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THE KISS STEALER

He Was Very Adroit In His Thefts

By F. A. MITCHEL

The railroad, like everything else, is a development. The first rails were strap-iron on wooden beams. The first car was a stagecoach, then several stagecoaches together mounted on wheels. Then came the passenger car of the present day, only much smaller. When these cars were pulled through a tunnel the passengers were left in total darkness. Indeed, the lighting of railway cars passing through tunnels is a feature of recent years.

When Tom Arnold was about to return to college for his sophomore year he was asked if he would escort a little girl who was going in the same direction to boarding school. Tom didn't like being burdened with the care of a "little girl," but he couldn't very well decline. When he saw his charge he didn't mind taking care of her so much as he had thought he would. Lucy Atwood was fourteen years old, but tall enough for a girl of sixteen. She was very demure and appeared to be utterly devoid of conversational powers. Her protector, having reached the advanced age (to her) of eighteen, probably filled her with such awe as to prevent conversation with him.

But if Miss Atwood was tongue tied she was very pretty. There is nothing more delicate, to a young man especially, than a pair of pink coral lips. Lucy's complexion was as soft and downy as a peach, and her lips were a combination of beautiful curves. Tom couldn't keep his eyes off them. He was young and a sophomore in college, a combination that can occur but once in a man's life. His thoughts, his arguments, therefore were sophomoric. "I have been burdened with the care of a tongue tied kid without recompense. It behooves me to look out for my own reward. I don't know if my payment that would suit me better than just one kiss of those lips. In half an hour we'll get to the tunnel. It requires three minutes for a train to go through it, and one can do a great deal in three minutes."

This was the basis of a plan Tom formed. Before reaching the tunnel he would go into another car, first noting the exact position of his charge. As soon as the train plunged into darkness he would re-enter, make his way to where Lucy sat, take the kiss and retire. Some time after the train had emerged into the light he would go back to his seat, yawn, take up a newspaper and begin to read as if unconscious of anything eventful having happened.

It was a very pretty scheme, but more tempting to a youngster of eighteen than to a full fledged man. There was one thing about it, however. Tom didn't like. The kid had been placed in his care, and he didn't consider it quite honorable to avail himself of the situation to take what didn't belong to him. But the more criminal the act, the more horror attached to being found out, the more attractive the scheme.

Tom sat looking sideways at those lips, before which every vestige of honor faded. Nevertheless as the train approached the tunnel his courage began to fall him. What an awful thing for him to do! But how nice! Suppose the girl should scream and some one should grab him! The very thought gave him the shivers. But he was at an age when the greater the risk the greater the temptation. He fell, and great was the fall thereof.

He had often been through the tunnel and knew the approaches well. Some ten minutes before the train reached it he told his charge that he would go into the smoking car for a while if she didn't mind sitting alone. She said she didn't, and Tom, having noted that the seat was the third one from the door on the right, left the car. He didn't smoke, fearing that the odor of tobacco would give him away. He sat looking out through a window, a prey to numerous emotions.

When the train entered the tunnel, summoning all his resolution, he hurried into the car he had left and counted the seats on the right by putting a hand on each till he came to the seat required. Folding Lucy in his arms, he took the desired kiss. There was a smothered cry, followed in a few moments by the sound of an opening and closing door, then no other than the rattling of the train.

When daylight came again several passengers who sat near Lucy looked in her direction for an explanation of the cry they had heard. She gave no indication of anything unusual. She was wiping the dust from her face with her handkerchief. She would remove a portion of it, look at the smudge it had made on her handkerchief, then rub off some more, scrutinizing it also, especially in one corner.

Some twenty minutes after the train had left the tunnel Tom Arnold came back and sat down beside his charge. Had Lucy looked him in the face she would surely have seen signs of guilt which, despite his efforts, he was unable to conceal, but she was looking out through the window and did not give him a glance.

Tom was delighted with the success of his scheme. It was not the kiss

that pleased him, for he had enjoyed that he should have been intent upon it rather than on committing a robbery. It was the fact that he had carried out his scheme without having been detected. He wondered that Lucy made no mention of the stolen kiss, but a very young and delicate miss might feel abashed at communicating such a thing to a young man.

