

JAMES JAMIESON'S LEAP-YEAR PROPOSAL

A Scotchman's Method of Popping the Question

By BESSIE DETWEILER

JAMES JAMIESON was Scotch from the top of his sandy hair to the soles of his neat little boots. But he could not be more completely Scotch than was Jeannie MacPherson. Even her sprinkling of freckles was a proof of her fine Scotch complexion which freckled easily because so very delicate.

Jamie had been in love with Jeannie for the last ten years, but had never declared his passion, although he knew, and so did she, and indeed the whole countryside, that he hesitated only because of his overwhelming shyness. They both worked for the same farmer, and saw a great deal of each other. James knew very well that Jean was almost as shy as he, but long ago he had imbibed the idea that she should be the first to speak, and from this firm conviction he had never swerved.

Other lads sought the hand of the bright-eyed Jeannie, with her thick reddish curls, but she was so rude and even cutting to them that they fled in dismay. One bolder young hopeful had spent an entire evening with her, and had left with her "Good-night" as the last two of the five words she had spoken to him the entire evening. That chilly "Good-night" had been the last of his drop of cold water on the flame for him.

Her mistress had gently reproved her for her rudeness, but had received the curt retort:

"Oh, ma'am, I canna abide him! He's sic a tawpie!" And with a toss of her ruddy locks, Jean had renewed her scrubbing with great energy.

James had welcomed leap-year twice with high hopes. Surely she would make use of her opportunity. If she did not—but that was out of the question. She knew how shy he was. But twice he had learned that all things do *not* come to him who waits, if he merely waits and does not help himself. The third leap-year, however, convinced him of a realization of his dreams. She was now twenty-four and would not let another year waft her into spinsterdom. Surely not! The weeks sped on and he grew uneasy. So, after much pondering on his pillow, he resolved that he would try to lead the conversation to the point desired. Accordingly he laid his plans.

One bright Sabbath just before dinner, Jean, whose day it was to get dinner while her mistress was examining her neighbors' hats in her pew, was busily paring potatoes in the kitchen. Jamie was poised high and dry on the edge of the wash-sink opposite, his feet dangling therefrom like two pendulums.

"Jeannie," said he.

Jeannie looked up.

"Potatoes is an awfu' price, is they no?" he went on desperately under the confusing fire of her radiant eyes.

"Aye," was her response, adding—"but ye shouldna' talk about sic matters on the Sabbath."

"Na," agreed Jamie bashfully, "but I was thinkin' they were, so I said it."

Jeannie's laugh brought him to his senses with a start. She was retorting:

"If ye maun think it ye might as well speak it, it's a' the same, ye'r a sinner, Jamie--ye'r a sair sinner!"

"No, Jeannie," he cried, "I dinna speak out all I think, ye canna say wi' truth, lassie, that I maun speak out all I think, eh?"

She suddenly was very serious and responded gravely:

"Ye shouldna think what ye durna speak. If ye'r ashamed to speak it ye shouldna think it."

James was driven into a corner. He was nonplussed. At last he shot forth thus:

"But if ye'r ower shy!—There's things"—he hurried on breathlessly—"there's things a mon thinks on that if he spoke them ilka time he thought on them he'd speak naething else in the world!"

His tone was so unusual that Jeannie, who had resumed her potato paring, now looked up again with a startled look in her eyes. He was very red, and pretended to be studying his feet with tremendous concentration. It was little wonder, for one foot had taken a rotary motion, while the other attempted to continue the pendulum swing. To keep up these two movements simultaneously certainly did require close application of mind. Jeannie had a keen eye, but a still keener sense of humor.

"Ye look like a craw on the fence," said she, shaking with mirth.

He swallowed this dose admirably in his hot pursuit of "the point." Eagerly he added:

"Aye, I'm a craw an ye'r the field o' corn."

She only regarded him with increasing merriment. Then she burst out:

"Hoots, mon, if ye kened the kind o' craw I mean, ye'd no' mind the corn!"

"What kind?" enquired the unsuspecting Jamie.

"A scarecrow," said she cheerfully.

No rifle shot could have brought down a "craw" from a fence more instantaneously than this shot made the human crow drop from his perch. Even his ears burned this time, but he retorted with great pretence of severity,

"Ye needna say anything about desecratin' the Sabbath! Jeannie, sic frivolity on the Sabbath is shameful. Elder Tammas wad hae ye afore the session if he heerd ye!"

The mock penitence on Jeannie's face was too funny for his sobriety.

Just then she got up to put the kettle on and his opportunity was past.

But to one who is on the lookout for opportunities as concernedly as Jamie, another opportunity is not long in presenting itself.

One night Jeannie was milking the cows which were all in the large cowshed, not tied fast as Jeannie had told James not to trouble tying them; they stood, she said, very well, thanks to her training. They did, indeed, stand well, as James remarked to himself, hanging the upper half of himself over the lower half of a stable door. Jeannie was unconscious of her observer and milked away in her vigorous manner that was a part of her.

One cow, however, being younger than the rest, and consequently not long under her training, was seized with a roving disposition, and persisted in making a pilgrimage every other minute with the irate Jeannie in its wake. The fifth pilgrimage, effected just as Jeannie had settled herself, brought the traveler directly before Jamie. But Jeannie was not in a seeing mood, and she sat down determinedly for the sixth time. She patted the cow a few times and talked to it in alluring tones, which went to Jamie's heart of hearts, and made him wish wildly to be a cow—almost—if he might but hear such tones addressed to him.

