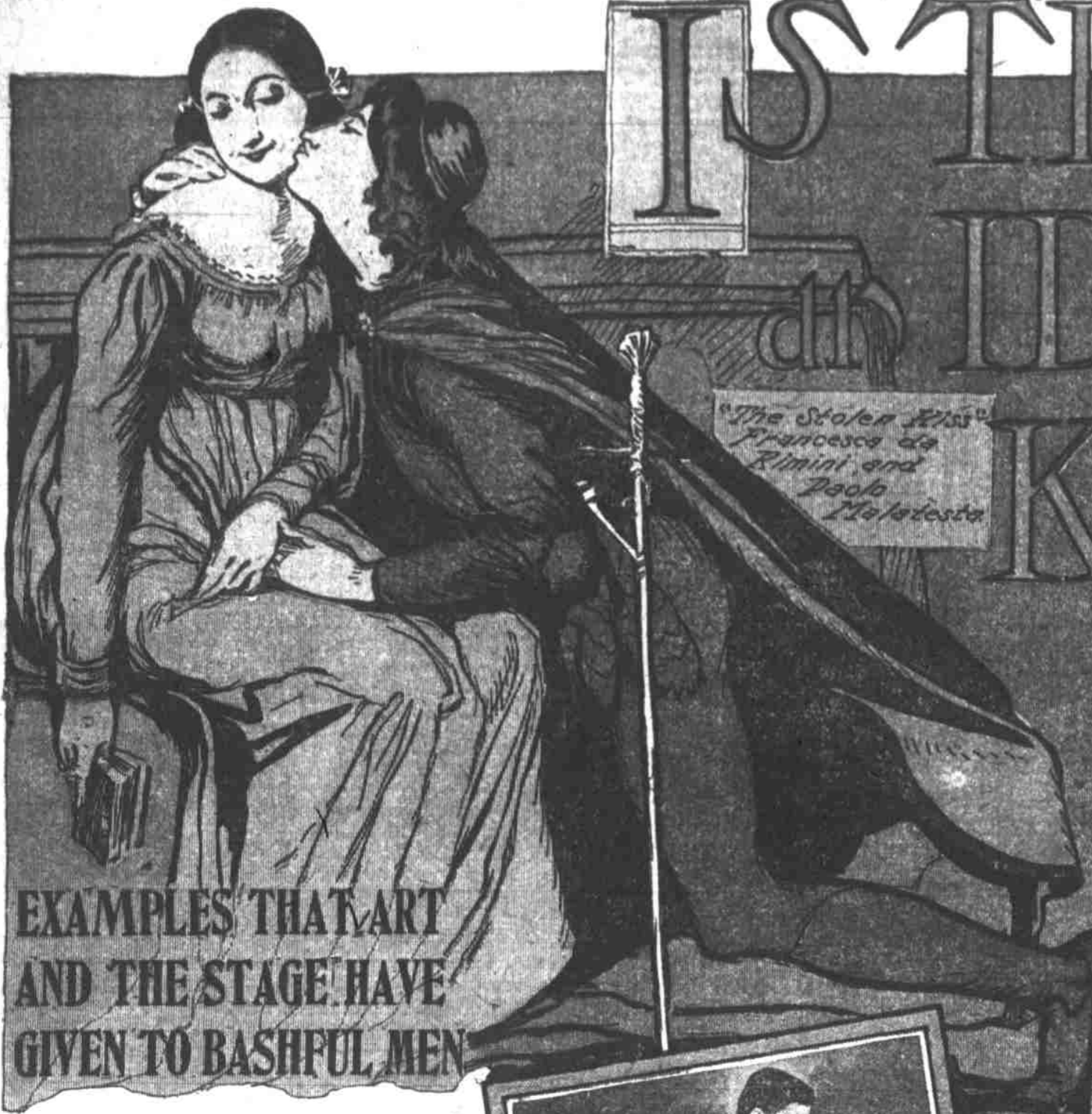


# IS THERE AN IDEAL KISS?



EXAMPLES THAT ART AND THE STAGE HAVE GIVEN TO BASHFUL MEN

IS THERE an ideal kiss? If so, what is it?

