

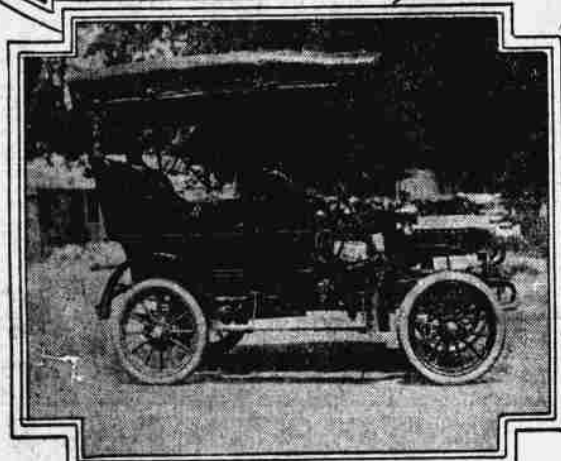
A Kiss for a Car



Mrs. Spangler Gave the Kiss and Got the Car, Farmer Brown Wanted to Return the Kiss and Take the Car Back, the Jury Decided That Kisses Are Not Returnable ---and the Whole Interesting Subject of What a Kiss Really Is Worth That This Interesting Case Opened



Mrs. Bertha Spangler and the Car for Which She Gave Her Kiss.



A Kiss for a Throne. The Famous Incident of Cleopatra and Caesar as Shown by the Great Painter Jerome.



A Kiss for a Soul. Faust with Marguerite, for Whose Caresses He Made His Compact With the Evil One.

If a kiss lasting forty-five minutes is worth a little car, what kind of a kiss would be worth a 12-cylinder touring car? If one kind of kiss is worth an automobile, what kind of kiss would be worth a house? Just how could one discriminate between a kiss worth an evening gown and one worth a piece of city real estate? Between one worth a diamond ring and one worth only a pair of silk stockings? Can a definite commercial market price be placed upon a kiss?

According to the decision of a jury sitting in Scott County, Iowa, the kiss has been accorded a commercial value. For the first time in history osculation has been legally given a financial rating. This enterprising and intrepid jury decided that the kiss of a comely blonde matron was worth the car.

So far so good; but a most interesting point, either overlooked or ignored by the jury, was returnable or exchange value of kisses.

In this Iowa lawsuit a farmer brought action for the recovery of a car he had transferred for the consideration of a kiss. He did not allege that the transaction had been fraudulent; he made no claim of having been swindled; he merely took the ground that a commodity purchased with a kiss should retain its osculatory rating. He offered, it is said, to buy the car back from the woman to whom he had sold it at double, even treble, the price she paid; but she declined the offer, manifestly fair as it was!

It is not to be wondered at that this Scott County (Iowa) jury deliberated for nearly five hours before bringing a verdict for the defendant, declaring she should keep the car; that she had given a full equivalent of its value and was, therefore, legally entitled to it.

The jury doubtless realized it was about to set a world standard. The problem involved was one of ratios. Assuming the value of a long kiss to be a small automobile, what would a five-minute kiss be worth?

Or would the value depend upon the kind of woman who gave the kiss and the type of man who received it? The woman who was awarded a small car for her kiss is thirty years of age. If she had been forty, would her kiss have been worth a still smaller car?

One member of the jury contended that no kiss could possibly be worth an automobile; still another maintained that an automobile was meagre payment for any kind of a kiss. Another declared that the farmer who had been favored had gotten off cheaply, for, being a middle-aged bachelor, he had few chances of gathering kisses.

Although the jury delivered a verdict definitely according to the thirty-year-old matron the car, it can be seen that they did not thereby standardize the value of a kiss, but ruled that the value depends upon the persons, the time, place and circumstance.

The unique suit for the return of the car given in payment of a kiss, was brought by Thomas Brown, a wealthy farmer and bachelor of Scott County, Iowa, against Mrs. Bertha Spangler, who had been his housekeeper.

Brown testified that Mrs. Spangler had been an excellent housekeeper. Under her management his farmhouse had been kept spic-and-span. Meals were served punctually, and the food was deliciously cooked. No one could surpass her in baking bread. Brown's physical needs were adequately cared for, but apparently those of his spirit were not. He yearned to kiss his fair housekeeper. But kiss she would not. Then Brown purchased the car—the car aroused the enthusiasm and admiration of pretty Mrs. Spangler. And Brown, having failed to secure the kiss otherwise, offered the car for a kiss.

"How much did you care for Mrs. Spangler at the time?" he was asked. "I never thought more of any woman than I did of her in all my life," he replied. The jury decided this admission proved the kiss was of real value to Mr. Brown.

The cross-examination of Mrs. Spangler revealed the amazing length of the kiss for which she received the Ford.

