HERE, GIRLS, ARE A FEW LEAP YEAR POINTERS!

CATALOGUE and "COMPLETE PROPOSER for SPINSTERS and WIDOWS."

Being a List of the Most Eligible Bachelors of the Realm and a Discourse Upon the Most Approved Forms of Feminine Popping—Single Blessedness Among Our Public Men and Multi-Millionaires—Unusual Bachelor Crop This Year—What They Have to Offer in Position, Pedigree and Pocketbook.

BY JOHN ELFRETH WATKINS.

THE leap year proposal which an ardent Texas lady has addressed to the young and statuesque Postmaster-General suggests that a catalogue of bachelor Americans, worthy of being termed "good leap year catches," might be of interest, if not of value, to the many worthy but neglected spinsters and widows of the land.

And for the guidance of all good ladies tired of a single existence it will not be amiss to add a few classic and historic precedents established by brave ladies who have proposed to their future lords and masters, and who have thus established a code useful and essential to the fine art of leap year proposing.

Twere readily perceived why the Postmaster-General should have received a leap year proposal within the first few days of this magic year. Only recently has he arrived at that age of discretion when men are ripe enough for the matrimonial market—for of Summers he has seen but 44. Like Washington and Jefferson, he is red-haired, and stands several inches over the six-foot mark—a combination bespeaking as great emotional as physical powers.

With cheek, chin and lip as naked as those of Adonis, he yet preserves the figure of the Apollo Belvidere—a shoulder broad and square and a waist line fully preserved. With a year and a month yet left in his term of office—and mayhap four more years into the bargain—he has abundant time in which to heap upon some lady fair the exalted honor of being a "Cabinet wife" and of assuming a social eminence second only to that of the land's first lady herself.

He is the only bachelor adorning the Cabinet board, and none grace the bench of the Supreme Court. But in the Senate there are three.

Our Bachelor Statesmen.

The youngest of this defiant trio is Senator Brandegee, of Connecticut, only 47, who has to his credit a wealth of good looks. But the leap year charmer who wins him must possess sufficient magnetism to counteract the attraction of the seven clubs to which he belongs—one for every night in the week.

Representative Butler Ames.

Moreover, she should not be of an inquisitive nature, for as chairman of the committee that has lately uncovered the evils of the "third degree" he has become initiated into all of the secrets of forcing confessions. As his Senatorial term will not expire for three years, there is abundant time for his captor to enjoy the social advantages of his rank after leading him to the altar.

The two other Senatorial bachelors, Burton, of Ohio, and Penrose, of Pennsylvania, are looked upon as confirmed misogamists, but there is always a chance for the right lady at the right psychological moment. Senator Burton, having just passed his 60th birthday, can be more highly recommended for his docility than Senator Penrose, who is only 51. But the Ohio Senator's being a minister's son may compensate for this discrepancy in years—that is, if we accept the ancient belief that rectory-reared boys are more prone to mischief than those brought up in an environment more worldly. In a published catalogue of Americans of royal descent Senator Penrose is entered as a direct descendant of Llewelyn Iowerth, the Great, who was Prince of North Wales back in the twelve hundreds.

Likeliest Catch in Congress.

But the Congressional leap year catch who can boast of the likeliest combination of youth and wealth is Representative Butler Ames, of Massachusetts, grandson of the famous Civil War hero, General "Ben" Butler. He is only 40, a stylish dresser and a great drawing-room favorite. The lady who snares him will find him a handy man about the house, for he has a natural genius for tinkering. Already he has built himself an automobile and an aeroplane.

Jerome Napoleon Bonaparte. © Harris & Ewing

Harold S. Vanderbilt.

John Barrett.

Senator Brandegee. © Edmonston

Kingdon Gould.

Maidens seeking the traveled experience of the patriarch in combination with the grace and pulchritude of youth should give careful consideration to the charms of that suave and amiable bachelor diplomat, John Barrett, director-general of the Pan-American Union. Besides serving as editor and war correspondent, he has in the brief compass of his 45 years performed important missions for his Government in as many countries as you can count upon the fingers of your two hands. At slipper time before the blazing fire the widely traveled John can be depended upon to discourse entertainingly of his adventures in Siam, Japan, Corea, Siberia, India, Mexico, Argentina, Panama, and Colombia, for he entered the diplomatic service while only in his twenties. In the drawing-rooms of the capital he has long been a prime favorite with the debutantes of officialdom and as a banquet host he has no peer.