The cow stood unmoved, apparently, but just as Jeannie set to business with a will, the gypsy longing came upon this interesting creature, and with a toss of its head, it walked off with the briskness and dash of a business man flourishing himself down his front steps. Jeannie sprang up in exasperation.

"Ye limmer of a beast!" she cried hotly, "I'll go wi' ye wherever ye go—if ye want me or no!"



"Aye! Aye!" he shrieked, seizing her hands in a terrific clasp.

"Now or never," muttered Jamie, and cleared the door at a bound.

"Aye! Aye!" he shrieked, seizing her hands in a terrific clasp while the pail and the milk had a race for the straw-covered floor.

Jeannie gasped and turned pale. Astonishment and horror made her mute. Then a terrible thing happened.

He could think of nothing else to say!

Wild ideas of all kinds shot through his brain like so many comets through a clouded sky, but try as he might, he could not hold them fast. Suddenly the vision of the potato paring flashed across his brain and in desperation he gasped:

"Are they no an awfu' price?"

"What?" cried Jeannie with eyes that told him he was insane.

"Engagement rings!" he retorted dizzily.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, dropping her head so that the curls hid her rosy face, "but a plain gold band wad do me, Jamie."

An hour after they stood side by side before the mistress of the house and told her the news. They were going to be married. They would go and set up housekeeping for themselves. They looked like two children who had been caught stealing jam.

"I thought," laughed Mrs. Hogins, "that you would be too shy to propose, James."

James burst into a triumphant smile that relieved the redness of his blushing face.

"I didna, ma'am," said he.

"Jamie!" almost shrieked Jeannie, her eyes ablaze.

"This is leap-year, ma'am," said he, "and Jeannie did it for me."

The very freckles—a half dozen of them over her little nose—rose darkly from the pallor of her face and accused him. She was speechless.

"Aye," he persisted sheepishly, "ye did, Jeannie, ye said 'I'll go wi' ye wherever ye go—if ye want me or no!'"

Then the blaze died out of her eyes, and a maze of sparkles took its place.

"Umphm!" said she, nodding demurely, "but I said too, 'Ye limmer of a beast!' an' if ye'r willin' to be a beast I'll no fash myself."

James' face fell. Suddenly another bright idea struck him, and he cried with rare intensity:

"Jeannie, will ye hae me?"

"Aye," said she.

Shy James Jamieson not only proposed, but proposed before a third person. But sometimes when he tries to tease Jeannie about her leap-year proposal, she retorts:

"Ye'r a limmer of a beast then, Jamie," and then he reminds her reproachfully of his final brave deed, whereupon there is a suspicious lack of words on both sides.

CURES FOR JEWELS

ARE your jewels fading away? Then they are "sick," you should see that they are properly looked after, says a writer in *Answers*.

All jewels, as a matter of fact, are liable to become "ill," and a proper jewel nurse or doctor should be called in to attend the patient. What this "illness" really is has not yet been definitely settled. Certain people, however, have a mysterious power which enables them to "cure" pearls that have lost their brilliance.

One of the most remarkable pearl "curers" is Senorita Valencia, a Spanish dancing girl. She discovered her mysterious power quite by accident. One day she bought some pearls very cheaply owing to their dullness. She wore them for a few weeks, and they gradually regained their original beauty.

So successful has she been in this work that she is now more famous as a curer of sick pearls than as a dancer. She has been commissioned by the Tsar to go to St. Petersburg in order to "cure" the famous pearl necklace which belonged to the Empress Catherine.

Only a short time ago the authorities of the Louvre, the famous art gallery in Paris, were searching everywhere for a reliable nurse for their famous pearl necklace, consisting of one hundred and fifty of the finest pearls in existence. This necklace is valued at £50,000, but that value is going down rapidly, as the pearls are losing all their lustre, and becoming dull and colorless.

Another dodge for curing sick pearls besides wearing them, is to place them in the sea again. But it must be the open sea itself. They are generally placed in a perforated casket, and left at the bottom of the ocean for months—sometimes years—before the cure is completed.

Sometimes pearls are actually operated upon! The pearl is, first of all, placed in a number of different baths, in order to soften the outer skin. Then this discolored, dull skin is carefully removed by the pearl doctor. The greatest care has to be exercised in the process, but more often than not the operation is a success.

Rubies, like pearls, often lose their brilliancy, and the "doctor" has to be called in. The precious stone is first thoroughly cleaned, and then carefully dyed. Then in a day or two the ruby is given another dose of dye. The "patient" is afterwards thoroughly massaged, and under this vigorous treatment it slowly recovers its normal health, and becomes as brilliant as ever.

Diamonds suffer as much from disease as any other precious stones. One of the worst, and, alas! one of the commonest, "sicknesses" a diamond gets is an attack of yellow tint. A stone free from the fatal yellow tint is far and away more valuable than one with it.

First, the diamond is given an ink bath. When taken out of its black bath it is allowed to dry partly, and is then carefully wiped with a soft cloth. Wiping the stone while the ink is still damp ensures a very slight coating of ink remaining. A diamond that has had an ink bath loses its yellow tint, and acquires a slightly blue one instead. Blue-tinted diamonds are worth more than yellow ones. The ink bath, if cleverly done, will deceive even experts.

Sometimes a poor diamond is treated with a bright violet dye, which, again, does away with the objectionable yellow tint. Of course, both these methods only make the diamond look better for a short time. Sooner or later the ink "skin" or dye is rubbed or washed off, and the stone goes back to its original state.