

An Incorrigible

She Effected a Result by
a Stroke of Genius

By F. A. Mitchel

Kate Tracey as a little girl was an incorrigible tomboy. She climbed trees, rode the horses to water (straddle) and would have played baseball if she could have found enough girls similarly minded to make up the necessary teams. Furthermore, she was careless, scatter brained and generally reprehensible. Neither her father nor her mother could do anything with her. Scoldings had no effect. Punishment she laughed at, averring that she enjoyed it. Altogether Kate was by no means a model girl unless a model of all that a dutiful child should not be.

Nevertheless her parents adored her. If she left her room in disorder to go out to the barn to play hide and seek with the boys—they used to treat her as one of their own number—her mother, if the housemaid was otherwise engaged, would put things to rights, meaning that she was obliged to do so, but unable to provide against her daughter's doing the same thing again. Her father would endeavor to show her how selfish was this conduct and how it troubled her mother, but seemed unable to impress her with a sense of her fault, or, if he did, it was of no avail, for her only reply was, "I forgot it." No matter how severely he scolded her, within a few minutes after he had finished she would be in his lap with her arms around his neck, apparently forgetful of her offense.

Kate never "talked back" to her parents except under one condition. She had a pet dog, which she loved better than all the world beside. If any one, even her father or mother, punished the dog for a misdemeanor Kate would rebel. Then there would be trouble in the family sure enough, for if there is one thing a parent knows that he should not stir over it is rebellion on the part of his child. When the dog was suffered to go in peace Kate would beg pardon according to the formula laid down for her, but there would be no evidence of repentance in her words.

One of Kate's peculiarities when she was passing from childhood to womanhood was a fascination for the fire department. The moment she would hear the first tap of the signal bell she would listen, counting the strokes, and when they were finished, without referring to the book of districts, she could locate the fire. Not far from her home was a hook and ladder house. The first time her father knew of her fire proclivities he was coming home one evening while an alarm was being struck. The hook and ladder conveyance was coming down the street, the horses galloping, the gong clanging, dogs barking, and what was the father's astonishment to see his little daughter running beside the truck. A man standing on the foot-board reached down, swung her up beside him, and the whole passed out of sight.

The scolding Kate received that evening was more impressive than any before delivered. Nevertheless at the next alarm the action was repeated, and it soon became a regular thing to see her mounted on the ladders, held there by a fireman, whenever the equipment was hurried to a fire. She was made an honorary member of the company, and when she reached an age when such action could no longer be tolerated they presented her with a gold badge. But she never got over her penchant for going to fires and at an alarm even at the dead of night would put her head out of the window to discover the location of the burning building.

Every one was curious as to what sort of person Kate would turn out when she came to the age of discretion. In one respect, and one respect only, there was a great change. Whenever she troubled her parents she was very much troubled herself. Though she continued to worry them by her antics, she was always truly repentant. Her father finally came to believe that she couldn't help it and endured it. Her mother believed she could help it, continued to mourn her daughter's perverseness, and waited upon her and obeyed her as though she were her maid instead of her parent.

Kate had always been a favorite with boys and when grown drew young men to her as lovers. When lectured upon the subject she averred she couldn't help it; the fault was not hers, but the men's. No one believed her except her father, but whether he understood her better than other persons or whether she was capable of making him believe white was black, and vice versa, nobody knows. He was certainly not an unbiased judge.

Be this as it may, every now and again some young fellow would make Kate's acquaintance, suddenly become very attentive and after awhile drop out. Had she been a beauty or rich those about her could have understood what was the attraction; but, since she was plain and without fortune, no one could give a reason for it. She was not a girl to permit familiarities, so that this could not be taken into account.

The truth is Kate Tracey was a child of nature—not governed, as other people are, by such precepts as are laid down in well regulated households, but subject to her own whims. The world loves novelty. In Kate the young man discovered novelty enough for a dozen

girls. They found waywardness, unconsciousness of her own peculiarities and innocence. Compared with other girls she was like a glittering gem to a lump of coal. All that glitters may not be gold, but beast, bird and mankind from time immemorial have been attracted by that which shines rather than that which is somber.