Strength, Wealth and Pedigree.

Another leap year eligible, both ornamental and useful is the Treasurer of the United States, Lee McClung. Having been a famed athlete in his time he is the physical ideal of the ardent and powerful knight who could bounce his lady love upon his saddle and bear her off unto the priest and his castle bold. He was the star football captain at Yale 20 years ago and he still keeps in training upon the tennis court. Only 41 years have gotten past him and he is fair to look upon. Moreover, he has a greater pecuniary responsibility than any other American.

Perhaps no American bachelor in public life has to offer as many attractions as Gifford Pinchot, the "progressive" agitator. He is very rich, handsome, scholarly and young—only 46. He lives in one of the show-houses of Washington, has been educated not only at Yale, but in the universities of France, Germany, Switzerland and Austria; has been a college professor and Federal official. Many sportsmen regard him as America's greatest angler and big game hunter. Moreover, he has the entree of the most exclusive social circles here and abroad. His sister, Lady Johnstone, is the wife of an eminent British diplomat. So the lady who captures him will be assured a social career on both sides of the big pond.

There is also a chance this year for some ambitious lady to make herself a Bonaparte. When it comes to name and pedigree there is no more tempting "eligible" than Jerome Napoleon Bonaparte, III, a Washington bachelor, who will reach his 34th birthday this month. He is the great-grandson of Jerome Bonaparte, King of Westphalia, and great-grandnephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperior of France. Although born in Paris, he is an American citizen and Harvard graduate. His mother died this Winter, leaving him a fortune and the jewels of his royal forbear.

This leap year's list of young bachelor scions of the great multi-millionaire families is unusually promising. First there is young William Vincent Astor, who will become of age during the year. He is the only son of John Jacob Astor, who, after having been divorced by Mrs. Ava Willing Astor, married Miss Force a few months ago. Another bachelor Astor is John Jacob the Fifth who is the younger son of William Waldorf. He will be 26 this year and his prospective share of his father's estate is estimated at $70,000,000. He is an officer in the most aristocratic of London regiments, the King's Life Guards. Several years ago, while his troop was at swimming practice, he dived in and saved a trooper who, after having been kicked senseless by a horse, had fallen into the water.

A prospective head of the house of Gould is also in this leap year's matrimonial market. This is Kingdon, eldest son of George Jay Gould, the present head of that multi-millionaire family. The share of the latter's estate, to which young Kingdon will be entitled, is estimated at $10,000,000 He and his younger brother have been subjected to spartan discipline by their father, who built them a gymnasium and polo field upon his Lakewood estate, Georgian Court.

The great Vanderbilt family, too, has a young bachelor, Harold S., a son of William K. and a brother of the Duchess of Marlborough. He is only 28. Then the Goelet family has to offer to the lady with the proper dot, Robert Walton, who is 31. He is the eldest of the two children of the late Robert Goelet, 2d.

In the multi-millionaire house of Havemeyer there is a rich catch in the person of Young Raymond, a bachelor who will this year reach the 28th year mark. He is the grandson of William Frederick, 1st, founder of the fortune, and the son of William Frederick, 2d.

Heirs to Princely Fortunes.

Other promising catches in the great multi-millionaire families are:

Pierre Lorillard, 3d, Harvard graduate, and his brother Griswold, who will reach 30 and 27 this year. They are both sons of Pierre, 2d.

Raymond Belmont, nearly 24, and his brother Morgan, almost 20—sons of August Belmont and each heir to one-third of his fortune.

Marshall Field, 3d, grandson of the merchant prince and son of late Marshall Field, 2d. He is the male head of the house and will be 19 in a few months.

Philip D. Armour, 3d, grandson of the beef baron and one of the two sons of the late Philip D., 2d. He is making ready to celebrate his 18th birthday.

Few young gentlemen upon this

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The House Of Dreams — A Tale of Love and Adventure.

BY BATTERMAN LINDSAY.

WHEN I came upon the House quite unexpectedly, I experienced a shock of startled recognition, but no surprise; for I had been seeing it now and again in my dreams for many years. No dwelling could have been more commonplace and unattractive in appearance. The long way of it abutted upon the road, and the steep weather-beaten slope of its roof enhanced the gray monotony of its exterior.