Do the wild waves whisper its description at the seashore resorts? Does its inspiring spirit linger amid mountain fastnesses?

"Every kiss is ideal," you may declare, "if the kisser or kissee is the ideal one. There can be nothing new nor more ideal about osculatory manifestations of love than Mother Eve doubtless discovered and her descendants have welcomed with increasing favor through all the ages."

Then why have new kisses come into vogue of late? Why have recent amatory demonstrations on the concert and theatrical stage caused such widespread sensations and been so generally discussed?

Are the new kisses better than the old? Is that bestowed by Mary Garden upon Dalmores in one of the tense moments of "Louise" different in form and structure, bliss and blessing, from those yielded by the Puritan maiden Priscilla to the eager lips of longing John Alden?

A long, long kiss—a kiss of youth and love.—Byron.

MARY GARDEN'S kisses differ in one way—they are doubtless longer in their ecstatic duration.

But can there be a new kiss? You thought there was only one kind! There have been many forms of kissing since kissing was invented, devised or originated.

For instance, there is the platonic kiss. It was known in the days of the old Greek philosophers, and has been overworked, lately, by "affinities." There are the kiss of friendship, the religious kiss, the parental kiss, the stolen kiss, the passionate kiss, the sincere kiss, the flirtatious kiss. Not to speak of the soul kiss! One could go on some time with a category of kisses.

It is a pity, perhaps, that for the sake of the future historian of osculation the Mary Garden kiss has never been caught by the coldly calculating eye of the camera



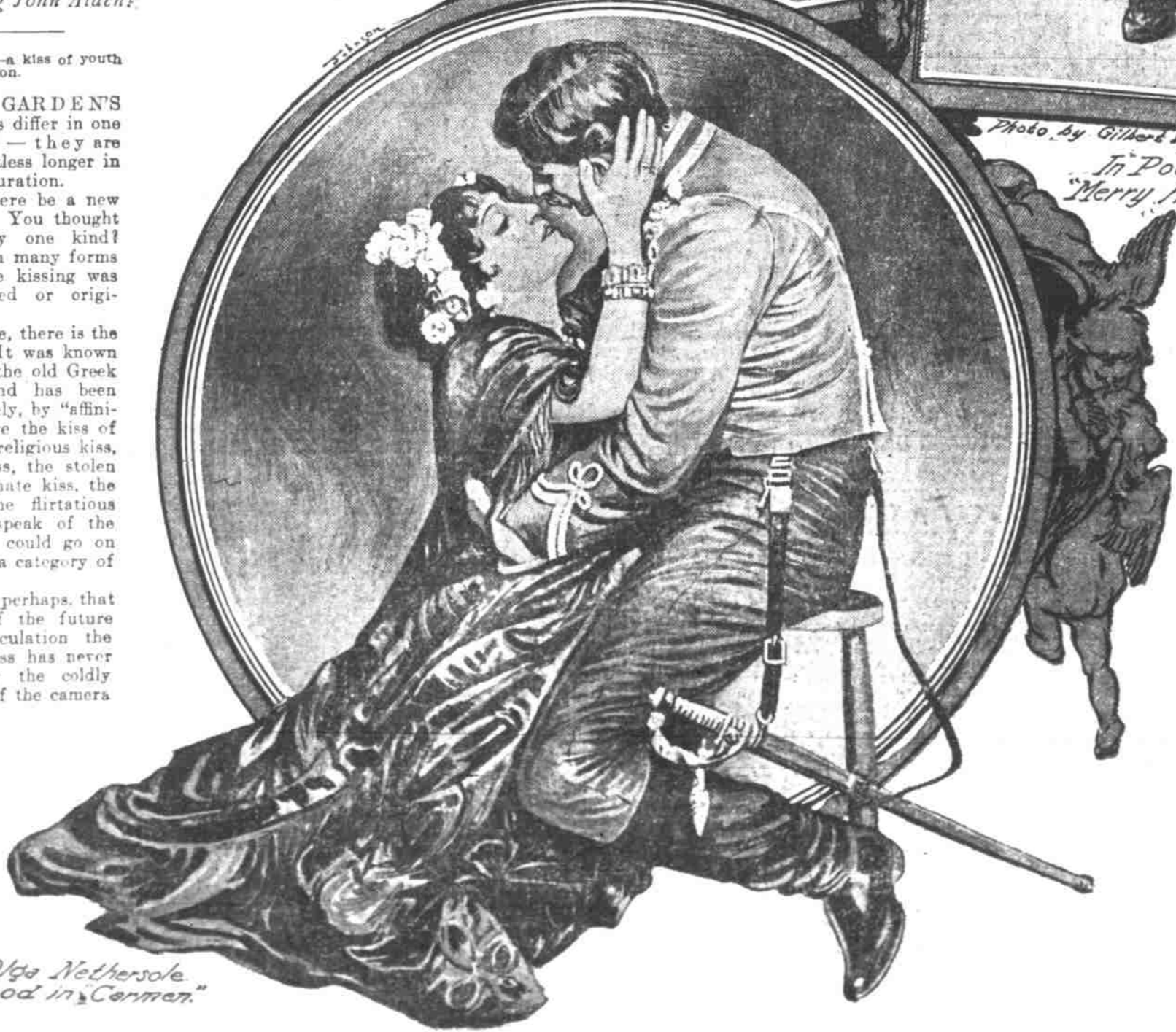
An Interesting Moment in "The Hotel Clerk." Photo by Gilbert & Bacon.