Kate turned off suitors in droves without even incurring the slightest blame from any of them. She was obliged to inflict some grievous wounds, but always managed to apply a balm that averted a change from love to hate. However, the day arrived when two lovers came down upon her at the same time, and she was sorely puzzled.

James Tisdale and Ernest Brown were the two young men simultaneously struck by Kate Tracey's charms. Since she wanted neither of them it was not possible for her to decide between them. Unfortunately she did not know of the rivalry and bitter animosity that had sprung up between them. One evening she was struck with astonishment upon receiving an anonymous note informing her that the rivals were intending to fight for her in an opening in a wood beside the river, a secluded spot about a mile from the town, at 5 o'clock in the morning.

This was a stumper for Kate. The idea of bloodshed occurring on her account appealed her. Her first impulse was to tell her father, but he had warned her time and again against being drawn into complications with men who wished to marry her, and she dreaded lest he should blame her. She fretted till late at night before coming to any decision, then struck a plan that reflected her own peculiar genius. Sallying forth, she went to the building of the hook and ladder company. The men were sitting around in armchairs, but when they saw their female honorary member enter each and every man rose and saluted. Kate nodded to them and went straight on to the office of their captain.

After half an hour's conference Kate emerged from the hook and ladder house attended by the commander, who insisted on seeing her home. He left her at her door and returned to the engine house, while Kate went to bed.

At 4 o'clock she arose, dressed herself, crept softly downstairs and went out into the street. No one was about at that early hour, all being stowed away in bed, but at the corner she found the captain of the fire department with a carriage and several of his men with a fire engine. Kate entered the carriage with the captain, and, followed by the fire engine, they were driven out of town.

Just before 5 o'clock—it was coming daylight—the dueling parties were on the ground making preparations for the encounter. An attempt was made by the seconds to effect a reconciliation, stating that the affair would appear at least ridiculous and might result in a tragedy. But a man will make a guy of himself about a woman, especially when he has a rival, quicker and more obstinately than for any other cause, and neither of the principals would budge.

The ground was paved, the positions marked and the men placed upon them.

But just as a signal to fire was to be given one of the seconds called a halt.

The rising sun was shining in his principal's eyes. A new arrangement was made, and the contestants were placed differently.

The delay proved fortunate.

Just as they were about to receive the signal to fire a carriage drove up, followed by a fire engine. Kate Tracey and the captain of the hook and ladder company jumped out of the carriage, and at an order from the latter the engine began to play a stream of water on the duelists. In a few seconds they were drenched, and, since the water was not overwarm, they shivered. But the firemen played on till Kate called a halt.

"Shake hands," she said.

Neither of the principals would. They seemed chiefly concerned about the ridiculous figure they cut. Every one on the ground except themselves was laughing. Kate told the firemen to continue the douche for awhile, then renewed the order to shake hands. But another wetting was necessary before they would obey. Then, upon the assurance of all concerned that the affair should proceed no further, Kate and her attendant returned to the carriage and, followed by the firemen, drove back to town.

Though Kate had pledged all the firemen not to divulge the affair, it was too good for the seconds to keep. It got into the newspapers, and the first knowledge of it that Mr. and Mrs. Tracey received was through this source.

"What shall we do with her?" exclaimed the father in perplexity.

"Oh, heavens! I don't know unless we shut her up in a lunatic asylum," replied the mother.

But the idea of shutting the young lady in an asylum was not to be considered, her father averring that as chief lunatic she would assume a leadership of her fellow prisoners and take command of the institution. But he agreed that, since there was nothing positively bad in his daughter's makeup, it would be better to "give her her head" and let her set her own pace.

However, soon after the crowning episode of her single life, in which Miss Kate extinguished a rivalry for her hand with cold water, she fell deeply in love with and was married to a young man who is a model of sobriety and steadiness. He has heard about his wife's escapades before her marriage and can't exactly understand them. He says he doesn't see what all the fuss and worry were about. He doesn't see anything the matter with her.

