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summer frocks beneath the trees. The statesman moved from group to group, listening to the balderdash emitted by small minds which imagined that they were big. Then suddenly he came upon her, all alone in a plain dress and with tired lines about her eyes. "Stella," he said, and went to meet her with both hands outstretched.

The sweet pain of it all came back to him with a rush. He hadn't had a girl and Tommy Green had, so Tommy had offered to ask his girl to bring along a friend and they could make a four of it. Herbert had spent the afternoon hoping that Tommy's girl's friend would turn out to look like Gaby Deslys, but it was Tommy's girl who had looked like Gaby Deslys and her friend had been a popeyed nonentity with a big nose and buttoned boots. Tommy's girl was called Stella and her friend was called Jasmine, and they all went to sit on the wall and look at the briny, as it was the fashion in those days to call the sea. Tommy and Stella sat at one end of the wall, and Herbert and Jasmine sat at the other. Herbert didn't know what to say to Jasmine, who said that she would give him a penny for his thoughts. Herbert said that he didn't think that his thoughts were worth a penny.

Then Jasmine asked him intensely, "Do you play tennis, Mr. Mawson?"

Mr. Mawson had most vehemently not played tennis, and after that he had not played badminton, chess and beggar-my-neighbor.

By a quarter past eight he hadn't read Black Beauty, The Rosary and Huckleberry Finn, but he had read Buffalo Bill. By half past eight he knew that the population of India was three hundred thousand million and that the proper time for boiling an egg soft was three and a half minutes. Then it was time for Tommy to accompany Stella to the station, and Herbert and Jasmine tagged along too. Jasmine was dropped off at the door of her house on the way, after telling them all that it was colder at the North Pole than at the South Pole, because she had read it in a book. Herbert went on with Tommy and Stella to the station, because he had seen Stella's face only in the dark and wanted to see how pretty she looked in the light.

She looked lovely all right, standing by the open railway-carriage door, with the lamps sending a sheen down on the black satin bow of her pigtail. Just as the train was about to leave, she asked Tommy if he would like to travel with her as far as the junction and catch the next train back, but Tommy said, with a lack of chivalry which surprised Herbert, that he really couldn't be bothered. Inspired into disloyalty by the desire to have a little of her beauty for himself, Herbert said that he would come like a shot if she wanted him to, and, to his surprise, she smiled and said that she would love to have him come. Tommy didn't seem to mind greatly. Three minutes later Herbert was sitting beside her big mackintosh with the belt round the middle, and riding with her prettiness all to himself, with the black night outside plastered glossily against the lighted carriage windows.

Stella didn't ask him if he played golf, swam sidestroke or ate mustard with mutton. Instead she told him all sorts of funny familiar little things about herself. She wasn't going to put her hair up till after she was eighteen, she didn't like boys who tried to walk arm-in-arm with her the first time she met them, and she never wore silk stockings, because her father thought they were "fast."

He met her again the next night, at the gate of the churchyard. She wasn't there when he arrived, and he waited for a long time alone in the dark, afraid that she wasn't going to come. Then suddenly she was beside him in the night, with her face peeking palely from the deep, upturned collar of her dark coat.

Wordlessly he went with her up a rough lane to a little valley shadowed by trees. They lay side by side on the embankment and looked up at the stars. The wind blew gently in the long grass, but they were both too young to feel cold. For the first time in his life Herbert sensed a little of the mystery of eternity in the realization that thousands of years ago lovers had lain like this and that thousands of years hence other lovers would still lie beneath the same stars.

"You're not saying much," she said.

"I'm thinking," he said.

He was thinking, of course, that he wanted to kiss her and to put his arms round her. He restrained himself, partly because of what she had said about boys who tried to walk arm-in-arm with her, partly because he didn't want her to think that he was out for a light kind of love. So they lay on in silence in the darkness with the sky high above them and the church clock chiming. The only gesture of tenderness which he dared to make was to touch the collar of her coat and say that the fur was very soft.

He rose at once when she said that it was time for them to be going, and accompanied her back to the house and said good-by at the gate. He lingered on alone, however, until one of the invisible upper windows turned pink, and he didn't leave until it had turned black again. The last train had gone long ago, and he walked the five miles back to town with enchantment singing in his heart.

Theirs was essentially a courtship of the poor, conducted in parks and lanes and shelters. It was in the shelter on the golf course in front of the Marine Hotel that he first kissed her, missing her mouth in his nervousness and taking a peck at her nose. "Now I'm your best girl," she said, and nestled close to him with shining eyes.

The shelter became sacred for them because it was the place where they had first kissed, but they never met at the shelter, lest Stella should arrive there first and some man should try to pick her up. They met always in front of the hotel and, after looking through the windows at the solemn dining of the rich and envying them not at all, they went to the shelter to enjoy their own less expensive pleasures and to swear that they would be true to each other even when they were very, very old.

To Herbert's surprise, Tommy had never reproached him for stealing Stella from him. Indeed, he had seemed relieved rather than distressed by the turn which events had taken. It was Gerald whose competition aroused his jealousy. Gerald was twenty-six and, because he was a qualified doctor, was

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Once a fellow becomes putty in a woman's hands, he's in bad shape.
—MORRIE GALLANT.

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