In Position for the Famous "Merry Widow" Osculation." Photo by Gilbert & Bacon.



As 'Tis Done in "The Gay Musician." Photo by Gilbert & Bacon.



The Old Nethersole Method in "Carmen."

quired to prolong the kiss as long as the kissing music continues. That takes forty-five seconds. What made the "Merry Widow" such a success, the waltz or the kiss? In such questions of psychology it is difficult to tell. But after the delicious waltz the audience just hung on the seemingly interminable kiss of Ethel Jackson and Donald Brian.

People gasped again when they saw the "Hotel Clerk" for Eugeno MacGregor and Jeanette Bageard kissed so passionately, so intensely, so furiously, forsooth, that it seemed like a real "cat-em-alive" caress!

Then came the "Gay Musician," and Broadway thrilled when Amelia Stone sank back in the arms of debonaire Walter Percival, and, as their lips met, even the most blasé railbirds sat up, electrified, staring.

Next season, stage managers whisper, there will be more kisses. The public has found, and wants to see, its ideal kiss, they aver.

The conventional kiss, you know, is fleeting, brief, a mere touch of the lips, and a timid flying apart for fear some one might see. Young lovers usually kiss like Paolo and Francesca—seizing one drop of nectar in the stolen seconds and then trembling for fear lest it be discovered.

Many still maintain it is the ideal kiss. It does not sear the heart nor wound the soul. It is not the kiss of Carmen, which sends men's blood rioting in their veins ready to do murder. When Olga Nethersole delineated this kiss on the stage some ten years ago its fame spread broadcast. Years before Emma Abbott pioneered the enduring kiss in "Faust" and made a million. Whenever a kiss was prolonged indefinitely on the stage, strangely, the play was usually a success.

There are some kisses about which there is no question of public disapproval. There is the diseased, unhealthy kiss which shocked even New Yorkers in "Salome." There was the scene of Salome demanding the death of John in reward for her dance before the dissolute Herod; of Herod's reluctant assent, and of Salome finally seizing the charger handed from the cistern, in which the imprisoned John was beheaded, and raising the severed head to her lips, exclaiming: "Ah, thou wouldst not suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan! Well, I will kiss it now!"