"In reply to the question as to the time when the remarkable exchange was made she said she could not remember the date, but one Saturday afternoon when she returned to the farm from a nearby village when she had bought necessities, she found Brown there with the automobile.

"About what time was that?" "It may have been about 4 o'clock."

"What did Brown say to you in regard to the car at the time, if anything?" "Here," he says, "I brought you your machine and here is the receipt for it. Take it and keep it, so you won't lose it and now you are going to kiss me."

"I said, 'Sure I will kiss you.'" "You gave him the kiss?" she was asked.

"Sure I kissed him," Mrs. Spangler admitted. "I kissed him in the pantry."

Under questioning by the Court, Mrs. Spangler declared that was the first and last kiss she ever gave Mr. Brown.

"What did you give Mr. Brown for the car, if anything?" said the Judge, who seemed to view the case with some suspicion.

"A kiss—that is all he asked for," said the defendant. "That was after he gave me the receipt for the car."

"Had you given him any before?" "No, sir."

"Have you given him any since?" "No, sir," emphatically.

"I do not care how long it lasted," contended one of the jurymen, "no kiss is worth a car."

"But a kiss is worth something!" averred one the jurymen, a farmer, whose furrowed features were not exactly kissable.

"Sure it's worth something," all admitted. "But how much?" "She sure has a pretty mouth," said one gravely.

"Yes, but is that mouth worth a car?" "Mrs. Spangler's a pretty woman; of course if she was ugly I don't think as her kiss would be worth a car," averred another.

The jury, of course, considered the various complaints made by Mr. Brown. Brown admitted he had actually given the car to Mrs. Spangler.

"I said to her, 'How do you like the car?' said Mr. Brown, in his testimony. "Oh," she says, "it looks all right. And that was all there was to it."

"Did you tell her at any time that the machine was hers to take and use?" "Why, yes," he admitted. "I told her the machine was hers to go anywhere any time she wanted to, and she hadn't ask me to hitch it up, providing she never had any men riding around with her, or didn't stay out late at night. I told her that several times. 'You can ride round here in the country,' I says. 'You can have as good a home as any woman could have.'"

Unfortunately for Brown, however, his own happiness was short lived—the kisses stopped. And when no more kisses were forthcoming he wanted the car back. For about a month Brown had seemed satisfied with his bargain; then

he became restive. He did not get many rides himself in the machine. Whenever Mrs. Spangler wanted groceries or anything from town she told him to go to the village in the car and bring back the articles desired. That was all the joy-riding he was accorded.

On the other hand, Mrs. Spangler mastered the art of the chauffeur. She went out motoring all the time. She motored in the afternoon. She motored until late in the night. One Sunday she went away and was not seen on the farm until the following Tuesday or Wednesday. Then one evening bachelor Brown experienced a most unpleasant shock.

Pottering about outside the farmhouse, attending to various sordid duties, he heard the loud and jubilant tooting of a horn, and looking up from his labors saw the car he had purchased dash by. In it were Mrs. Spangler, at the wheel, and a man. Mrs. Spangler seemed resplendently happy. The man seemed happier. Engrossed in one another, laughing, elated, neither looked in the direction of the dejected Brown. The ringing echo of their laughter, the bacchanalian glee of the tooting horn, filled Mr. Brown's soul with rage and chagrin.

Within his house things went from bad to worse. According to Brown's testimony, the broom was seldom taken from its place back of the kitchen door. Dust covered the floors of the rooms. The washing was not done.

"We had a row one Sunday," said Brown, almost plaintively, in court, "and she never hardly swept her floor out after that. Never done a thing. Never baked. I had to buy bread and had to buy meat, and she would then take the meat and fry it and would have no vegetables cooked or nothing. She just spent every day firing up and cleaning up the car and running around."

Things came to such a pass that Mrs. Spangler decided she did not care any longer to fill the role of housekeeper. She told the jury she voluntarily threw up her job. Brown indignantly retorted that he was glad Mrs. Spangler had left, that he had all the housekeepers he wanted, and that, knowing how to cook, he would be his own housekeeper from then on. But he wanted the return of his car. Mrs. Spangler's kiss was not worth a car, he contended.

The jury, considering the facts in the case and all the testimony, deliberated for hours. They reached the following verdict:

"We, the jury, find the defendant, Bertha Spangler, to be the legal owner of the Ford in question."

As the verdict was delivered by H. D. Parnelle, the foreman, Mrs. Spangler rose to leave the courtroom smiling victoriously and radiantly. The commercial rating of her kiss had been legally established. Nevertheless she declared she did not intend taking advantage of the financial value thus set.

"I have had enough of men and enough of kisses," she said. Personally, I think a woman's kiss is sold cheaply for an automobile. Men ought to keep house for themselves, and hereafter I am going to keep house for myself, and I am never going to marry."

A Kiss for Power. The Biblical Incident of Delilah and Samson as Conceived by the English Painter, Solomon.