It was two-storied, with narrow porches extending its whole length, above and below; and from the dust of the highway one could step directly upon the unrailed lower one. In both stories, it had a door in the middle and two small-paned windows on either side, which created an uncanny impression of empty eye sockets.

Evidently it was long deserted, and so I had always seen it; but it was still in good condition, for those whom it had once served as a roadhouse had long since passed another way, and there was none to molest it.

The interior of this house had never been shown to me; so I swung from my saddle to the porch, determined to have the secret of it before going further. The door was not locked, and admitted me to a small square entry, with a door on either hand, and between them a stair, occupying the whole width of the hall, and ascending before me to the upper regions.

The portal to my right led into a parlor, where the cheap and gaudy paper was still intact, though faded and discolored, and from an empty stove-pipe hole sooty streaks ran down the wall. Behind this was a large apartment which no doubt had once been the dining-room; from here one passed through a pantry under the stairs into the whilom kitchen, and from there into the front room on the left of the entrance, formerly the bar and office of the tavern. Here was a huge fireplace of rough stone, and a large table of home-made workmanship. Other than this there was not a vestige of furniture, not a closet or cubby-hole which could have concealed a mouse.

The secret was not hidden here.

I climbed the stairs, my tread echoing hollowly in the empty edifice. A narrow hallway divided the house in two from end to end, and in each half were four small chambers. One after another I entered them, and gazed with fatuous gravity at bare walls and floors; baldly naked to the wan light of the Autumn afternoon, staring in through curtainless windows. In two or three of the rooms were the soot-bewhiskered stove-pipe holes, and I explored these with a serious attention of which I should have hated to think there was any witness.

As I prowled, intermittent noises as of stealthy footfalls and faintly rustling garments accompanied me. Once, as I entered a chamber from the hall, a door connecting it with the next one closed softly. I sprang to it, but when opened it revealed only another empty space between four walls.

Once, I sneezed, and brought a cloud of impalpable dust down upon me, and inaugurated a clamor of raucous echoes that appalled me.

One by one, I completed my examination of the rooms; all were alike in their stark bareness, until I came to the eighth, a corner one. As I crossed its threshold, marveling at its strange obscurity, so unlike the others, a shadowy figure advanced to meet me through an open door, where no door should be, but an outer wall.

I arrested myself, my grasp still on the knob, and the other did likewise. My hand instinctively sought my hip, a gesture duplicated by the other.

It was an appreciable time before the comprehension grew upon me that he who was thus coming to meet me was my own image reflected in the opposite window darkened into a reflecting surface by the crowding gray-green branches of a sturdy juniper. A disregarded seedling when the house was built, it had since grown into a lusty shrub, pressing closely against the pane. I laughed sheepishly, and the echoes mocked me with cacophonous din.

It is disconcerting to hear your own laugh in an empty dwelling, and you alone in it. I swore under my breath, and quietly made my way back downstairs.

Standing on the veranda, I argued with myself, attempting to convict myself of folly in permitting a chance resemblance to the fantasy of a dream to assume proportions of such importance in my imagination. In vain; for as my eye roved over the scene, now beheld for the first time, it too seemed as familiar as the sound of my own name.

On the opposite side of the road lay a small lake with marshy borders occupying the center of an oval basin rimmed by low, bare hills of tarnished copper hue. Out of the hills at the upper end the old highway emerged, passed the house midway and went out of sight again into the hills at the lower end. The sky was overcast by a uniform dull pall and so I had always seen it. In every detail of its featureless monotony, the scene was familiar.

For me, this house certainly held something, and I must know what before taking the road again. I turned and re-entered.

Again I received a shock.

Sitting half way up the stairs, with a small derringer cocked across her knees, was a young woman.

"Don't move another step," she said.

The warning was needless. Surprise held me motionless more effectually than her weapon. But for the entirely human sound of her voice, I should have regarded her as a second illusion.

"What were you looking for upstairs?" she inquired after the mutual stare had endured several seconds.

"You can search me!" I replied fervently. "Though, now that I come to think of it, I believe it must have been you, though I did not realize it at the time."

"Don't be flippant!" she admonished crisply. "I am very much in earnest!"

"Would you object to turning that weapon a little?" I suggested humbly. "I don't mind telling you that it makes me feel quite a bit nervous."

There was just the faintest perceptible twitching at the corners of her mouth, which I regarded as a favorable sign. She deflected the barrel slightly, and looked me over consideringly.

