days after, she remained unconscious; the doctor said she had typhoid fever. The physician was Doctor Grant. Mr. Harris called him in to attend his daughter, there being no other, at the time, convenient; and they would have hunted in vain for one more competent than he was. He attended her regularly until the fever abated, and then announced his determination to return home, as he had only come to Scarborough for a few days' recreation, and his business at home was urgent. This he told to Annie in a most indifferent manner, and as he politely extended his hand, she felt that he no longer loved her. She saw him go to the door, and she called him back.

"Doctor Grant, we have always been good friends; when I go home, do you intend to treat me as coldly as you have done recently?" And, feeling weak from her severe illness, she covered her face with her hands, and wept.

The doctor raised them, gazed at her earnestly, and then said, "Why, Annie, is it possible that you care for me?"

She would not answer, but hid her face. He smoothed her hair gently, and knew he was a little more than a friend to her then.

VARIETIES.

TABLE DESIGN.—If fashion be so very elastic with regard to dress, the same cannot be said of the table, where each course now calls for its distinct kind of ware: Sevres, Dresden, China, Majolica, etc., often varied with gold and silver services. Even the knife handles represent the pattern of porcelain and plate, as well as the express woven linen. Not long since the famed Saxe design of little onions re-appeared on a princely table, and gave the signal for more poetical imitation, as corn flowers, daisies, rose-buds, etc. Very *recherché*, too, is the Louis XVI. shaped service, dotted with blue bottles; a perfect copy of the one used by Mary Antoinette at Trianon.

MARRIAGE.—Marriages, says a German writer, are usually contracted to gratify one of three desires, viz: Love, fortune or position. The man who marries for love, takes a wife; who marries for fortune, takes a mistress; who marries for position, takes a lady. He is loved by his wife, regarded by his mistress, tolerated by his lady. He has a wife for himself, a mistress for his household, a lady for the world and society. His wife will take care of his household, his mistress of his house, his lady of his appearance. If he is sick, his wife will take care of him, his mistress will visit him, his lady inquire after his health. He takes a walk with his wife, a ride with his mistress, goes to a party with his lady. His wife will share his grief, his mistress his money, his lady his debts. If he dies, his wife will weep, his mistress lament, and his lady wear mourning.

PORTRAIT.—No two artists read a face alike any more than two biographers a character. Of this last consideration Mrs. Siddons is a notable example; it is interesting to compare the three chief portraits we have of her from Gainborough, Reynolds, and Sir Thomas Lawrence. Sir Joshua's is infinitely the finest, the most idealized, and probably at the same time the most faithful portrait; but there is little resemblance between his fragile-looking, rapt muse of tragedy, pale with lofty passion, and Lawrence's handsome, majestic matron with black brows, rich colouring, and a suspicion, if not of coarseness, at least of a lack of refinement. Gainborough's portrait of her differs from both; it shows us a delicate *spirituelle* woman of the world, rather pensive and very well dressed.