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This New Year Is Leap Year

By **ROBERT DONNELL**

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THE year 1912 is a leap year. Query: Why is a leap year? Why did the chicken cross the road? To get on the other side. Maybe that's why the year leaps. Anyhow, what's the use to bother about such a tangled mathematical, astronomical, scientific question as to why February has an extra day every four years—Hold on there, now! It hasn't. It has an extra day only when the number of the year is divisible by four. Hold on again! Even that is not strictly true, for the year 1900, which was divisible by four as long as it lasted, was not a leap year. The reason was—But go and look it up in the public library. Celebrate the New Year by finding out just how leap year came about. This story has to do only with leap year matchmaking.

Albeit it is now become a part of the common law, in regards to social relations of life, that as often as every bissextile year doth return, the ladies have the sole privilege, during the time it continueth, of making love unto the men, which they do, either by wordes or lookes, as to them it seemeth proper; and, moreover, no man will be entitled to benefit of clergy who dothe in any wise treat her proposal with slight or contumely.—From a Book Published in Shakespeare's Time.

Leap year is ladies' year. Yes; only year out of four when the ladies have the privilege of popping the question, and even then they don't do it. There is a prevalent fiction to the effect that girls propose to young men during leap

ungallant gentleman shall present the fender damsel with a new silk dress. There is a reservation, however, that the right to claim this penalty depends on the circumstance that when she proposed the damsel was the wearer of a scarlet petticoat, which



BEWARE OF THE LADIES.

(or a little of the lower portion of which) she must exhibit to the gentleman, the understood idea being that the silken dress shall cover the petticoat and thus assuage dire feminine indignation at the rejection of her offered hand.

Wherefore it behooves us bachelors—or widowers—in this new year to beware of ladies whose scarlet petticoats peep out when they cross a wet street or climb into an automobile or carriage.

Albeit, as often as leape yearre dothe occurre, the woman holdeth prerogative over the menne in matters of courtship, love and matrimonie; so that, when the lady proposeth, it shall not be lawful for the man to say her nae, but shall entertaine her proposall in all gude curtesie.—From the Statute in the Old Saxon Code.

According to the old Saxon code, as quoted above, no man may refuse a maiden who proposes in leap year without being discourteous. Therefore it is to be taken for granted that if any damsel or dame makes love, with proposal of matrimony, to any bachelor or widower said victim must accept the "suggestion" or forever after be held discourteous to the fair sex.

Leap year truly is an ancient institution. It was created, we are told, by no less a personage than C. Julius Caesar, who announced to the world that "all Gaul is divided into three parts." The late Mr. Caesar in the year 46 tacked the extra day in the calendar on to February, and for his services in thus giving a local habitation and a name to the day that had been wandering around every four years without where to lay its head the future calendarists honored him by naming the month of July for him—Julius July.

Seven hundred years ago, which was 1,200 years after Caesar's dust was turned to clay, to stop a hole to keep the wind away, as somebody quaintly remarked, leap year was the subject of lawmaking. A Scotch statute of the year 1228 reads thus:

It is statut and ordaint that during the reime of her maist bleisit majestie, ilk fourth year, known as leap year, ilk maiden ladye of bath high and low estait shall have liberty to bespeak ye man she likes; althit, if he refuses to take her to be wif, he shall be mulcted in the sum of one pound (41) or less, as his estait may be, except and awis if he can make it appear that he is betrothed to one woman, and then he shall be free.

Mr. Taft's New Year's.

President Taft will be a weary man before New Year's day is over, but no doubt his perennial smile will conceal the fact. Every year the president gives a New Year's reception at the White House. An ingenious statistician has figured that he shook a mile of hand last New Year's day, and this time he may have more than a mile of shaking. Last Jan. 2 the statistician wrote as follows:

"The Taft handshake yesterday was a long one. It is estimated that all the hands if raised one above the other would be taller than the combined heights of Eiffel tower, the Metropolitan Life tower, the Singer building, the Washington monument and St. Peter's dome, in Rome.

"The president shook the hands of 5,575 persons in three hours. The average length of a hand is seven inches. The total length of the hands shaken computed on this basis is 39,025 inches, or 3,252 feet 1 inch, or over half a mile.

"The Eiffel tower is 985 feet high, the Metropolitan tower 657 feet, the Singer building 612 feet, the Washington monument 555 feet and St. Peter's dome 330 feet, a total of 3,139 feet, as against the president's handshake of 3,252 feet high, or as long as you wish to compute it."



CELEBRATE THE NEW YEAR BY FINDING OUT JUST HOW LEAP YEAR COMES ABOUT.

years. It is nothing but a fiction, however. That is, they don't propose any more in leap year than they do in other years. As a matter of fact, girls do a large share of the proposing anyhow—larger than most of us imagine. Perhaps they do it with their eyes instead of their voices, but it is a fact that women are the real proposers.

If you don't believe it just keep your eyes open and watch. "Drink to me only with thine eyes" is not a vain boast. The eyes have it always when the motion "to love" is put, provided, of course, she really loves you, oh, fashful and love sick swain!

Yet there comes eternally back this seedy old superstition to the effect that in leap year women propose marriage to men—do it deliberately by word of mouth. Now, let's be sensible. Did you ever know or hear authentically of a woman who took ad-



PRESENT THE TENDER HEARTED DAMSEL WITH A NEW SILK DRESS.

vantage of this presumed leap year privilege? Ten to one you never did, and you never will.

"A lady has 'the privilege,'" says one of the writers who use things for granted just because they have always heard so and so, "in leap year of suggesting marriage between herself and a bachelor acquaintance. In the event of his refusing the penalty is that the

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