"Can I be of any use to you?" I inquired politely.

"No, thank you," she returned with equal politeness. "My father will be back in a few moments. Or—yes! You will oblige me greatly by getting on your horse and going on wherever it was you were going."

"I had intended to pass the night in this inn," I replied.

"Please!" she said.

It was impossible to disregard the entreaty in her voice. I turned from the door and stood on the porch, reflecting, while my pony nuzzled in my palm.

Mount and ride away! From this House of my Dreams, that held enshrined in its emptiness something so unexpectedly precious? So madly piquing to curiosity! So evidently in need of protection. That at least was sure, whatever else was mysterious.

Sitting half way up the stairs, with a small derringer cocked across her knees was a young woman.

The tires of an auto had left their broad tracks in the dust of the old road. I had noted them on my first arrival, wondering idly what errand could have brought the machine into this deserted and forgotten land. The car had stopped in front of this house, people had gotten out (the story was told plainly in the dust) and then the wheel marks went steadily on toward the hills.

Why was this girl left behind alone, a prey to fear and suspicion?

No, I would not mount and ride way.

I led my pony to the lake, loosened the cinch and let him drink his fill, then brought him back and left him before the door, with trailing rein, for so he was trained to stand till the last trumpet sounded if left so long. Then I knocked some boards off the shed which had once stabled the stage horses and taking them in through the kitchen door, soon had a snapping blaze in the cavernous chimney. With a bough from the juniper tree I swept the dust from table and floor, and with some of the filched boards improvised a seat.

Not until all this was done did I venture a peep into the hall to see if the bird were still there. It was; perched in the same place—a tired and worried looking bird. Should I be able to coax it from its perch?

"Won't you come to the fire?" I inquired cheerfully. "You may as well be comfortable while you wait."

With but a momentary hesitation she complied. She seated herself on the makeshift bench and basked in the firelight with evident enjoyment.

"It feels good," she remarked after a moment. "It was getting right chilly out there."

I sat on a corner of the table and waited for her to make the conversation, judging that course to be more becoming in me.

She unwound her veil and took off her hat, stabbing the pins back into it, and lifted her hair lightly with her finger tips. The worried look faded measurably from her face, and the nervous tension of her figure relaxed as she gave herself up to rest and warmth.

"If we only had a cup of tea now, we would be quite cozy," she ventured with a charming smile.

"Just what I was thinking myself!" I agreed with enthusiasm.

"No! Really, we couldn't!"

"We surely can." I assured her, and hastened to fill my camp kettle from the lake; to rake out a bed of clear coals on the hearth and set the kettle over them on two flat stones. I produced my package of tea, my few lumps of sugar and my one tin cup. The top of my flask made a second, if diminutive, drinking vessel, and very quickly we were drinking tea, and munching crackers in perfect good-fellowship.

"It is just like one of Mrs. Wharton's or Robert Chambers' stories. Their people are always eating or drinking something," my mysterious girl said, giggling delightedly. She was very young, certainly not more than 19, and though her manner was perfect in its decorum, I could not doubt that the roots of her soul were steeped in joy of this adventure.

Moving unthinkingly, from somewhere about her the derringer dropped to the floor. She gazed at it in round-eyed horror.

"It might have gone off!" she breathed.

"It was impossible not to laugh as I stooped to pick it up. She grew prim again instantly.

"All the same, I should have used it, if you had not stopped when you were asked!" she said.

I hastened to assure her that I had no doubt on the subject.

"What were you laughing at when you were upstairs?" she asked suspiciously.

I related my disconcerting encounter with my own reflection, when I also had been quite sudden with my pistol, and we laughed over it together.

"Do you know," she confided, "I thought you were laughing because you knew I was there, dodging around from room to room to keep out of your sight. Truly, did you not know I was there?"

"I felt it," I returned soberly. "But in that idiotic way we mortals have of denying all the subtle best of us, I told myself it was a childish imagining."

"If we only had a cup of tea now, we would be quite cozy," she ventured.

She regarded me thoughtfully. "And you do not think it strange for me to be here?" she inquired.

"As incredibly strange," I replied, "as if, picking a pebble out of my pony's shoe, I had found it a diamond."

"Well, you are here also!" she returned, instantly on the defensive.

"I am quickly accounted for," said I. "A civil and mining engineer, temporarily idle, I am doing a little prospecting on my own account. It has always been a theory of mine that this country was never more than scratched a little on the surface."

