

All Through a Nickel

By F. A. MITCHEL

It seemed to me it was a blaze of glory that passed me.

Coming to a cross street, she stood waiting for a trolley car. I waited directly behind her, and when she entered it I entered too. She dropped into a seat, opened a portemonnaie and poked among cards, samples and other things, first carelessly, then eagerly and finally despairingly.

"Two," I said, holding out my ten-cent piece to the conductor.

So unconscious was she of my very presence that she supposed I was with another and paying the fare for both. She told the conductor that she had spent all her money unknowingly and if he would stop the car she would get out. The conductor looked at my dime.

"How many?" he asked.

"Two," said I.

"Where's the other one?"

"Two," I repeated doggedly.

An idea struck him suddenly. If I were fool enough to permit him to ring up two fares he need not bother about the lady's deficiency. His accounts would come out square. But the lady was not so obtuse.

"Thank you very much," she said. "Kindly give me an address where I can pay the debt."

"There is no debt. A nickel especially thus invested is not worthy of consideration."

"It is not the nickel; it is the principle."

"There are principles and principles. It is a principle that a gentleman who acts so as to require a lady to communicate with him should send to her in stead of permitting her to send to him, five centuries have they? Or, let us it is your right to insist on payment of the loan, but it is my part as a gentleman to send for the nickel."

It was evident that her mind was not used to considering such trivial matters. I could understand her solving a mathematical problem, writing a book, criticizing a work of art, but not catching the true inwardness of my argument. She puzzled over it for a few moments, then said:

"You are inclined to sophistry. Instead of permitting me to get rid of an obligation you would impose upon me another."

"Not at all. It is I who am incurring these obligations."

"How so?" She brought those wonderful eyes of hers to bear on me.

"First by permitting a stranger to spend temporarily in your behalf to coin—only one twentieth in value of what he would offer a writer as a tip—you are conferring on him a very great honor, besides a pleasure. In the second place, if you permit him to send for the amount of the loan, thus waiving your right to send it to him yourself, you honor him still more, and he has the exquisite pleasure of having saved you trouble."

A faint smile dawned upon her lips.

"I have certainly derived pleasure from your ingenuity," she said, after brief thought. "Which is another obligation under which you have placed me. But your argument falls to pieces like the wonderful one-hoss shay that broke down all at once. I admit that your motives are unimpeachable, but notwithstanding the brilliancy of your logic there remains the bare fact that you have conferred a favor on a stranger and refuse to permit that stranger to discharge the obligation."

"Ah, but I have not declined to accept a favor at the hands of the stranger!"

She smiled again, this time more amused than before.

"So much ingenuity, so much gallantry," she said, "so delicately expressed must needs gain your point for you."

Inserting her gloved thumb and finger into her portemonnaie she drew out a card and hesitated. I handed her a pencil. She wrote her address on the card and handed both card and pencil to me.

"Thank you very much," I said. I realized that the time for me to make my exit had come, and, turning to look out through the window, pressed the button, and when the car stopped, raising my hat deferentially to the lady, I left the car.

So far, so good. I thought over our brief dialogue and could not think of anything I had said that would look like forcing an acquaintance. And yet, though I had not intended to force an acquaintance, I had intended to leave no stone unturned to bring one about. I had succeeded in learning the lady's name and address, but how could I proceed further without indelicacy or even presumption?

A little thought showed me that I held the key to the situation. I had no difficulty in learning who the lady was. After I had discovered this I hunted for a mutual acquaintance. I found one who chided me by informing me that the object of my admiration came of the best of stock intellectually and otherwise, and I was not given much encouragement to hope that I could aspire even to an acquaintance. However, I was accorded an introduction and received graciously. Eventually I gained more than this—the lady herself, who is now my wife. I have often asked her how it was that I won her, and she gives me the invariable reply:

"By your unblinking assurance."

"But there was nothing indelicate about it, was there?"

"Nothing. It was the delicacy of a 'Mephistopheles.'"

The Democracy of Death.

