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## How She Proposed

A Story For Leap Year

By ELINOR MARSH

Professor Poland of — Woman's college was lecturing to his class, his subject being customs in India. He had excited considerable attention while dwelling upon the suttee, the girls showing great indignation at the immolation of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre. A hundred pens taking down the lecture scratched fiercely on as many notebooks. From the suttee he passed to the products of the country, and the pen scratching fell off so perceptibly that the professor was admonished that he was losing his hold on the interest of his class. He kept a number of slips, on each of which was written some bit of information calculated to attract the attention of young women, and, taking up one, he interpolated it into his lecture.

"Among the singular marriage customs of different people there is one in India which is very delicate."

Every pen of the hundred young ladies began to send forth a sympathetic sound.

"A father will hold his daughter for a price to be paid by the suitor before marriage. A parent having a very beautiful daughter, or being able to

settle on her a large dowry will sometimes put so high a price on her that such young men as desire her cannot afford to pay it. This makes a market for marriageable women. Widows may be had at a very low price."

A hum of expressions of amusement, approbation or dissatisfaction interrupted the lecturer.

"When a father finds that he has been holding his daughter too high and wishes, so to speak, to put her on the bargain counter [laughter] he does not tack a card to her on which is written 'Special,' as would be done in America if we had any such marriage custom. He adopts a much more poetic method. He marries her to a bouquet of flowers and throws her husband into a well. Since he must be drowned the bride becomes a widow. This is a notification to the young men that she may be had cheap."

Professor Poland, who was a young man of twenty-seven, paused and showed a white set of teeth under his dark mustache in a smile which was meant to be a partial unbending from his professional dignity. A ripple of amusement passed over his auditors, and he was about to return to a finish of the products of India when Belle Halliday, one of those girls who go to college to let off a surplus stock of mischief, arose to ask a question. Professor Poland paused and looked at her inquiringly.

"This being leap year," she said, "it occurs to me that this wedding to the flowers might be used by a girl as a delicate way of proposing to the man of her choice. It would be equivalent to saying, 'I may be had for a song; buy me.'"

The class tittered. The professor looked at the ceiling, then made the following reply:

"Your method, Miss Halliday, would involve a knowledge on the part of the man proposed to of the Indian custom

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in question, which he would not be likely to possess.

"Oh, I didn't think of that!" And Miss Halliday sat down in pretended confusion. But if there was any confusion in the matter it was with the professor, who was at the disadvantage of being one man among many women. He made an attempt to smile, then went on with his lecture, but did not again strike anything as interesting to his class as the matter of a girl being wedded to a bunch of flowers and her husband being thrown into a well.

Professor Poland's lecture was delivered in February, and Miss Belle Halliday was graduated in the following June at the foot of her class. As has been said, she did not go to college to study, but to have a good time. She was philosophic about it. "Why should I make a grind of myself when all the rest of the class are grinds? If I spent my time studying, who would do the devilry? If I were destined to make my living as a teacher I would need to apply myself. But I'm not to teach; I'm to be married."

"Got him picked out, Belle?" asked a chum.

"Yes."

"Has he proposed?"

"No, and I don't expect him to propose. This is leap year, and I intend

to do the proposing myself."

"Going to be married to a bunch of flowers and throw your husband in a well?"

"Maybe."

The chief reason underlying Miss Halliday's indisposition to make a grind of herself she did not mention. Her father was a rich man, and she was an only child. Besides what property she might expect from him, she possessed a fortune in her own right, inherited from a grandmother. Indeed, it would be difficult to find a reason why she should, like the busy bee, improve each shining hour over dead languages, mathematics or philosophy for which she would have little or no use, since the probability of her coming to want was very remote.

But Miss Halliday was bright enough to get what she wanted, and in one respect she knew very well what she

wanted. She wanted Professor Poland. But Professor Poland was in receipt of an income of \$1,500 a year and possibly might in the course of ten years be worth twice that to the cause of education. Miss Halliday knew very well that the modest young man would never have the assurance to propose

(Concluded on last page.)

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