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The Proposals of Paula By OTHO B. SENGA Copyright, 1904, by Otho B. Senga

The privileges and possibilities of leap year were under discussion. "It is my opinion," said Paula in a judicial tone, "that woman ought always to be the proposer and man the proposee," coining the word with charming assurance. "You would never dare," said one man tauntingly. "I'll prove it. In fact, I'll propose, not only to one, but to seven." The men surrounding her gave utterance to despairing groans, and the girl laughed enjoyably. "I've made up my mind," she continued in a reflective tone, "that I really ought to become engaged this year." "In that case," little Sawtelle began eagerly, "why not?" "Consider you? That wouldn't do at all. I want the pleasure of making a proposal that shall be original with myself." "You'll have some difficulty in choosing the 'proposee,'" declared Henderson gloomily. "Oh, I think not," airily, "Not all the eligible men of my acquaintance have proposed to me. I can think of several, any one of whom I would be willing to marry if all the circumstances were favorable." "Suppose the first one should accept?" suggested Dike Salter dismally. "There will not be any 'first.' There will be seven simultaneous proposals by letter, and I shall be somewhere in hiding. The man who reaches my side first—pausing as if to consider how to pile up the difficulties—"with a ring that fits my engagement finger—to him I'll say, 'Thou art the man!'" The Splinters' leap year ball was in progress at the Tulleries, the "Splinters" being a coterie of the richest society girls, many of them buds in their first season. Paula Pendleton's announcement was the climax to an evening of gaiety. "Do you really mean it, Miss Pendleton?" asked several. "I am genuinely in earnest," she replied, laughing, "but I feel safe; my hiding place will not be discovered." "Be careful lest you meet the fate of Geneva," warned a grave voice some distance from the laughing group.



"IS IT YOU, PAULA? AM I THE ONE TO FIND YOU?" "Did you notice Kenneth Carter?" whispered one of the girls. "He looked so scornful, and at you, Paula!" "Did he?" asked Paula indifferently. "He always looks scornful—or bored. It seems to be his natural expression." It was hardly a bored expression that rested on Kenneth Carter's dark face as he bent over Paula's white hand in courteous adieu. "You'd better take special notice of the size of my fingers," said the girl mockingly. A dangerous light gleamed for an instant in his dark eyes, and the hot southern blood flamed in his veins. "I prefer not to believe you in earnest," he answered guardedly. Paula's greatest charm for him was an indescribable quality, a combination of purity and comradeship that robbed the most daring speech or act of all unwomanliness. "I hope she won't do that," he thought uneasily on his way home. "It is only a girlish prank, but—" The next evening as Carter sat chatting with his invalid mother a note and a small package were brought to him. The note was but a line: "Now is the accepting time. Are you coming?" It was signed with Paula Pendleton's name. He read it hastily and sprang to his feet in angry dismay. Then he handed the note to his mother and explained rapidly. "Are you going?" she asked, hardly above her breath. "No," he replied sternly. "I will not

be a party to any such mockery of a thing that ought to be sacred. She is doubtless amusing herself as usual, and if there is a favored one among the seven he will know just where to look for her."

He turned sharply away, with choking throat and hot, stinging eyeballs. "You do care, Kenneth," persisted his mother wistfully. "Yes," he answered shortly, "I care. I care so much that I cannot tolerate the thought of her as a prize in a game of hide and seek."

"The package, Kenneth," Mrs. Carter suggested inquiringly. He opened it quickly, gazing bewildered at the contents, a small, plain gold ring. "What does it mean?" he asked confusedly. "I think it means that you are not the only one who cares. She evidently doesn't intend you to fall for lack of a ring that fits. Now will you go?" "Yes," he said quickly, "but I'll seek her at her home, as an honorable man should, not elsewhere."

He returned in an hour, with disappointment unmistakable in his face. His mother did not need to question him. "I saw three or four men who, I am positive, were looking for her," he said in a slow, hard tone—"Van Horn, with his best pair, and little Sawtelle in his automobile. There's a dinner dance at Trumbull's tonight, and young Cooper and Dike Salter came dashing out of there just as I was passing."

"Are you sure she isn't at home?" "It was her own maid who came to the door. I feel sure that she would not deceive me. You know she is little Oscar Larson's sister."

"The boy who was injured and for whom you secured the damages?" "Yes. The girl evidently knew all about this affair and realized the uselessness of my search, for she said in a very kind and gentle way, 'You'd better go home, Mr. Carter.'"

A faint flicker of a smile, instantly repressed, appeared at the corners of Mrs. Carter's mouth. "But the ring, Kenneth," she persisted. "Probably sent to raise my hopes and so make my failure all the more crushing," he answered bitterly. "We will not speak of it again, dear little mother, and I will say good night now. I want to be alone."

"Before you go, dear, please bring me my embroidery from the library table." He pushed aside the portieres and entered the library. A slender, girlish figure stood before the grate, and the dancing firelight fell in soft gleams upon her white dress and lent a bright glow to a face pale with emotion. Kenneth gave a sharp cry and sprang forward.

"Is it you, Paula? Is it really you? Am I the one to find you?" "Did you want to find me, Kenneth?" she asked, half crying. "Did I want to? Oh, Paula!"

He held her to his breast in silence and then bent and kissed the sweet mouth upraised to his. It was after the announcement of the engagement that Paula exclaimed one day, looking into Kenneth's gloomy face: "What is the matter, Sir Doleful? Such an expression as that on the face of a newly engaged man is hardly flattering to his fiancée."

He answered slowly, "That night at the ball you said there were several whom you would be willing to marry." "I did," Paula returned promptly, "but you may recall that I said also 'if all the circumstances were favorable.'"

"I can't see that that changes it any," he argued obtusely. "You don't deserve to be told, but because you are so stupid I'll have to explain that the absolutely essential circumstance was that I should love the man. And lest you continue making yourself miserable for nothing I'll confess right now that you were the only one to whom I sent a note. Even then I was so dreadfully afraid you wouldn't come that I followed the note, and your mother 'aided and abetted' in a most shocking manner."

The Order of the Garter. The Order of the Garter, the highest and most illustrious order of knighthood in Great Britain, was founded, says Selden, by King Edward III. on April 23, 1344. But some trace the origin of this order back to April 23, 1192, when Richard I. compelled twenty-six of his best knights to wear a thong of blue leather on the leg when fighting with the infidels. The generally accepted tradition, however, is that King Edward III. was dancing at a ball with the Countess of Salisbury when she dropped her garter, which the sovereign picked up and at first tied about his own leg. Observing, however, that this act excited a good deal of attention, he handed it back to the fair owner, with the words, "Honi soit qui mal y pense" ("Evil to him who evil thinks"), words still used as the motto of the order. The king said further that shortly they should see that garter advanced to so high an honor and renown as to account themselves happy to wear it.—Harper's Weekly.

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SPECIAL NOTICES. Notice for Bids. Bids will be received until Saturday, December 24, 1904, at 11 o'clock a. m. for building 42 net racks at the Occident and Columbia canneries. Plans and specifications can be seen at the office of the Columbia River Packers' Association. The right is reserved to reject any and all bids. Columbia Packers' Association.

FOR RENT—HOUSES. For Rent—Six-room house, corner 47th and Cedar streets, Alderbrook, two blocks from car line. Inquire of Mrs. K. Johnson, over Fisher Bros' store.

"MISCELLANEOUS." Notice. All persons having bands of the La Imperial and La Veras cigars must turn them over to the members of the committee not later than Saturday, December 24, at 1 o'clock p. m. sharp. For further particulars see committee. By order. Committee CIGARMAKERS' UNION.

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