

# Kisses Are Costing More!

Recent Valuations as Recorded in the Courts: A Man's Life—Oakland, Cal.; Biddeford, Me.; May's Landing, N. J.:

\$250,000—Chicago; Stoning a Woman—Brooklyn, N. Y.



The stage kiss that makes the flapper thrill

BY ELIZABETH SHIELDS

He kissed me and so I killed him. He kissed me, and I beat him like a fury. He kissed me, and only \$25,000 will right that wrong. He kissed me and I married him—the man I hate.

**W**HAT is the value of a kiss? Weighed on heart scales; measured by clinging memory; sounded by plummets of love and hate; viewed through perspective of years or examined with the distorting lens of passion, what is the intrinsic worth of a kiss?

At the top of the page is the record of some of these values that have filled through the courts where the kiss was blamed for offenses ranging in degree of seriousness from misdemeanor to murder. Could any price-list be more inconsistent than this?

Still, out of eight judgments, three balance the worth of a kiss with life; two suggest that it is almost if not quite synonymous with life; one decides that it shares importance with marriage, which is only another name for life, and very long life in some cases!

Only in Cleveland, where the girls are said to be the sweetest of any in the middle west, and where the kiss is declared

to be an exceptionally fine article, is its importance cried down.

A young man from somewhere in the east took a walk for amusement, and, happening to meet a maid whose charm was ravishing even in a city of maidenly charm, approached her and with the greatest simplicity in the world, kissed her. Then they smiled and would have passed on.

Watchful eyes were about, however. He was whirled before a magistrate.

"She was so pretty I just couldn't help kissing her," the youth explained.

"I haven't lost anything that couldn't be replaced easily, and besides I like him. He seems a sensible boy. I decline to prosecute!" This is what the girl said.

The magistrate imposed a fine of \$50. A week later he received a note from the victim of Cleveland beauty, asking that a poem he had written and enclosed be placed in the fair hands of the kisser. It went this way, in part:

Fifty dollars for a kiss. A Cleveland kiss. Can it be a thing that's priceless goes like this? For a measly fifty per?—'Tis a deep insult to her— To the lover, to the maiden, to the miss.

Cleveland kisses—fifty dollars.—gold is dross.

Not enough—take all the world's supply and toss With the world's gems in a pile—and 'twould be worth the while— It would never coax a Cleveland kiss across.

So why fine a man whose lips have felt the burn And the sweetness of a thing he can't return? Nay, unhand him, let him go: life for him can hold but woe.

Cleveland kisses breed an everlasting yearn.

Mrs. Jesusita d'Agostini lived her girlhood in Mexico, where Spanish blood runs warm and the greatest of all human attributes save only one is thought to be love, and that is honor. When she married she moved up to Alameda, Cal., where she had the unfortunate experience of being obliged to shoot her husband, a bank cashier, to protect her two little boys.

She lived quietly through the six years that followed. Finally Arnold Postel, wealthy merchant of the California city, came a-courting. He had a wife, but she seemed not to mind. He was so averse to having the elfin-eyed Spanish woman out of his sight that, according to her

Mrs. Marcella Hurley Wills, who was acquitted of murdering her husband, whom she slew because of a kiss.

story, he called at her home to persuade her not to go to Mexico to attend her father's funeral. A few hours later detectives found him with a bullet hole over his eye and the back of his head blown out. The little Spanish woman was surrounded, but she showed neither interest nor concern.

Flinging the pistol on the table before her, the chief of police set in motion the machinery of the third degree:

"Why did you kill him?"

"I killed him because he kissed me!"

"He kissed you! How often?"

"Just once. One kiss was enough. I killed him for that one kiss!"

No intensity of speech; no emotionalism of manner. She explained that when his lips sullied her she killed him because that was exactly the time to do it; not too soon, for she had been violated in honor by that act. Not too late, either—for he had died while his lips were still warm and hers cold from that kiss.

She is serving ten years in San Quentin prison.

A third woman, Mrs. Marcella Hurley Wills, has been acquitted in May's Landing, N. J., where she was on trial for the murder of her husband, Lewis Wills.

Mrs. Wills was accustomed to beatings and abuse. Insofar as was possible she ignored them. It was when he came into the house one night and kissed her that her self-control broke. She finished her story:

"I heard him moving in bed and I snatched the revolver and shot him before he had a chance to get up. The next moment he said, 'My God, you've killed me! Come here and kiss me!' I did kiss him then, many times."

She added the last statement wonderingly, as if unable to understand her willingness to give munificently in death what she withheld in life.

Miss Hildegard Grey stood upon the veranda of her uncle's home in Birmingham, Ala., and told her fiancé, Beacon O'Rell, that she believed their engagement to have been a mistake. He would

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Mrs. Marcella Hurley Wills, who was acquitted of murdering her husband, whom she slew because of a kiss.



Mrs. Marcella Hurley Wills and her husband, Lewis, whom she killed because he kissed her and whom she kissed after she shot



Miss Matilda Bankhardt, a \$25,000 kisser.



Frank C. Henderson giving Sigrid Holmquist, Sweden's "Mary Pickford," a "doubly proper kiss." Mr. Henderson paid \$300 to Italy's milk land for it, and, besides, Mrs. Henderson watched him take it.