The Port Tobacco Times

AND CHARLES COUNTY ADVERTISER.

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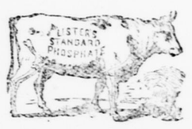

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A Select Story

TWO KISSES.

"Madam will you give me something to eat?"

It was a bitter pass for the proud, pampered and flattered child of luxury and indulgence to come to; and the half sullen, half defiant tones in which the words were uttered were evidence of his inward rebellion against the hateful necessity forced upon him.

"Something to eat?" repeated the lady, a kind looking matron of about thirty-five, who had come to the door on seeing him approach, and cast a quick, comprehensive glance over his person and attire. "Oh, yes!" she added. "Come in."

"Who is it, mamma?" asked a little, eager voice, as a pretty child of six years came from an inner room.

"Only a poor man, dear, who wants something to eat," replied the lady. "There, now!" she continued, placing a well filled tray upon the table. "Sit down and help yourself."

The stranger obeyed.

A few words would have told his story. The only child of wealthy parents, Ralph Wentworth had lived to the age of twenty in ease and luxury. He had graduated with fair record from college, but with no marked proclivities for any art or calling, save the very agreeable and congenial one of enjoying the good things of life. Within a week after the brilliant festivities that had celebrated his majority, his father had fallen dead in the street from a paralytic stroke, leaving his family penniless. In a week more his mother had sunk to the grave; and the petted indulged boy was left to face the world alone, with no resources save a hundred pounds that remained of his father's birthday gift.

With the first shock of bereavement over, his friends clustered around him, ready to advise and eager to assist in the spending of his little patrimony. That once gone, his friends went also.

Ralph made a few ineffectual efforts to obtain some employment. But where the heir of prospective thousands had been met with smiles and affability, the impecunious young man now encountered supercilious looks and incredulous shrugs.

Finally, filled with misanthropic disgust against these summer friends, he had resolved to quit London, and so he cared not where. On the morning after coming to this decision, while glancing aimlessly over a paper, his eye fell upon an item describing the marvelous discovery of gold in California.

In an instant his resolve was formed, he would go there. If he must begin at the bottom of the social ladder and earn his bread by manual labor, it should, at least, be away from the sight and sneer of those who had helped to bring him to this pass. He had strong limbs and he would make the journey to Liverpool on foot.

It was on this journey that he made his first request for a meal, for the last few pennies of his slender funds had brought him a meagre dinner the day before. And as he now sat eating the bountiful repast placed before him by the generous hand of a stranger, a sudden gush of emotion came over him, and forced a sigh that was almost a groan from his lips.

"What is it makes you feel so very bad?"

The little earnest voice breaking in upon his painful reverie aroused him with a start.

Seated in a little rocker, which she was gently swaying to and fro, with her hands folded in her lap, and her sweet wistful eyes fixed with a searching yet sympathetic gaze upon him, was the child whose presence he had entirely forgotten. Her mother had left the room temporarily, and he had thought himself alone.

He could not speak for a moment; then recovering more composure, he said, answering her question with another:

"And why do you think I feel bad, little one?"

"Because your face looks so sad, and you don't eat anything hardly; and you almost cried just now," replied the little creature, bending forward, and fixing an earnest gaze upon him. "Don't you feel happy?"

"Not very happy, child; that is a fact."

And another sigh finishes the sentence.

"Are you a bad man?" was the next question.

A half smile parted Ralph's pale lips.

"Why do you ask me that?" he responded.

"Because mamma says that real good people are always happy, and that they only feel sad when they do something wrong."

"I suppose mamma is right," said Ralph, sighing. "And yet I am not a bad man, little one; only a foolish one."

"I am foolish sometimes," said the little creature, shaking her head with a serious air. "And then mamma tells me to sit down in my chair and think about it; and, by and by, I feel very sorry, and look sad like you do now. Don't you feel sorry you was so foolish?"

"Indeed, I do, my child," said the young man, with involuntary earnestness. "But tell me," he added, interested by her artless prattle, "what do you do then?"

"I tell mamma how sorry I am, and then she kisses me, and I feel better. Haven't you any mamma or friends to kiss you?"

"No, little one. My mother is dead, and my friends are all gone."

