

"Shall I Ask Him to Marry Me?"

Why Not, When Many other Women Have Proposed



Queen Victoria shortly before her marriage



Baroness Burdett-Coutts



Maria Gay the Sugar Who Crossed the Ocean to Capture Big Zensello



Holland's Queen also Offered Her Hand



IT WAS in Wayne county, Michigan, in January of this tender, loving leap year.

Gabrielle Lobbehuel had led to the official altar of the marriage license clerk the man of her heart, Alphonse Vanenoo. There, on the very eve of the wedding to which he had given his shy consent, the groom balked.

"No," he told her, shaking a suddenly reluctant head. "I can't do it now. I must think over it."

Gabrielle—whom Wayne county admiration classes as distinctly worthy of a dozen better men than her chosen Alphonse—declared indignantly:

"If you don't do it now you'll never get another chance."

But Alphonse, still dubious, still reluctant, went his unmarried way, home-ward.

And, sure enough, he hasn't had another chance.

Was he foolish, or was he wise? Should a man accept a leap-year proposal?

WHAT, in the courageous average of the marriages made on earth by those angels from heaven—women, to wit—the chances for happiness? What, if he has a cautious eye on his future wife, and on hers, should a man do to whom the woman proposes?

Alphonse, in Michigan, is not the only man this year who has fled the eager, tender arms of a woman who would draw him to her yearning bosom.

In St. Louis, a newspaper friend of Frank B. Hanna, the good-looking city comptroller, framed up a joke on him—one of those happy inspirations of humor that leave a man aching to commit homicide.

He took the comptroller at his laughing word, and published an article telling of Mr. Hanna's professed willingness to marry the first presentable girl who should propose to him. And he was careful to give the comptroller's age—41 years—and to tell how presentable he was on his own account.

The man who has been in St. Louis knows how many pretty girls are there; the man who hasn't has a joy awaiting him. But it happened that just then the inevitable pulchritude of St. Louis was enhanced by the presence of Miss Betty Sharpe, whose mass of dark hair, rounded cheeks, Cupid bow mouth, faintly retreating nose, deep, dark eyes and adorable figure gave to St. Louis feminine charm the brilliancy, the grace, the provoking archness and the seductive glamour of unrivaled Norfolk, in old Virginia.

The residence on Virginia avenue, in St. Louis, held her and half a dozen of her prettiest St. Louis friends when the little joke on Comptroller Hanna came to their attention.

The admiring seven took honest stock of their individual attractions, and there was not one who could find in her conscience to say that any of the others failed to fulfil Mr. Hanna's reasonable requirements. Nor was there one whom his qualifications failed to content.

They drew straws for him. Miss Sharpe won him. She is only 21; but she is wealthy and educated, and clever enough to write a proposal that filled the St. Louis girls with despairing envy.

What happened? The strangest thing—or the most natural thing, as one happens to know or not to know the St. Louis city comptroller.



The Maren Women of Denmark Always Propose

with even a sore throat, much less an aching heart? The next steamer bore to New York the delight of Zensello's constancy.

Her Giovanni was launched upon the notes of Enzo in "La Gioconda," when his ravished eyes recognized, in a box, the dark and handsome face of Maria Gay. The curtain was no sooner down than she was in his arms. It was a proposal brought in most huggable person from far across the sea. The Italian singer, no less chivalrous than the American editor, lost no

time in accepting it.

Maria, the insistently betrothed, is back in London now. She thinks she knows the marriage will become a reality, and so does her Giovanni. And so do all the other sinners, who, like the public they delight, adore a romance. But so do not the indefatigable press agents who know, as no one else alive knows, that if there is one thing that delights the public more than a romance that ends happily with "and so they were married," it is the romance that drags along with "and so they aren't."

It does take courage to refuse a girl for a woman's proposal is very different from a man's, when she means it. He can be expected to be refused and come again, and his first rejection is properly only the prelude to his second proposal.

But with a woman, as typified in the futile Michigan match, it is usually now or never. Yet, even here, there are exceptions. Philadelphia furnished one.

Shortly before the first of the year Louisa Hahn went to board with Mrs. Eleanor Widdis, the mother of her friend, Mary. Mary had a beau, Horace Lauks. It was the real, old-fashioned love affair, because Horace had known Mary from the time she was the littlest sort of a girl in the shortest kind of short dresses—and he had loved all the way through her growing up.