Doing fancy "stunts" in an airplane is taking dangerous chances, of course, but even the man who does nothing but plain, everyday, unornamented aviating is not regarded by the life insurance companies as a safe risk.

DAMES AND DAUGHTERS.

Mrs. Elmer Nutting of Cambridge, Mass., is said to have the largest collection of postcards in the world. It numbers more than 30,000 specimens.

Mrs. Chang, widow of a Chinese official, is the editor in chief of the Peking woman's paper, which is devoted entirely to subjects interesting to her sex. Mme. de Ronsard, a heroine who nursed British soldiers with Florence Nightingale in the Crimean war, is now, at the age of eighty-four, living in an obscure quarter of Cairo, Egypt, in sickness and want, it is said.

The Duchess of Fife, who recently attained her twenty-first birthday, is owner of one of the largest estates in north Britain, comprising nearly 250,000 acres of cultivated land, mountain, moor and forest. She inherited the vast estates and great riches of her father. The duchess is fond of outdoor sport.

Mrs. Lydia R. Kemper, a scientist of note, has received unusual recognition in Germany, the emperor having recently conferred on her the title of "professor." Though born in Russia, she has lived practically all of her life in the United States and has occupied a chair at the University of Pennsylvania. Mrs. Kemper is now in Berlin pursuing scientific investigations.

Sporting Notes.

Danny Murphy, captain of the Athletics, owing to the injury to his leg probably never will be able to play baseball again, but he will retain his connection with the Athletics in the capacity of a scout.

First Baseman Myers of the Spokane club of the Northwestern league has established a new league base stealing record, stealing 118 bases. The former record of 105 bases was held by Zimmerman of the Chicago Nationals.

Ted Meredith, the champion runner, will not be on the Pennsylvania freshman football team this season. Meredith wanted to play, but after writing to Trainer Mike Murphy he learned that he would take on flesh if he played football and this might interfere with his running.

Current Comment.

Scientists are still trying to produce life artificially while moralists are lamenting that life is too artificial.—Brooklyn Standard Union.

All the country has spent on its schools does not appear to have gone far toward educating the hazing practice out of being.—Denver Republican.

Once more the time honored question arises, this time in Paris: What sort of a man understands women? The man who never boasts about it.—Detroit Free Press.

A speaker at the national congress of hygiene says the United States leads the world in deaths. The professor might have stated the fact more pleasantly by saying we lead the world in everything.—New York Telegram.

Short Stories.

The United States spends \$15,000,000 a year to see baseball games.

The Russian government has put the stable hunters out of business for three years.

From deep water in the Atlantic to deep water in the Pacific the Panama canal will be fifty miles in length.

The kitchens of the Emperor Francis Joseph's palace at Budapest are considered to be the most modern and in every way the finest in Europe.

In the United States there is one lawyer for every 700 persons, in England there is one to each 1,100 of population, in France one to 4,100 and in Russia one to 30,000.

Cost of Living.

The official government report shows that the high cost of living is almost equal to the cost of high living.—Chicago Inter Ocean.

Now that a government commission has made an exhaustive examination and reported thereon, the public suspicion that the cost of living is high has been confirmed.—Philadelphia Ledger.

It is true living costs more than it used to. The federal bureau of labor has issued a report confirming the rumor. We had hoped the story might at last have turned out to be unfounded.—Chicago Record-Herald.

Town Topics.

Chicago is a queer city. It has even gone so far as to forbid "ad." displays in street cars.—Boston Journal.

Baltimore policemen must not play dominos on Sunday. Probably it is the one game that they don't play at all.—Milwaukee Sentinel.

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—Chicago Tribune.

Americans and Soap.

There is a serious absence of cake soap from the hotels on the tourist belt of west Scotland, and nearly all of the soap supply is in liquid or powder form. A correspondent of the London Chronicle reports that the spray and the trifle were safeguards against the Yanks. No American tourists, he was told, can see a hotel cake of soap without putting it in his pocket, provided he is unobserved. "They are a splendid people to deal with," said one of the hotel keepers, "but unchained, portable soap is their undoing."