The child pondered for a moment.

"That is too bad!" she exclaimed, thoughtfully.

Then suddenly raising her little face fervent with tender sympathy, she added:

"Will it make you feel better if I kiss you?"

There was a simple but touching pathos in the artless words stirred the heart of the homeless man as it had not been stirred before; and bending forward, he said with emotion:—Yes, I think it will. I am sure it will."

"Well, I will kiss you."

And, rising from her chair, the child stepped to his side, and kissed the lips that bent down to meet hers.

"Now you won't be foolish any more, will you?" she asked.

"Indeed, I will try not to be!" was the earnest answer.

"God bless you, little one! That is the sweetest kiss I have had since my mother died! Now I wish I had a dear little friend like you!"

"I will be your friend," said the child. And wait a moment—I will get you something."

Darting away from his side, she left the room, returning in a few minutes with a small parcel in her hands.

"See here," she said, opening it upon his knee. "Papa had my picture on some cards the other day, and he gave me this one to do just as I please with. He wrote my name on it—"Maude Evelyn Granger." I will give it to you, and when you look at it you can think of your little friend, won't you?"

"But will your mamma let you give this to me?" asked Ralph, with some misgiving.

"Oh, yes! I asked her just now. I told her I wanted to give you something to make you happy, and she said, "Very well, dear." Now you'll have one friend, won't you?"

"Yes" said the young man, taking her soft, little hand in his, "and if I should come back again some of these days and tell you that I have been good, and not foolish any more, will you kiss me again?"

"To be sure I will!" was the eager response, and at that moment the returning footsteps of the lady were heard. Ralph arose, hat in hand.

"I thank you kindly, madam, for your hospitality," he said, bowing with grave courtesy, for a new spirit had been infused into him by the sweet sympathy of that little child, and he no longer felt like a homeless tramp.

"Good by."

He pressed little Maud's hand in a close lingering grasp, raised his hat to his benefactress, and left the house.

Five years had passed, finding Ralph Wentworth still working as a common laborer at the mines, but reckoned among the most steady, efficient and faithful. Every evening, when his work was ended, he would wander off to some secluded spot, then drawing a little package from his pocket, gaze long and earnestly at the pictured face it contained. One of his fellow workmen had, on one occasion, gratified his curiosity so far as to follow him, and stole upon him unawares, just as he was raising the little souvenir reverently to his lips. But the look in Ralph's eye, as he turned and discovered the intruder, warned him that it would not be safe or pleasant to attempt any further investigation; and beyond an occasional sly reference to "Wentworth's sweetheart," no allusion was made to the matter.

Frugal, abstemious and self denying as a hermit, his life appeared to have in it little to envy. But he had a goal before his mental vision of which they knew nothing; a goal to the attainment of which every shilling of his hard earned wages, every energy of his life were devoted.

Although apparently lost to the world without, Ralph was not entirely forgotten. One day, a letter came for him, a thick, cumbrous-looking envelope, directed in a large, sprawling hand. In the solitude of his little cell room he opened it, and his pale cheek flushed with a look that was almost an ecstasy. Thus passed ten years more.

The brilliantly lighted saloons of Mrs. Remington's handsome mansion in Belgravia were filling fast with guests, when the hostess came quickly forward to welcome a new comer—a lovely girl of twenty years, who was entering accompanied by a gentleman, evidently her father.

"Good evening, my dear Maude!" she exclaimed, with a rapturous little squeeze of her hand. "I have delightful news for you—and all the other marriageable young ladies who will be here to-night with a gay laugh. "I am to have among my guests to-night no less a person than Mr Wentworth, that elegant young man—I call him young, for he is only thirty five, who has been winning so many laurels for himself in Parliament. He's a splendid looking man, they say, and immensely rich—owns mining property—and I've secured him for to night. I will be sure to secure you an introduction to him."

"Do," replied Maud, smiling. Then she passed on to another part of the room.

