

"A kiss for the bride!"—and what may not be the result.

Latterly, in the Middle West, some few of us, you know, have been urging abolishing the handshake—the naked hand, that is—for reasons which hardly make refined reading, but which will explain themselves on reminding oneself of the dozen and one things you may have touched since last you washed your hands. You hung on a strap in the street-car—who held that strap last, pray tell? You fumbled your money—who passed it to you, and from whose pocket had it come? You know and I know where savings are kept, very often. You pressed door-knobs, handled this and that. Then you meet Smith, on his way, as you are, to lunch, and you both shake hands. Smith and you exchange microbes as you pass on to dine. No chance to wash between the café door and dinner, so you put Smith's gift of microbes on the roll you will touch, on the chicken you must finger in order to eat, on the pickle, or the olive, or anything else with which good breeding permits a hand touch.

Here at the wedding likewise. With white gloves removed, and one and all now just about to sit down to the wedding feast, you shake hands with the bride—poor little bride!—and give her your own supply of microbes—the heartier your clasp of good wishes the more—and then, adding insult to injury, plant that kiss on her mouth!

A few years ago, a magazine errand sent us to the little village of Plevna, about which the mightiest battle of the Russo-Turkish War had been fought. We chanced to come to town when a funeral was in progress, and as everyone in the place attends such, so we. Not to weary with details which, while interesting are not pertinent, by and by the Pope, or priest, of the orthodox faith raised a square little Icon from its place on the breast of the dead—a victim of scarlet fever the woman had been—put it to the lips of the corpse that "they might once again have the benefit of such sacrament," and then kissed it devoutly himself. Returning it to the woman's breast, he was followed by everyone else in the church then, each person putting the Icon to the lips of the dead, then to his own, then to the coffin once more. When we wrote of this not alone grisly but plague-spreading rite, medical papers far and wide commented on it as Europe's most barbarous custom, and as a relic of savagery and the like.

That, though, is in a benighted up-country hamlet in Bulgaria, a land where brigandage and rapine and murder have kept down the finer arts. But in London, Ottawa, Washington, San Francisco you will find in vogue, among all classes of people, a custom which is not one whit less foolish.

A kiss and a handclasp for the bride, and then . . . well, maybe physicians are all of them wrong when they prate of the spread of disease through contagion. But maybe, again, they're not!

## OUTSIDE THE GATES.

### WOMEN.

There is a lively correspondence in last week's *British Medical Journal*, aroused by the "Report on the Forcible Feeding of Suffrage Prisoners," signed by Sir Victor Horsley, Mr. Mansell Moullin, and Dr. Agnes Savill. Of course, it presents the opinions of those for and against this special form of torture, but the arguments of Dr. Barbara Tchayhovsky are worthy of note, as she claims that forcible feeding does not fulfil the two-fold purpose for which it is presumably used: (1) To prevent starvation; (2) To prevent prisoners from terminating their sentences. She considers that the time is ripe for the medical profession, through its organisation, to protest against the imposition on its members of duties that are distinctly unprofessional, for it is probably difficult, if not impossible, for any individual medical officer to refuse to carry out the instructions of his authority. She fails, however, to recall in this connexion any other branch of the medical service where the necessity for the imposition of any form of medical treatment does not lie solely with the medical officer, whose decision is final. Apparently in the case under consideration, the prison doctors take their orders for this special form of medical treatment from their lay authority, which is surely an abrogation of their privilege to prescribe or withhold treatment unbiassed by any consideration except the need of health.

Dr. Tchayhovsky asks "Are prison doctors called upon to render purely medical services, and are they in order, as members of the medical profession, in administering a form of treatment to the patients under their care which rapidly reduces these to a serious condition of invalidity? Even in Russia, during the savage flogging of prisoners, the prison doctor stands by and raises his hand when in his opinion the prisoner has had enough. Here, apparently, the prison doctor administers the torture himself, and then decides from the prisoner's physical condition when she has had enough of his treatment.

"I have before me," she writes, "a copy of the oath taken by Arabian doctors at the Kasr-el-Aini Hospital at Cairo, which begins and ends:—

I swear in the name of God, the Most High, and of His Sublime Prophet Mohammed, whose Glory may God increase, to be faithful to the laws of honour, honesty, and benevolence in the practice of medicine.

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May I be respected if I remain faithful to my vow. If not, may I be covered with shame and be despised. God is my witness to what I have said. The oath is finished.

"Surely the doctors of the West will not yield to their colleagues of the East in high aim and purity of motive!"

To object to the indignity of forcible feeding is, according to one correspondent, mere "senseless sentimental clamour"!

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