That matter of soap is one of the international quarrels of manners," observes the Chronicle. "The whitest American is as dishonest about a cake of soap as the blackest of his compatriots is about chickens. He will steal anybody's cake of soap."

"And just across the channel you find countries where you carry your own soap and would as soon think of a public cake of soap as of a public toothbrush."

When Right Seemed Wrong.

Brown, a stranger in a Canadian city, stopped a pert looking newsboy and asked directions to a well known park. He grew wrathful as he repeated the urchin's instructions.

"Take any old street car," Brown schooled.

"Yes."

"And at the end of the line change to the first young street car. Is that what you said?"

"Yes," answered the boy, with a grin. Then he shied off at the gentleman's gesture toward his cheek.

"You'd better run," Brown called after him. "You needn't try your smart tricks on me or I'll thrash you." He walked away, stopped at a newsdealer's to buy a city guide and found the directions to the park as follows: "Take any Old street car to end of line, then change to Yonge." —New York Press.

When Hoops Began.

When were hoops "in" for the first time? According to Strutt, "trundling the hoop is a pastime of uncertain origin, but much in fashion at present" (1801). Dr. Murray's dictionary, incidentally remarking that the original hoop affected by boys was a barrel hoop, gives no English reference to it earlier than 1792. But the hoop was well known to ancient Greek and Roman boys, who called it a "trophus" (wheel). Their hoops were made of bronze, and representations of them on gems show that they were driven by a little hook with a wooden handle, very like the modern boy's hoop stick. This was called by the Greeks "elater" (driver) and by the Romans "clavis" (key). Sometimes the ancient hoop had bells attached to it.—London Mail.

Order of Gybbogles.

The gybbogle is one of the rarest and most curious animals in existence and is found only in Madagascar and a part of Australia. It didactically began Professor Licklephier, the schoolmaster, during a recent session of the Sit and Argue club. "It is a sort of a vampire, something like a cross between a kangaroo and an enormous bat, and can swim and fly with equal ease, it"—"Fine, fine!" snarled the old codger, whose rheumatism was hectoring him with unusual severity. "Swell name for a new lodge—"The Concatenated Order of Philanthropic Gybbogles," or something of the sort—and what a jo-darter of an emblem a little gold gybbogle would make to wear on our watch jobs!"—Kansas City Star.

Royalty's Game.

Cards have always been a royal game. Queen Elizabeth played cards and lost her temper over them frequently. She was no Anne of Austria, to play "like a queen, without passion of greed or gain." In her reign was commanded to be played "at Wyndesore a Comedie or Morral devised on the game of cardes," which resulted in the performance by the children of her majesty's chapel of "Alexander and Campaspe," in which the pretty lines occur:

Cupid and my Campaspe played
At cards for kisses. Cupid paid.
—London Chronicle.

Agin the Government.

"What do you think of dis govm't ownership idea, Weary?"

"My experience makes me agin it."

"Your experience?"

"Yes; de govm't runs de jails, don't dey? Well, de way dey does it don't make no hit wit me."—Boston Transcript.

His Art.

Mrs. Syille—My husband takes a deep interest in art. Mrs. Oldar—You surprise me. Mrs. Syille—Well, it was a surprise to me, but I heard him telling Jack Rowder last night that it was a good thing to study your hand before you draw.

—Chicago Inter Ocean.

Sarcastic.

"That's arrant nonsense," said Mr. Henpeck, "about there always being room at the top."

"Oh," his wife sarcastically replied, "when were you up there to see?"

Tough Luck.

Bix—Picked up a five dollar bill this morning. Dix—Lucky dog! Bix—Lucky nothing! Right behind me was a chap I owed a fiver to, and he boned me for it.—Boston Transcript.

Two Passions.

Mrs. Prosy—Reading is quite a passion with my