Half an hour later there was a slight bustle at the door, and a ripple of expectancy among all the guests. Maude, who happened to be standing where she had a view of the entrance, perceived a tall elegant gentleman bending over the hand of Mrs. Remington. At the next moment, he raised his head to glance over the company, and their eyes met. Was it fancy, or did a fleeting emotion cross his face—a look of surprise, almost gladness, light up his fine eyes? Maude was sure she had not met him before, and yet, as she returned his gaze for a moment, a feeling as of a half forgotten memory came over her. Unable to analyze the feeling, or indeed, comprehend it, she turned to respond to a request for a dance, and at the same instant the distinguished guest stepped aside to acknowledge an introduction to some new acquaintances.

Twenty minutes later, as Maude stood conversing with her partner, Mrs. Remington's voice greeted her ear.

"Maude, my love, Mr. Wentworth wishes to be introduced to you."

And looking up, she encountered again the earnest gaze of the handsome visitor.

A request for the next dance followed the introduction; then a promenade; and then, almost before she was aware Mr. Wenworth had secured all the disengaged dances on her card. His conversation, animated, varied, fluent, had at the same time a certain undercurrent of deep, even intense feeling, that lent a strange charm to his most commonplace words, and sent a subtle thrill to the very heart of the fair girl. It seemed as if there existed a kindred chord between them—a chord long silent, yet living still, and which thrilled with every vibration of his voice, making her feel, ere that short evening was past, as if he had been a friend of years—a loved and valued friend—rather than a stranger whom she was meeting for the first time.

Mr. Wentworth learned, in the course of their conversation, that Miss Granger was spending the winter in town, being on a visit to relatives; and he further asked and obtained permission to call upon her. He did call, many times; and at length, one evening, he said, in the course of a long and earnest conversation, "Miss Granger, ever since our acquaintance began, I have been wanting to tell you a story. Let me tell it now."

Drawing his chair closer to where she sat, Ralph Wentworth began a tale with most of which the reader is already familiar. Then continuing, he said:

"One day there came to that young man a letter, containing the notice of a bequest of ten thousand pounds, from a distant relative, lately deceased. That money, with what he had saved in those five years, completed the purchase of a claim that was the beginning of his fortune. Step by step he mounted the ladder of life once more, until he commanded wealth, influence and friends, and better than all, a clear and honorable record. Then he came back to his native land to find her who had been his good angel all those years. Perhaps she had forgotten the man to whom her sweet, childish sympathy had been a talisman and blessing, for he had not even told her his name; but something whispered to him that he would find her again, and find her heart free. Maud," he continued, taking the hand that trembled in his grasp, "through all those years that innocent kiss of a warm, affectionate heart has laid pure upon his lips, the solace of my lonely life. Temptations I had many, but that little face was present with me always. I could not look in those pure eyes and sin. On the day when her little hand pointed out the way to a better life, she promised that if I came back again, and could say to her that I had tried to do my duty, to be a good and useful man, she would kiss me again. I have kept my faith, have earnestly strived to retrieve youthful folly that had not become vice. And now will the woman redeem the promise of the child? Will she raise her lips to mine in another kiss—a kiss that shall tell me she will be my life's good angel—my cherished and honored wife?"

For a moment Made's voice failed her. Back over the years memory swept, bringing up every detail of that memorable interview, and she now knew the subtle sympathy which had seemed from the first to bind them together. A new voice seemed speaking to her now; one to which her heart responded with a great and solemn joy; and reading his answer in her face upraised to him in one fleeting glance, Ralph Wentworth drew her to his heart and kissed her.

In a private apartment in Ralph Wentworth's luxurious home hangs a beautifully executed copy of the photograph he has cherished so long; while inclosed in a golden locket, which he will carry over his heart as long as he lives, is another, in miniature, of the sweet, childish face, which, lifted to his in that first innocent kiss of sympathy and trust, was the turning point in his life—the earnest of a useful, honorable and happy future.

Select Reading.

The Romance of a Coal Stove.

One day last fall, after talking until his throat was sore, a Detroit stove dealer succeeded in selling a widow a coal stove, but it was with a proviso that if everything didn't work satisfactorily he was to make it. Two days after delivering the stove he got his first call. A boy entered the store and said:

"Mrs.—— wants you to come up and fix the stove. The house is full of smoke."

A man was sent up, and he found the trouble to be with the chimney. Only three or four days had passed when the boy came in again and said:

"That stove is puffing and blowing and scaring the widow to death. She wants the same man to come up again."