In the democracy of the dead all men at last are equal. There is neither rank nor standing nor prerogative in the republic of the grave. At this fatal threshold the philosopher ceases to be wise, and the song of the poet is silent. Dives relinquishes his millions and Lazarus his rags. The poor man is as rich as the richest, and the rich man is as poor as the poorest. The creditor loses his usury, and the debtor is acquitted of his obligation. There the proud man surrenders his dignities, the politician his honors, the worldling his pleasures. The invalid needs no physician, and the laborer rests from unrequited toil. Here at last is nature's final degree in equity. The wrongs of time are redressed, injustice is expiated, the irony of fate is refuted, the unequal distribution of wealth, honor, capacity, pleasure and opportunity which makes life so cruel and inexplicable ceases in the realm of death. The strongest there has no supremacy, and the weakest needs no defense. The mightiest captain succumbs to that invincible adversary, who disarms alike the victor and the vanquished. John J. Ingalls.

Beauty Five Centuries Ago.

They have dug up an old beauty book in Italy, published 500 years ago, which laid down the following rules of the game:

"To be beautiful," says the work, "the women must have the following: Three white things skin, hands and teeth. Three black things eyes, eyelashes and eyebrows. Three pink things lips, gums and nails. Three long things life, hands and hair. Three short things teeth, ears and tongue. Three wide things forehead, shoulders and intelligence. Three narrow things waist, mouth and ankle. Three delicate things fingers, lips and mind. Three round things arm, leg and doxy."

Things haven't changed so much in five centuries have they? Or, let us it is your right to insist on payment of the loan, but it is my part as a gentleman to send for the nickel."

A Thoughtful French Wife.

Wearied of life a farmer went out to his barn and hanged himself. A little later his wife, entering the barn to feed some animals, saw her husband swinging from the rafters. Arguing that it was not natural to think her husband intended to commit suicide, she would be exasperated by the frustration of his intention she left the body as it was and went on with the work of the farm. Several hours later in the evening when her daughter came back from the fields, the woman told her what had happened. Mother and daughter deliberated for some time as to what ought to be done and finally decided to inform the mayor. When that official came in haste and cut down the body he had been extinct for several hours. —London Telegraph.

A Bird Performer.

Canaries and other tame birds are sometimes taught to perform tricks, but it always has been regarded almost an impossibility to train a wild bird. Andrew Lillie, the famous Scotch bird-lover, trained one of the wildest of Scotch birds to perform all sorts of remarkable tricks to jump and keep time with the skipping rope to perform on the slack and tight rope climb an upright rope, stand on top of a running carriage, draw cards out of a box, mount a ladder and ring a bell, go round a wheeling stair step by step and fly to its owner's head when called upon.

Ingratitude.

When Lord B. died a person met an old man who was one of his most intimate friends. He was pale, confused, and awe-stricken. Every one was trying to console him, but in vain.

"His loss," he exclaimed, "does not affect me so much as his horrible ingratitude. Would you believe it? He died without leaving me anything in his will. I who have dined with him at his own house three times a week for thirty years!" —Life.

Sad Case.

Son—I came across a very sad case this morning, father. I pitied the man with all my heart. Father: What was it, my son? I am pleased to know you show so much sympathy for the poor. Son—There was a deaf and dumb man begging in the High street who had an impediment in his speech. Father: (crossly) Impossible. Do not expect me to believe such nonsense. Son—It is the truth, father—he had a finger off.

In Boston.

"No doubt she's very charming in her way, but I can't remember having ever seen a person of pretensions so lacking in culture."

"Dear me, what has she done?"

"Why, she persistently and invariably neglects to sound the 'd' in 'deed'."

—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Good and Evil.

Accustom yourself to submit on every occasion to a small present evil to obtain a greater distant good. This will give decision, tone and energy to the mind, which thus disciplined will often reap victory from defeat and honor from repulse. —Colton.

The Mind.

Little Elmer—What is the mind, Elmer? Little Elmer—The mind is something that turns round and round in your head and makes up stories. —Chicago News.

Too Modest.

Mrs. Jinks—Bingor says their baby is the smartest in the United States. Jinks—Why doesn't he claim the European rights too? —Outlook.

Speed of a Hare.