This was the kiss of death. It caused "Salome" to be withdrawn from the opera house. It certainly was not considered ideal.

To the contrary, the new kiss of Miss Garden was hailed with enthusiasm. Dalmores and Mary Garden received pay for their kiss at about \$6.87 per; a rate of \$989.28 an hour.

When it comes to the price of kisses, possibly the cheapest record price was that set by a jury in Newark, N. J., in 1902. A young woman asked for \$300 damages for a stolen kiss. The defendant proved by witnesses that, after it was over, the fair lady forgave him. Then the jury awarded the lady six cents.

Sometimes the price is very high. A stolen kiss was appraised at \$200 by Recorder Walcott, of Little Falls, N. Y. A court in Wisconsin, some years ago, assessed five kisses at \$15,000, or \$3000 apiece.

There are few men, indeed, who are not grateful for any kind of kiss. In 1794 the charming duchess of Gordon secured 1000 recruits for the Gordon Highlanders by offering a guinea and a kiss to every recruit. Men sprang to the front, and, after securing this reward, in the struggle with France 250 lost their lives.

ing sylv. anyway. Softly, cautiously, her face beaming with anticipation, she steals upon him—she is back of him—and her arms envelop him, tighten and close about him. Book falls to the floor. The lover gives himself up to bliss. And The Kiss goes on.

Several bars of melody—of soft, languishing, expiring melody—pulse from the orchestra. The Kiss doesn't stop. From the street comes a faint rumble of cabs and the toot of automobile horns. Inside, excepting the music, breathless silence. People lean forward, gasping. The Kiss continues. Slips of girls look at one another wonderingly. Older misses regard their escorts with undisguised reproach, and still older matrons seem inclined to sniff. Still the music creeps through the darkened auditorium. There are visible signs of nervousness. The kiss is like that which Tennyson describes:

O love! O fire! once he drew With one long kiss my whole soul through My lips as a night drinketh dew.

"The kiss looks natural—of course; to be successful, even a stage kiss must be natural," declared Dalmores. "The reception of the kiss by the audience is most satisfactory. They sit in perfect silence. Otherwise it would appear ludicrous. The kiss comes, and, as it is prolonged, the audience feels the same sensations felt by the characters portrayed on the stage."

"A long kiss! Miss Garden thinks it isn't so very long. 'It's as long as we can make it, however,' she said, 'and we kiss as long as we can and keep our cues with the music. But if the New York audience thinks this is a long kiss—well, maybe next year I'll show them the Aphrodite kiss.' And she laughed. There was a threat in her words. 'Tis whispered that the "Aphrodite kiss" is tremendously longer!

Is this stage kiss but a reflection of the sentiment of the beholders; is it what they would like to do themselves? Is the most popular kiss to become longer and still longer of duration?

Now, in the "Waltz Dream" they stretched it out for forty-five seconds, and Sophie Brandt and Edward Johnson, the participants, are re-

—at least, not for general circulation and consumption.

This new kiss is the legitimate successor of other famous kisses, such as the "Emma Abbott kiss," the "Carmen kiss," the "Sapho kiss"—only the new exposition of lip-to-lip bliss is much longer. Mary Garden adopted it last season in "Louise." It lasted twenty-eight seconds.

Sophie Brandt seized on to it in the "Waltz Dream"—for forty-five seconds. The kiss of Nethersole, which used to make a sensation, lasted only twenty seconds.

Some one has said that the new kiss will not remain popular because of its length; women might like it, but men wouldn't, being too busy. This remark is on a par with Lady

Montagu's address to her husband, "Be plain in dress and sober in your diet; in short, my dearie, kiss me, and be quiet." When it comes to kissing, there are mighty few men who care to limit it by the watch.

In Act III of "Louise," Dalmores, the tenor, is seated on the stage reading. Enter Miss Garden, the dainty Louise, such a kissable look-