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A Biter Bit

By F. A. MITCHEL

[It is obvious from this story that the story teller was a young man bent on an adventure.]

One morning the postman left me a letter with the firm name of Outcault, Hardy & Dunn, attorneys-at-law, stamped on the left hand corner of the envelope. I opened it and read the following, signed by the lawyers:

Your proposition to unite the properties so long in legal dispute by marrying Miss Auchincloss has been referred to her with our assurances that the tangle between the two can never be unraveled except by such a union. Present circumstances if continued will in time eat up a property which removed from litigation would produce an income of \$5,000 clear of all expenses. Miss Auchincloss, never having seen you, desires us to send her your photograph.

It was evident to me that the letter doubtless intended for another Anthony Page had come to me. I inclosed my photograph in a note stating in substance the note I had received from the attorneys and adding that I did not care to act further through them, but would be pleased to form her acquaintance direct. I chose this course, thinking that the real Anthony Page might be known personally to Messrs. Outcault, Hardy & Dunn and my photograph if sent to them would give me away.

In due time I received a note signed Bertha Auchincloss acknowledging the receipt of my photograph and inclosing one of her own. It represented

a young girl of eighteen or nineteen, pretty as a peach and in whose eye lurked an inexhaustible fund of mischief. This will be a case of diamond cut diamond, I said to myself, and I see a lot of fun ahead. The letter was very short, stating that the writer agreed with me in direct action instead of the "horrid lawyers" and inviting me to call.

Without proper consideration as to the risk I ran of being horsewhipped by some of the young lady's relatives I went to see her. She came into the room smilingly and extended her hand, which I grasped and pressed. We began our acquaintance without the slightest reference to the subject of the union of property and, so far as that first meeting was concerned, made no progress in coming to an understanding with regard to a union of properties. This was gratifying to me, for the moment we should enter into details I would betray myself. On leaving I asked permission to call again, which was graciously accorded.

Having made no reply to the note of the lawyers, I did not hear from them again.

So delighted was I with my success that on my second visit to Miss Auchincloss I ventured to mention the object of my calls. She dropped her eyes to the floor and said that before the matter could be considered she must take time to have inquiries made concerning me. She could not even contemplate such a step without knowing more about me. I winced at this, for it seemed impossible for her to make such inquiries without discovering that I was an impostor. Nevertheless I brazened it out and offered to give her references. To this she replied that she already had the names of some persons who could give her the required information. Of course she meant friends of the real

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Anthony Page and I hoped he had a better character than I, though I did not express the hope to her.

Notwithstanding the perils by which I was surrounded my bark sailed on over an untroubled sea. At times I wondered how I could escape the dangers that beset me, but the truth is I was falling heels over head in love with Bertha Auchincloss and was infatuated not only with her, but the part I was playing. My calls grew more and more frequent, but instead of taking up the matter on account of which we had come together she not only refrained from mentioning it, but discouraged my doing so. This, taken with the fact that nothing adverse had come from her inquiries, gave me quite a clear coast.

Plunging headlong into love as I was, the time soon came when I made a declaration without confessing my identity. I told her that I loved her and were the property on account of which we had come together sent to the bottom of the ocean still would I love her, still would I marry her if she would consent. She did not drop her head on my shoulder and whisper "Yes." She burst into a laugh.

"The next time," she said, "you play a game like that, keep your wits about you. My aunt, for whom I am named, is the lady you have supposed you were visiting. Since you first came to see me she has married the other Anthony Page. She is forty years old, and he is fifty. I took an interest in that case and remarked the handwriting of the letter he wrote my aunt and which was sent her by the lawyers. Believing that their reply to him must have fallen into the hands of a scamp—for the writing was not his—I sent for your photograph, thinking to have a little fun. Being pleased with it and realizing that it takes two to carry out a lark, I invited you to call. Accept my thanks for having afforded me the most amusing episode of my life."

I was madly in love with a girl who had been fooling me. Nevertheless, I began all over again and in time captured her. She says that in marrying me she did better than her aunt with the other Anthony Page, since their property involved only a hundred thousand dollars, while mine is half a million.

Read "The Tinder Box." It will interest you.

READ

READ

THE TINDER BOX

By
MARIA THOMPSON
DAVIESS
Author of "The Melting
of Molly"

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The First In- stallment

in

The Cloverdale Courier

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