When the journey was ended and Tom left his charge at the door of her school he looked scrutinizingly into her eyes to see if he could detect any evidence of her suspecting him. She returned his gaze with a childlike simplicity that reassured him, and he left her feeling very comfortable.

One June morning, when the trees were in bloom, a young man who had been invited to spend a week end at the country place of a friend sauntered out on the veranda in negligee summer costume, plucked a rose, sniffed it, put it in the buttonhole of his flannel coat, descended the steps and strolled about the grounds. Having examined the tennis court, the stables and other features of the place, he sauntered toward a hedge, which was just the height to enable him to look over it. In the adjoining grounds was a pagoda, in the pagoda a hammock and in the hammock a feminine figure. But whether the lady was old, middle aged or young he could not see. He thought he would like to satisfy himself on this point. Walking back and forth along the hedge, he looked for an opening. At length, finding a place where the hedge was thinner than at others and stooping, he wormed his way through, though when he reached the other side his costume was somewhat disarranged.

Brushing off the dirt and straightening the bang of his clothing, he sauntered toward the pagoda. There was no movement of the figure in the hammock, and the morning being warm, he figured the occupant might be asleep. He had no business in the grounds, but he was a venturesome fellow, with no end of resource and assurance, and had an excuse ready in case he met any one. Drawing gradually nearer to the pagoda, he finally reached a point near enough for him to see a lady asleep in the hammock.

She was young—about twenty—and fair to look upon. She seemed to be sleeping so soundly that the young man drew nearer, even to the steps of the pagoda. There was something in the face of the sleeper that seemed familiar to him. He thought that he had seen her before, then that he had not, vibrating between these two opinions, at last deciding that he had not. One feature especially charmed him—the lady had a very kissable mouth.

For a young man to stand looking at a young lady asleep with a kissable mouth is dangerous—not so dangerous to the young lady as the young man, for there is certainly no harm in one being kissed who doesn't know of the fact. But the young man taking that which does not belong to him is liable to the consequences of his rash act. Then suppose the lady is awakened by the process? Such a contingency would naturally strike terror into any sensitive man.

The watcher drew nearer and nearer on tiptoe till he reached the hammock, then, bending over the sleeper, in one of the alternate risings and bendings finally lightly touched the lips with his. The sleeper slumbered on. Not a muscle twitched. The young man was tempted to take another, but suddenly the abyss on which he stood occurred to him, and, turning, he tiptoed away to the opening of the hedge and passed through. Then he began to wonder at the recklessness, the folly, the awfulness of what he had done.

When he untied his scarf at dressing for dinner that same evening he missed a stickpin surmounted with a horseshoe that he had worn during the day. He wondered how and where he had lost it. Then he remembered working his way through the hedge. He must have dropped it there. He was tempted to go out and look for it, but he had barely time to dress for dinner, so he must needs put off the search till morning.

When he went down to dinner whom should he see but the girl he had kissed in the hammock. He was seized with a terrible fright, but on being presented to her she gave no evidence whatever of ever having seen, met or heard of him before. He was assigned to her for a dinner companion, and by the time they were seated at table he had regained enough of his equanimity to remark that it had been a very hot day, that he hoped it would be cooler tomorrow and that he feared the summer would be an oppressive one.

However, the lady made it easy for him by being agreeable, and he gradually forgot that if she knew how he had robbed her she would despise him. After dinner the company strolled out on to the veranda and spent the evening under the moonlight amid the fragrance of roses. The thief of the kiss quite recovered from any qualms of conscience and was glad he had done it, especially since the girl had not awakened.

On Monday the young man took an early train to the city. When the postman arrived during the afternoon he brought a small package addressed to Thomas Arnold, Esq. Opening it, the recipient took out a handkerchief, in one corner of which were his initials and a stickpin with a horseshoe mounting.

Arnold sank down in a chair, with a moan. He saw it all. When he had kissed the girl in the tunnel she had snatched his handkerchief from his pocket. She had since grown to be a young lady, and after he had kissed her a second time she had found his stickpin under the hedge.

