

About Kisses.

"A thousand kisses buys my heart from me,
 And pay them at thy leisure one by one.
 What is ten thousand touches unto thee?
 Are they not quickly told and quickly gone?
 Say that for non-payment the debt should
 double,
 Is twenty hundred kisses such a trouble?"

—SHAKESPEARE.

TREATED as a mere noun, the declension of the word kiss becomes difficult. It must be classified as both common and proper. It may be collective, but never abstract. It is plural, and all agreed it was singular when the monkey kissed the hen. It belongs neither solely to the masculine or feminine gender, so hence must be either common or neuter. It may belong to the nominative, possessive or objective case.

As an adjective it is even more difficult, for who can "describe, measure or indicate" that for which it stands? Moreover, "an adjective is a word which limits application," and there is of a certainty no such power where a kiss is concerned. It may be a qualitative, or even a cardinal numeral adjective of the quantitative class, and when you have settled on either of these, someone will bowl over your position by pointing out that it is an adjective of relation, or as it is more commonly known—a demonstrative adjective. Concerning its degree, it may be positive or comparative, but more often superlative, and now and then it belongs to what is termed by grammarians as "the irregular form."

On the whole, experience has taught us that it is more satisfactory to treat the kiss as a verb, selecting the mood, tense, number and person to suit ourselves.

Regarding its root, history both sacred and profane is silent. We look to old countries like Japan for light, but are astonished to find that the Japanese never kiss each other. They have yet to learn this sweetest labial in the world's language.

In his "Book of Songs," Heine asks this same question—"Who gave the first kiss?" and the echo answers "Who?"

John Milton places its starting-point in Edenic bowers. This straightest of straight-laced Puritans thus alluringly describes the primitive kiss:

"So spake our general mother, and, with eyes
 Of conjugal attraction unreprieved
 And meek surrender, half-embracing leaned
 On our first father; half her swelling breast
 Naked met his under the flowing gold
 Of her loose tresses hid; he in delight
 Smiled in superior love, as Jupiter
 On Juno smiles, when he impregns the clouds
 That shed May flowers, and pressed her matron
 lips
 With kisses pure."

We have no doubt that Milton wrote according to his light, but had he made a kiss to be the forbidden fruit on the tree of life, his poem would have been more comprehensible. The average woman does not care to risk much for an apple, but who can tell what value she sets on a kiss? Then, too; anyone who has investigated the subject knows that the oftener this sweet fruit is plucked from the tree of love, the more abundant it grows.

But when we have settled on Eden as the fountain-head of the kiss, along comes some scientist who tells us that the Garden of Eden is all a legendary myth of yesterday, and the kiss, like the Protozoans and Trilobites, in eons of ages older.

"AND WHAT IS THE KISS MADE OF?"

And here again the echo answers "What?" Some there are who tell us that it is made out of the flowers known as "tulips," but this we take to be the silly and irreverent definition of a would-be wit. To be accurate, a kiss (we have no reference to the airy confections called "kisses" which cooks contrive from sugar and flavoring) is made out of nothing, and yet, paradoxical as it may appear, it can be divided between two. Indeed this is