

TO KISS OR NOT TO KISS

Shall We or Shall We Not Join the World Crusade Which Seeks to Banish Completely the Joys of Osculation?

AFTER years of sporadic crusading a nonkissing organization has been started in Cincinnati, O., that is meeting with surprising success. In that city, according to the president of the society, more than 1,000 men, women and children have pledged themselves to abstain from the practice, and the membership roll is steadily on the increase. Supporters of the movement are so ambitious as to prophesy that within a year or two they will have members in every city in the union.

The leaders of the anti-kissers are going about their work in a hard headed, cold blooded, but extremely eloquent manner, and by the force of the ridicule that naturally follows their efforts, are steadily gaining headway.

A word or two descriptive of the woman at the head of the crusaders may serve to make one understand the seriousness with which the takers of the peculiar pledge are prosecuting their missionary work.

Her name is Mrs. John Rechlin. She is a rather attractive looking, dark haired, brown eyed little woman of about 35 years, who long before married was diametrically opposed to promiscuous kissing. She began to preach her doctrine to her husband, won him to her way of thinking, and then started on her friends, with such success that the "World's health organization" was founded, and she was enthusiastically elected its first president. Mrs. Rechlin believes a kiss to be the greatest disease spreader and germ carrier in existence, and her pet theory is that when the people of the world are all made to think so, too, a general improvement in public health and morals will be inevitable.

Just now the anti-kiss leader is devoting her attention to the conversion of the fair sex, particularly the young women of Cincinnati, who are about to become brides. Here is the pledge that the enthusiast causes to be sent to every bride to be with the petition that it be signed before the eve of her wedding:

"In order to encourage good health and lessen the spread of consumption I desire to join the World's health organization and hereby pledge myself to discourage the custom of kissing on the lips whenever it is in my power."

If the recipient of the petition signs and returns the pledge she is furnished with an attractive button inscribed with the words "I won't kiss."

"The custom of kissing a bride on

her wedding day is a most dangerous one," said Mrs. Rechlin during an interview recently. "To stamp out this evil at once would be to accomplish the impossible, but we have made the start and are much encouraged."

"Seventy-five prospective brides have joined the organization this month. On their wedding day they will wear the button of the society."

The anti-kissing leaders have mapped out a long campaign, and when it ends kissing will be a lost art, they hope. Soon they will try to make members of public speakers and singers—of everybody "whose success in life depends on healthy vocal cords."

In August fathers and mothers will be urged not to kiss their babies.

In September teachers will implore their pupils to abjure kissing.

October the less kissing the less hazardous the work of street cleaners and laundresses; so the organization will seek members on the highways and in the laundries.

In November women belonging to church clubs, card clubs and literary clubs will be asked to join and to wear their badges at club meetings.

"And in December, with its Christmas weddings, we shall turn our attention to lovers," said the president. "My life for just one kiss sounds thrilling in romance and poetry. But disillusion is found in the hospitals, whence lovers follow each other to the grave in a few short months."

"To kiss or not to kiss?" is a question that bids fair to be discussed before long throughout the country. Mrs. Rechlin's society is now known in all of the principal cities, and arrangements are being made for the establishment of hundreds of branch offices.

In New York, Philadelphia and other cities of the east the nonkiss idea has not met with the favor with which it has been greeted by the people of Cincinnati. Here are a few opinions expressed by eastern clubwomen of prominence.

Mrs. Phillip Van Valkenburgh, who has been married three times, says: "I don't think life would be worth living without kisses. They are as old as the world. I'm perfectly sure Eve knew about kissing before she listened to the serpent. Of course, I don't believe in promiscuous kissing, which cheapens the value of the kiss; but it is silly to talk about discouraging all kissing."

Miss Alberta Hill, suffragist—I was brought up in Japan, where they don't



THIS MAY MEAN TUBERCULOSIS

do such things. So, of course, I suppose I don't know anything about it. But, whenever I am told not to do anything, I always want to go straight and do it. So if a society is organized to prevent people from kissing—a pause and then a stammer—well—I—I—think all the other girls, who weren't brought up in Japan, will want to see why kissing's so bad."

Mrs. Belle de Rivera, president of the New York city federation—I think the agitation is extremely silly and in very poor taste. Every one knows a great deal of harm may be done by the promiscuous kissing of children. The fact is so well understood it seems silly to try to organize it. I feel certain New York clubwomen will not join in any such foolish, sensational agitation.

Mrs. William Cummings Story—Frankly, I never gave the question a serious thought, but (diplomatically) it must have a certain amount of importance on the Cincinnati women would not have deemed it worthy of their serious attention.

Mrs. Harriette J. Wood—I think the practice of kissing is altogether too extensive. The habit of certain society women of saluting each other with a kiss every time they casually meet is extremely silly. A handshake is in much better taste. But a mother should kiss her children whenever she chooses, unless she is a victim of disease. Her kisses are the result of a lovely natural impulse of affection, and the children can receive nothing but good from them. As to forbidding young men and women to kiss—well, I think they are old enough to look out for themselves. And even if the practice is an evil, every evil has its compensations, you know.

Dr. Eugenia Hancock—There are diseases terrible in their effect that are transmitted with the utmost ease by kissing. And all our young people are equally in danger. Yet kissing is a natural, wholesome thing in its origin, and sentimental considerations would make its banishment impossible. It is the very flavor of all poetry and song



and romance. But it should be properly safeguarded. It would not be such a bad idea if all young people had to produce health certificates before kissing or any other forms of courtship are indulged in.

Mrs. Winifred H. Cooley, national secretary of the Allied Clubs of Domestic Science—"It seems to me such things as domestic service and good roads and pure food and adequate schools are much more important than to kiss or not to kiss."

Mrs. Ida Husted Harper—"If women could vote they wouldn't be worrying their heads about being kissed."

"When it is in my power," runs the anti-kissing pledge. When the full moon's rays vainly seek to penetrate the honeysuckles that shadow the darkest corner of the piazza; when the dearest fellow in the world is seated next to her there; when gently he puts his arm around her waist and leans toward her—

Is it in her power then "to discourage the custom of kissing on the lips"? Ah, the danger of it. Did she only know it, all around her the malevolent bacilli of tuberculosis are laughing for vicious joy.

ONE EXAMPLE OF THE KISS MRS. RECHLIN IS STRIVING TO PUT OUT OF BUSINESS

MY WHAT A CHANCE FOR THOSE AWFUL GERMS!

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MRS. PHILIP VAN VALKENBURGH, WHO BELIEVES IN KISSING



MRS. JOHN RECHLIN, HEAD OF THE CRUSADE TO ABOLISH KISSING