"Just what my father says!" she cried. "Are you a Berkeley man?" she asked irrelevantly, her eyes upon my pin.

I admitted the fact. "I wonder if you knew my cousin, Billy Billings? He is a D. K. E., too."

It was my great good luck to have known Billings well, and forthwith we were in hot pursuit of further mutual acquaintanceship. But presently her brow clouded, and she consulted her toy watch.

"Dad surely ought to be back by now," she said, with a return of her anxiety. And then she quite simply expounded the mystery of her presence, which, after all, was no mystery.

"A few weeks ago, a man came to papa in Los Angeles, and told a tale of having located a mine, the richest ever, but he had never done his assessment work on it. He was without the price of a meal, not to mention enough to get him over here, and he offered to show papa the place and give him a half interest, if he would come down here with him and re-locate. He said there are too many people prowling around through this country these days—you, for instance—and that somebody else was liable to rediscover and locate his precious mine at any time. He got papa interested finally, and prevailed upon him to come, and I made dad let me come, just for fun. About noon we stopped here with the intention of eating our lunch, and papa went down to the lake after a pail of water. I got out and came up on the porch to peep in the windows of this house. In the wink of an eye that ungrateful wretch was off with the car, and left papa and me staring at each other from opposite sides of the roads like a pair of Cheshire cats. And the worst feature of it was, he had the lunch basket!"

I silently passed her the cracker tin. She took one and nibbled it as she continued.

"We held a council of war, and decided the only possible thing to do was for dad to walk back 10 miles or so, and try to get a conveyance of some sort at a ranch we passed. I never walked that far in my life, at once I mean, and would have been a great hindrance to him, when time is so important. And we both thought I would be perfectly safe in this old house, so papa gave me his derringer and left me. And not a soul came by, or a thing happened until you."

"Are you not rather glad I happened?" I ventured.

"Yes, I am," she answered frankly. "It was getting mighty spooky for a fact, and cold. But I wish that my father would happen."

As if in answer to her wish there was a sound of wheels outside. She whisked to the door, and I followed, not too far behind to witness the look of tense anxiety on the face of the newcomer give place to one of pleased relief on beholding his daughter, safe and joyous. The sight of my pony must indeed have given him some bad moments as he approached.

My inconnue cleared the situation at once by introducing me as one who belonged to the same frat as Billy Billings, and had been "most kind."

"Very glad to know you, Mr. Stanup," said the old gentleman, extending his hand with perfunctory cordiality. While his daughter adjusted her hat and veil, and looked for her gloves, his eyes rested thoughtfully upon my range pony. Suddenly his face lighted. He turned with animation to me.

"That looks like a mighty good little broncho," he suggested.

"I presume my daughter has told you of our ridiculous predicament. It has occurred to me that if you would drive her on to Hawthorne, and led me your pony, I might outwit that scoundrel yet. He knows no more about a machine than I do about roping a steer, and he is bound to come to grief before he gets very far. I used to be very familiar with this country once myself, and I can come pretty near locating that mine now without any further assistance from him. It can be but a short distance from here in an air line, and I can cut through the hills on the pony."

The suggestion was promptly approved by me, and Daughter's protesting "Papa!" was met with a somewhat brusque reply.

"It is the best that can be done, my dear. I am determined not to be made a monkey of by that scamp. There is a decent hotel in Hawthorne. Mr. Stanup will take you there, you will engage a room for me and register us both, and I will be with you some time tomorrow."

He imprinted a hasty salute upon his daughter's cheek, and was off at a swinging lope across the plain. Daughter turned to me with a little laugh that was almost a sob.

"You seem to be in for it!" she said.

"It sure looks as if I were elected," I replied, dissembling my exceeding joy, lest I should appear to be taking an unfair advantage of the situation. Then I proceeded, as matter-of-factly as if nothing epochal had happened to me, to give the team a drink and extinguish the fire upon the hearth. For I would have no snapping sparks destroy my blessed House of Dreams. Perchance I might wish to pass my honeymoon in it. Nothing could seem beyond the bounds of possibility now; nor even that I should win this fair maiden whose name I did not know as yet, but whom my heart had joyously acclaimed at the very moment when she was pointing a pistol at my head.

As we drove away from the House, Papa rode into a gully between the hills and disappeared from our view. And under the brooding sky in all that dun world, there were but we two, as alone as the first pair.

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