Some motorists in the Belfast North ern Whig tell a very interesting story that illustrates how fast a hare can run. At a certain part of the tour the way ran straight for about two miles, with banks and hedges on either side. Just about the beginning of this stretch a hare started out from the side and dashed along in front, right in the center of the road. Its ears were laid back, but every few seconds it raised first one ear and then the other, evidently to hear if the great racing enemy was coming too near. The speed of the motor was increased until it reached twenty-six or twenty-seven miles an hour. If increased further it would have run down the hare. The race continued for almost a mile and a half. At last an open gate into a field appeared, and through this the animal dashed. The motor was slowed down and from the slope of the road the men could see the hare running at full speed right across the large field. Evidently it had not been tired by its mighty efforts to keep ahead of the auto-mobile.

The Famous Old Willow Ware.

You may know a plate of old willow ware by its decoration. On the right there is a mandarin's country seat. In the foreground there should be a pavilion, in the background an orange tree and to the right a peach tree. The place is inclosed by a fence, and through the estate there should wander a brook, and in this brook there is an island high at the left side, with a cottage on it. Over the brook there is a bridge, and on it there should be three figures. The willow tree, the famous willow tree, is at one end and a gardener's cottage at the other. Two birds are high in the air above the picture. The whole is supposed to tell the romance of the mandarin's daughter, who is one of the figures on the bridge. The others are her lover and the mandarin himself. The birds are turtle doves, into which the lovers were changed by the gods that they might escape the wrath of Father Mandarin, who pursued them.

A Poet's Homely Face.

The poet Rogers was afflicted with a notably unpleasant and cavernous countenance which with all his intellectual tone was a mortification to him. To hide his homely face he looked about him for some necessary and devised his famous line, "I am a poet, and I have a face." He was called to Sydney Smith, who with Byron and Moore was dining with him, and said:

"I want you to perpetrate this line for me, if you can. I should like it if you could spare the world a line, if possible." And the wit replied: "If I were you, I would be taken at my word, my face buried in my hands."

Rogers laughed with the other persons present, but he shot a malignant glance at the poet, and it is said, never fully forgave him for the bonnet.

A Primitive Partnership.

There are three partners in a boat in a Yorkshire fishing village who will not accept a check because the bank is too far away. They have two motives to walk to get their money orders cashed. Only one of the three is able to read and write, and he draws the money for the other two. They sit at a table and divide it.

"One for you," says the leader, and passes a sovereign in front of one partner. "One for thee," and another sovereign is put in front of the other partner. And one for me," and he places another at his own corner.

And so he goes on, "One for you one for thee and one for me," until the sovereigns are equally shared, then the sinner and even the peace are divided in the same way. —London Mail.

His First Chance.

A certain railway magnate is anxious to have his young son acquire a working knowledge of husbandry including the art of carting, says the Cleveland Plain Dealer. The other day the youngster had a practical lesson when asked to preside at the table and distribute a roast chicken.

He gave his mother a drumstick and the next to his father. Each of the sisters he helped to a wing. And then he sliced up pretty nearly all the breast for himself.

"It's my first chance to get all the white meat I want," he said, "and I'm just going to try how it tastes."

Strange Young Man.

"Didn't I see your daughter with a strange young man last night?"

"You certainly did. When he asked daughter to go with him for some tea cream he asked her mother to go along and he went home at 10 o'clock without any hints, and he wears game socks and doesn't seem to think he knows it all. He certainly is a strange young man." —Houston Post.

Gallant.

"That pen will never come to perfection," remarked a young woman walking through a garden with Sydney Smith.

"Then let me lead perfection to the pen," said he gallantly offering her his arm.

Where to Get It.

"A simple look is all I crave," said the sentimental young man to the belle.

"Then you'd better consult your mirror," she replied tartly.

Not Either as Yet.

"Er—I want some sort of a present for a young lady."

"Sweetheart or sister?"

"Er—why, she hasn't said which she will be yet."

He Minded a Little Bit.

Hans Christian Andersen, the gentle fabulist, often displayed the ecstasies of a lovable and sensitive child, whose floods of sunshine are followed by deluges of rain. George Brandes, the Danish critic, told this story of the soft hearted fairy tale writer:

"Andersen was a child of the people and never, even in his old age, did he lose his wonderful childlike simplicity which, if it threw the glamour of fairy land over his creations, was nevertheless not without its amusing side.