He was sent, and it was discovered that she didn't know how to arrange the dampers and drafts. Everything seemed to run well for a week, and then the boy walked in to announce:

"She sent me down to have you send that man up again, please. The house is full of gas from the stove."

The man went up and applied the remedy, but inside of the three days the stove got to puffing; two days after that the fire wouldn't draw; then it drew too much; then gas escaped again. At length the dealer went to the house and said:

"Madame, you gave me $30 for the stove; how much will you take for it?"

"I wouldn't sell it?"

"But I can't be sending my man up here every two or three days all winter."

"You won't have to. I've concluded to marry him in order to have some one here in case of accident."

And a few days ago they were quietly and happily married.—*Detroit Free Press.*

Fighting the Wrong Man.

The champion fighting editor of the country lives at Albuquerque, N. M. As the story goes, eleven citizens of the variety known as "toughs," came to the conclusion, a short time ago, that it was their duty, in the interest of law and order and the purity of the ballot-box, to take the editor out and hang him. Now, our Albuquerque journalist lived alone in a log cabin, consisting of a single room, with a cellar underneath. His only companion, a pet grizzly bear, occupied the cellar. On the night when the editor had good reasons to expect a visit from the reformers, he retired to the cellar and left the upper room to the grizzly. At the hour of midnight eleven stalwart men arrived with a rope. They battered down the door and rushed in eager for the fray. They had no fight; but they rushed against their man, as they supposed. For an editor, he showed unusual pluck and strength. He went for the lyncners with such activity that the fight was over in five minutes. In the gray of early morning three men turned up in Albuquerque, each with an eye missing. One man called at the doctor's office with one foot and three fingers chewed off. The remaining seven reformers were loafing around on the streets, more or less mutilated. When the alleged facts of the fracas got out, the editor became the most popular man in the territory. His paper is doing a booming business, and he can get any office he wants. He still keeps the grizzly in the cellar, ready for an emergency.

A Wonderful Mathematician.

A Kentuckian prodigy, Reuben Field by name, has but one developed faculty, this one seeming to take entire possession of him, driving all other thoughts from his mind. In early infancy he was apparently much as other children, but in extreme youth he developed a wonderful precocity, or rather a supernatural endowment for mathematics, even then solving difficult problems with apparent ease and with but little study. This became a mania with him, and grew as he grew, to the exclusion of other branches of thought, until finally, without knowing a single figure or letter of the alphabet, he became the perfect master of the science of mathematics. He has been tested by the most scientific men of this profession, and the answers to the most difficult problems that they have been able to propound are at his fingers' ends, the invariably correct solution being given in an instant, quicker than thought. An an instance of his remarkable powers he has been known to keep more than a dozen of clerks busy in taking invoice of a stock of goods. Indeed, his knowledge and application of the science of mathematics far exceed anything that the most scientific men are able to comprehend. Another phenomenal characteristic of this man is that he can tell you, without hesitation, precisely what time it is, to a second, either day or night. Awakened from the soundest sleep, he can tell you precisely what time it is. What Blind Tom is to music Reuben Field is to mathematics, and, like that illustrious idiot, this one branch absorbs his entire mental capacity.

Didn't Know All.

Col. Sumpter McBride, of Austin, Tex., while in New York on a visit, read the advertisement of a clairvoyant in a morning paper. He went to the female fortune-teller to have his horoscope cast. She cast horoscopes with a dirty pack of cards, which she spread out on the table. "You will marry an unusually wealthy lady, and be very happy. Everything in your past, present and future is an open book to me." "I suppose you know everything about my future?" said the Colonel. "Not only about your future, but about your past and present." "It's wonderful, incomprehensible. Good morning, madame." "Hold on there. A dollar, If you please," said the female wizard, holding out her hand. "Well, that is strange. You knew everything about my past, present and future, and you didn't know I left all my money with the clerk of the hotel before I started out to have my fortune told. It's wonderful, incomprehensible?" remarked the Colonel, as he passed out.

A harmless American ship of war may be called "she" properly enough, but a fine mail steamship ought to be called "he."

Troubles spring from idleness, and grievous toils from needless ease.