On New Year's Day Mary was ill with the grip. She had been sick in bed since Christmas, when her friend Louisa met Horace for the first time, and, in her absence, entertained him in the parlor. New Year's Day Mary was well enough to have visitors, and Horace and Louisa were talking with her in her sickroom.

"It's leap year, Horace," said Louisa. "Are you ready to marry me?"

"I'll think about it," he responded. "I don't seem to be any one's steady company yet."

Nor was he, for that ennobling stage of lovehood was something he had never attained in all his attention to Mary.

Mrs. Widdis reproved her boarder for frivolity afterward.

"But I mean it," declared Louisa, calmly. "I like Horace, and if he'll marry me, I'll marry him."

Only a few hours passed when Horace returned

and secured permission to see Mary, in the sick room.

"I thought you would propose to me, Mary," he told her. "I was only waiting for that."

But Mary did not believe in leap year, even when the proposing was practically done for her.

"I should think you would wait until I am well," she remarked, "before you would talk about marriage."

"Well, I'll have to take Louisa," he said, as he went downstairs.

Take Louisa he did, and take him, most vigorously, Louisa did; for he had no sooner told her, before some visitors in the parlor, that he was willing to marry her, than she caught up a Bible that lay near and asked him to repeat:

"Before God, I promise to take you as my lawful wife."

Horace promised, in just those words, amid the laughter of the party.

Mrs. Widdis disapproved, very much. It was not merely frivolity this time; it was almost sacrilege.

PROMISE WAS BINDING

"Well," Louisa told her, "I can't see anything wrong about it. It was a solemn promise, and I am going to keep it, and so is he. I love him, and I'm going to marry him."

A solemn promise it proved to be, within a week, for they were married by Rev. J. F. Crouch in Mount Pleasant Methodist Episcopal Church on January 7, and they are now living as happily as other newly wedded couples at 219 East Horter street, with Horace's family.

It has happened likewise in Baltimore. Miss Eleanor Reeves exercised her leap-year privilege at a postal clerk's ball to propose to Edward L. McBaron, of Roxbury, Mass. He accepted on the spot, and the wedding was agreed upon for the following week. The record of speed in love-making and proposal surpassed the Philadelphia match, and the date for the wedding was set early.

East and West, this year, the record has been maintained. As far as Wenatche, in Washington, the telephone girls have the proposal habit, the telephone

company there offered a bonus, last year, to the girls who would desert their posts for marriage. Miss Rux Kaple stuck it out until the first of the year; got her bonus; proposed to Jesse Jones, married him, and hung up her ear-piece for good and all.

In the East, of all the leap-year romances which 1904 has furnished, only one has been attended with



Miss Betty Sharpe, Who Proposed on a Week-day in St. Louis



Mrs. Albertina Herman, a Cleveland Woman Who Proposed

tragedy. That one turned to unhappiness because the girl proposed too late. A pretty Pittsburgh milliner proposed to John Hull, a North Side saloonkeeper, who was a martyr to dyspepsia. He put a bullet through his brain within a month.

"If I'd married sooner," he told his fellow-clerks before he killed himself, "and if I'd got a little more home cooking, I'd be a happier man today."

She had proposed to him too late.

Apart from that marriage, which was no indictment of the practice of leap-year proposals, only one such marriage chronicled since the beginning of 1904 has turned out badly. That was the match made by Alberta Morgenroth with August William Herman in Cleveland, four years ago. When Herman stopped working, his brother-in-law read the riot act—and the riot followed. The patrol wagon, which took the bridegroom to the county jail, ended the romance there.

Yet Mrs. Herman can have the satisfaction of knowing that Queen Wilhelmina of Holland, who made the proposal for her husband, is commonly reputed to be unhappy—as unhappy as Queen Victoria and the Baroness Burdett-Coutts were happy, although both of them chose their husbands—the baroness a man who was young enough to be her son.

The example furnished by Queen Victoria of England is always quoted when the question of proposals by women comes up. It was because of her peculiar position rather than her wish that she was compelled to make marriage overtures to Prince Albert. Yet the wedded life that resulted proved one of the happiest on record.

A similar case was that of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, who, in what is generally considered old age, called for her remaining life companionship a young and handsome man. This marriage also proved happy, so far as the world knows.

There are many instances of leap-year and other year proposals by women. Why, then, should the unflinching maiden of this year hesitate to reveal her sentiments to the man of her choice?

