

"Shall I Ask Him to Marry Me?"

Why Not, When Many other Women Have Proposed



Green Victoria shortly before her marriage



Baroness Burdett-Coutts



Maria Gay the singer who crossed the ocean to capture Sig Zeebello



Holland's Queen also offered her hand



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

Gabrielle Lobbekuehl 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, homeward.

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—are the chances for happiness? What, if he has a cautious eye on his future bliss, 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 inimitable pulchritude of St. Louis was enhanced by the presence of Miss Betty Sharpe, whose mass of dark hair, rounded cheeks, Cupid bow mouth, daintily 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 admirable 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 fulfill 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 not the most natural thing, as one happens to know or not to know the St. Louis city comptroller.

GAVE UP THE QUEST

He simply paid no attention to her letter. When time passed, until every evidence seemed to prove he was no better than a hymeneal four-fuscher, the dark-eyed belle from Norfolk resumed her tour westward under the chaperonage of her mother, for she had stopped over in St. Louis only to visit friends on her way to California.

And then, only then, did another friend of Mr. Hanna procure a photograph of sprightly Miss Betty, of Norfolk, and fill him with regretful, vain chagrin over his ungallant neglect.

But she's going back next summer. To date, these are the only men, so far as known, who have had the hardihood to refuse the love of an attractive woman this year—and one of them might have done so refusing at all if he had known how very attractive the woman was. The other side is more chivalrous to contemplate.

Miss Elizabeth Sohm is a woman editor—the editor of the *Sorm Lake Vidette*, in Iowa. She bid for the county printing, and the supervisors rejected her bid, she thought, because she was merely a woman.

"What the editor needs," she remarked in a pungent editorial worthy of the finest traditions of western journalism, "is a man to swear for her when things go wrong. We need a good printer to do our fighting and swearing for us. Any one who thinks himself qualified is at liberty to regard this as a leap-year proposal."

The editor of the *Lytton Star*, G. A. Craig, had two qualifications: He was a bachelor, and he had never taken a bluff.

"The editor of the *Star*," he rejoined editorially, "can fight and swear enough for two newspapers. If the editor of the *Vidette* will agree to darn his socks and mend the gable end of his trousers occasionally, he is satisfied that a deal can be closed at once."

It is hoped, throughout the length and breadth of admiring, palpitating Iowa, that Miss Sohm will do her obvious duty. But there's no telling about these erratic journalists.

It is as uncertain with actors. Zenatello, who left Milan to sing in Oscar Hammerstein's grand opera in New York, left behind him in Europe one of the most beautiful and talented of chorists—Marla Gay, whose engagement at Covent Garden, in London, was evoking nightly rounds of applause almost as passionate as the tumultuous appreciation of her beloved Mendel.

Her contract? What contract ever held a singer



The Women of Burma Always Propose

with even a sore throat, much less an aching heart! The next steamer bore to New York the delight of Covent Garden, to end, once for all, her doubt of Zenatello'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 Marla 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

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'm willing."

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 Hotter 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 lovemaking and proposal surpassed the Philadelphia match, and the date for the wedding was as early.

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

company there offered a bonus, last year, to the girl who wouldn't desert their posts for marriage. Miss Rus 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 1908 has furnished, only one has been attended with



Miss Betty Sharpe, who proposed to a Wagoner in St. Louis



Mrs. Albert Herman, a Cleveland woman who proposed

Where Women Wear Mustaches



Logged in Household Duties



An Aino Woman and Her Pet

ture 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 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.

SUPPOSING, 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 cutlets of black or soot, which tattooes 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 soot or black 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 coast 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 build up a structure of 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 tamed 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 unspeakably 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.

They were called the hairy dogs from Hokkaido, and cried the barker. And the Japanese gaped with wonder at the sight of the strange hairy men and the women with their tattooed mustaches.

In the story 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 Kishiu, the inner southern of the three great islands of the country, 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 their 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. In due time she has a husband, a woman must develop a body with tattoo marks and "receive" a mustache.

Quite often the husband permits the job to be done, of which is the tattooing of the mustache. A woman without these marks is without honor in her country, and the more pronounced and black they are the more beautiful she is in the eyes of her smiling husband.