"He was peculiarly sensitive to criticism of any kind. One day in a cafe a friend noticed that he was reading intently a spiteful criticism of his work written by an unknown scribbler in a newspaper of no account and said to him:

"Surely you don't mind what a newspaper like that may say about you?"

"Anderson looked up, and the friend saw that tears were rolling down his cheeks.

"Yes," he said, hesitatingly, "I do mind just a little."

The Artist's Need.

"Do you know what is the great essential to the artist to whom he creates?" The sense of privacy, the power to isolate his own genius from every thing in the world, to be absolutely concentrated. To create we must be alone. Have strange, unmastered thoughts, just as in the realms of the soil every human being must have moments of complete isolation, thoughts, reveries, moods, that cannot be shared with even those we love best. You understand that?"

"Yes, I do."

"At the bottom we human beings come and depart absolutely alone. Friendship, love, all that we instinctively seek to rid ourselves of this awful solitude of the soul, avail nothing. Well, what others shrink from the artist must seek." —Owen Johnson in Century Magazine.

Bismarck's Prophetic Pipe.

Prince Bismarck was a great pipe collector, and the gem of his collection had a curious history. Many years ago Bismarck was accosted by a peddler and asked to buy a plain meerschaum pipe of the type that he most affected. At first he declined, but the peddler persisted for the pipe a cover of forest and told him he would serve three purposes as minister and that three important changes in life would be foretold by accidents befalling the pipe. Laughing Bismarck bought the pipe. He smoked three emperors and two days before the last one, when he was refused an audience, the stem of the pipe fell to pieces. Later he chipped a piece from the side of the bowl accidentally and within a month his practical dismissal by the emperor occurred.

Odd Tips For Lottery.

Stranger tips for choosing lottery numbers have been given than even communications from a deceased aunt. Grant Duff had from Lord Houghton the following in connection with the death of Sir William Stirling Maxwell in 1878. "When he arrived at Venice, on his last journey, the hotel-keeper seeing his arrival, gave him an in different room No. 8. When he became ill to the best the man had at his disposal, No. 4. After he died the servants took the numbers 16, 8, 4, added 50, the number which stands as it appears for death in the lottery ball game and paying on their won 30000 francs. —London Standard.

An Explanation.

The steamboat came splashing along her course at full speed, and the first thing the passengers knew had crashed head on into the pier.

"Mer!" cried a passenger as the boat crashed and the splinters flew. "I wonder what is the matter."

"Nothing," said the mate of the deck hands, "nothing at all. It looks to me as if the captain just forgot that we ship on here." —Harper's.

Old English Elections.

AS AN illustration of the violence that was once common during political campaigns in England is a quaint bill from a lawyer after an election at Andover in 1798. "To being thrown out of the George Inn Andover, to my legs being thereby broken to surgeon's bill, and loss of time and business 1500."

Wife's Business.

Willie saw you ought to see the men across the street raise a building on jacks. Pa (absently)—Impossible. Willie, you an open on jacks, but a man is a fool to try to raise of them—I mean it must have been quite a sight. —Exchange.

Hopeful.

Pessimist: Wife (weeping)—And that cook promised to come today without fail. Optimist: Husband—Cheer up, my love! It still wants ten minutes of midnight. —New York Times.

The Way He Put It.

She (after a tiff)—You will admit you were wrong? He (a young lawyer)—No, but I'll admit that an unintentional error might have unknowingly crept into my assertion.

His Snore.

Hub (angrily)—Here! What do you mean by waking me out of a sound sleep? Wife—Because the sound was too distressing. —Boston Transcript.

Wants His Money.

Visitor—What lovely furniture! Little Tommy—Yes, I think the man we bought it from is sorry now he sold it. Anyhow, he's always calling.

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Where He Balked. He balked with her. She balked at him. I hear that he told her he was worth of her. "Pshaw," all lovers tell their sweethearts that. I know. But she asked him to put it in writing and sign it in the presence of witnesses. —Atlanta Constitution.

Good Advice. The man I marry," she said, "must think I am the only girl in the world. Don't worry about that," her husband friend replied. "He will think it all right. Just put in your time trying to find out how to make him keep on thinking of you." —Chicago Record and Aid.

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