Where Women Wear Mustaches



Plagued in Household Duties



The Ainu Woman and Her Pet

honored unless she has developed a mustache. The men are very hairy—in fact, often resemble the bears they hunt in the forests of the island of Yezo. Living in a semi-civilized state, these people are among the strangest tribes of the earth.

THERE is a land where mustaches are as highly prized by women as by men. Indeed, it is deemed so necessary that they enhance feminine loveliness by such means that the women supply the failure of nature by an artificial mustache, tattooed into the skin, and curling above the lips with all the grace of the real masculine adornment.

The Ainu, aboriginal people of Japan, are peculiar in this respect—a married woman is not

supposed, fair lady, that after your marriage your husband told you that you must develop a mustache. Imagine losing all social prestige by a refusal!

Hair on the face is an ill in the eyes of most civilized women—now imagine to yourself conditions in the country where, if it does not naturally "come," the women cut open their lips and rub into the sores cuttlefish black or soot, which tattoos above the upper lip the representation of a mustache.

This operation, performed on the Ainu women, is excruciatingly painful. The crudest form of tattooing

is employed, and after the shellblack or soot is rubbed into the open wounds intense inflammation ensues. However, when the lips heal, a well-defined black mustache appears, tattooed indelibly in the skin.

This custom of the Ainu is in keeping with other barbaric customs. These strange people live on the island of Yezo and certain parts of the Kurile Islands, of northern Japan. Into this isolated region but few Europeans have penetrated, yet descriptions by those who have done so of the people are most interesting.

Even more coppery in color than the American Indians, the men are covered from head to foot with hair; their beards are exceptionally long—so much so, indeed, that they resemble monkeys. The Ainu believe that in some remote period of history they came from a far northern country.

"Why," they say, "if we did not come from a cold country should we need to have skins like a bear?"

It is believed that the Ainu did migrate possibly southward from the shores of Bering sea, by way of the Aleutian islands or along the coasts of Kamtschatka and the Kuriles.

Unlike most of the aboriginal tribes which preserve traditions, the Ainu have no records of any kind concerning their origin. One legend, however, is to the effect that, thousands of years ago, the Yezo was inhabited by diminutive people, the Koro-pokuru, or pit dwellers, who were exterminated by the more powerful Ainu.

Bravery is the characteristic of the men. Strong and athletic, they go armed with bows, arrows and knives, and with these primitive weapons have no fear in tackling the most savage bears in the forests.

One of the most curious customs of the people is their bear festival. At certain times of the year they hunt old bears. They preserve the skins and skulls, which are erected on sticks outside the hunters' dwellings.

Young cubs are eagerly sought. Women nurse these as if they were their own children. In due

time the bears are killed at festivals, in which the village participates.

The cub, pretty well grown, is teased until he stands on his legs, when the headman of the village or two selected warriors shoot him with an arrow. Presiding over the cauldron in which the bear is cooked, the foster-mother, who has nursed the beast, watches with great pleasure. These festivals are causes of great rejoicing.

With no religious belief whatever, the Ainu live in complete ignorance. They are said to be uncleanly dirty, and in summer wear little or no clothing. Many of the Ainu have intermarried with Japanese, and those living in the proximity of Japanese villages have adopted Japanese dress and customs.

In southern Japan an Ainu is more of a curiosity than an American Indian in New York. Several years ago a number of Ainu were brought to Tokio and exhibited in a tent at Asakusa Park, the Coney Island of the kingdom.

"Come in and see the hairy dogs from Hokkaido," cried the Barker. And the Japanese gasped with wonder at the sight of the strange hairy men and the women with their tattooed mustaches.

BATTLED AGES AGO

In the lore of Japan one finds accounts of fierce battles with the Ainu—battles as terrible and heroic as those of Troy in Greek mythology.

According to their myths, the Japanese came from Korea to the southernmost part of Kiushiu, the most southern of the three great islands of the empire. Long before the definite history of the country began, according to legends, they drove the hairy people into the northern islands, where, for thousands of years, they have lived, neither progressing nor perishing.

They have been diminishing in numbers, however. The imperial government regards these people as wards, and affords them protection, making no effort, however, to civilize them.

Amazing, indeed, is the idea of beauty among these people. Until they marry, the women are permitted to wander about as nature created them. But once she has a husband, a woman must decorate her body with tattoo marks and "receive" a mustache.

Quite often the husband performs the job, the most painful of which is the tattooing of the mustache. A woman without these marks is without honor in her country, and the more pronounced and hideous they are the more beautiful she is in the eyes of her admiring husband.