CHANGED HIS SHAPE.

Effect of Open Air Life Upon the Man of Business of Today.

"The American man, the American business man of forty or forty-five, has got a new shape," said a tailor. "He's got a lean, straight shape—full chest, narrow hips. But if you could have seen him a generation ago!"

"The business man of forty expected to be fat and soft a generation ago. He rather admired, in fact, a fat, soft shape. The richest business men were fat and soft, and that made a fashion of it, just as Queen Alexandra's taste made a limp fashionable in Victorian times."

"What stomachs our fathers had at forty or forty-five—feather bed stomachs, which they balanced by bending backward! A big stomach was a sign of success, a sign of gentility. If you were lean—why, you must be a laborer. Perhaps you didn't get enough to eat."

"What is the cause of the slender, agile figures of today? Open air and exercise, that's the cause. Golf is the cause. Motoring is the cause."

"My friend," the tailor impressively ended, "my books show that the middle aged business man of today is four inches larger around the chest than the middle aged business man of 1880 and eighteen inches smaller around the stomach."—New York Tribune.

ANCIENT HIGH FINANCE.

When White Deerskins Passed as Currency in China.

In China, the first currency to use banknotes, certain skins were once of such great value that they were accepted as cash, passing from hand to hand in the same way as banknotes of the present day. The negotiability of these skins was established in this way: The Emperor on Ti, being in want of money, gave his treasurer to understand that such a state of affairs must not continue. At that time it was customary for princes and courtiers on entering the royal presence to cover their faces with pieces of skin. Taking advantage of this custom, the treasurer procured the best piece of a certain species of white deer in the royal parks. Immediately, of course, there arose a demand for pieces of these skins, which, being a monopoly, were sold at a high price.

Thus were the royal coffers refilled. The steady value of the skins thus obtained made them readily a substitute for coin of the realm.

In the Russian seal fisheries of Alaska the workmen were formerly paid in the currency stamped on squares of walrus hide.—Washington Star.

Wyoming Has Many High Mountains.

Wyoming has nine mountains exceeding 13,000 feet in height and of these three approach the 14,000 foot mark, according to the United States geological survey. They are Gannett peak, 13,785 feet; Grand Teton, 13,747 feet, and Fremont peak, 13,730 feet. Cloud peak, one of the most beautiful mountains in the state, is 13,730 feet above sea level. Besides these mountains Wyoming has thirty-one other named peaks upward of 12,000 feet in height and some forty unnamed mountains which exceed that altitude.

An interesting story might be written of the thousands of lofty unnamed mountain peaks of the west which are nearly double the height of the very highest mountains in the entire Appalachian mountain system in the eastern portion of the country. Colorado alone has dozens of mountains with out dunes which are more than double the height of our most lofty eastern mountain.

Stones and Glass Houses.

The origin of the saying "Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones" is as follows: At the time of the union of England and Scotland London was inundated with Scotchmen, and the London roughs used to go about at night breaking their windows. Buckingham being considered the chief instigator of the mischief, a party of Scotchmen smashed the windows of the duke's mansion, known as the Glass House. The court favorite appealed to the king, who replied, "Steele, Steele, those who live in glass houses should be careful how they sling stones."

Feeding on Sunlight.

Major Miramond de la Roquette of the French army medical corps in reporting to the Academie des Sciences the results of some observations in southern Algeria on the relation between diet and sunlight gave it as his opinion that the tissues of the human body directly utilize the radiant energy of the sunshine. The normal diet of the natives of hot and sunny climates is far lower both in quantity and in nutritive quality than that of inhabitants of less favored regions, the sunlight seeming to make up the difference.

An Extraordinary Man.

"Yes, indeed, my husband is a remarkable man."
"I suppose nearly every woman has that opinion of her husband."
"But I'm sure my husband is an extraordinary man. I told him this morning where something was in one of the closets, and he found it."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Both Cautious.

M. D.—Would you have the price if I said you needed an operation? Manning—Would you say I needed an operation if you thought I didn't have the price?—Life.

He conquers grief who can take a firm resolution.—Goethe.

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