

Advice and Studies on Love from Early UMB Graduates

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St. Valentine's Day is upon us, advice on how to spend the day is everywhere. The goal of this post is not to add to this abundance of advice but to look back on how early UMB graduates studied love.

The first, a humorous, pseudo-science article titled "The Science of Kissing" found in the 1899 *Bones, Molars, and Briefs* Yearbook. Perhaps it's important to note that early college and university [yearbooks](#) served as more than a volume of photographs documenting the events of the year; instead they were literary and satirical pieces, highlighting milestones as well as inside jokes and embarrassing stories.

"The Science of Kissing" is an excellent example of applying literature and satire to the medical profession. In this piece an anonymous—presumably medical—student argues against an article claiming that kissing is a dangerous pastime due to the passage of germs and bacteria. Most likely the article alluded to did not exist. In "The Science of Kissing" the student claims to have pursued his own experiments and proven that when done correctly and with the appropriate partner kissing can be beneficial. The student states:

"Kisses, when selected with due care and taken on the installment plan, will not only restore a misplaced appetite, but are especially beneficial in cases of hay fever, as they banish that tired feeling', tone up the liver, invigorate the heart, and make the blood to sing thro' the system like a giant Jew's harp. I found by patient experiment that the health microbe became active at fifteen, reaches maturity at twenty, begins to lose its vigor at forty, and is quite useless as a tonic when, as someone has tersely expressed it, a woman's kisses begin to "taste of her teeth." Thin, bluish lips produce very few health germs, and those scarce worth the harvesting; but a full, red mouth, with Cupid curves at the corners, will yield enormously if the crop be properly cultivated. I did not discover whether the blonde or brunette variety is entitled to precedence in medical science, but incline to the opinion that a judicious admixture is most advisable from a therapeutical standpoint."

It sounds like kissing, when done correctly and with the right individual, could solve all our minor health issues! The student continues to give advice on how to best collect the health germs when the correct person is found:

The best results can be obtained about the midnight hour, when the dew is on the rose, the jasmine laid drunken with its own perfume, and the mockbird trilling alast good-night to its drowsy mate. You entice your best girl into the garden to watch Venus' flaming orb hanging like the Kohinoor pendant from the crescent moon, You pause beneath the great gnarled live oak, its myriad leaves rustling softly as the wings of seraphs. Don't be in a hurry, and for God's sake don't gab—in such a night silence is the acme of eloquence." In such a night Trolius mounted the Trojan walls and sighed his soul toward the Grecian tents where Cressid lay." She watches the fireflies respiring in phosphorescent flame, amid the clover blooms while you watch her, and twine a spray of honeysuckle in her hair. She looks very beautiful with her face upturned in the moonlight; but don't say a word about it, for there's a little of the poseur about all the daughters of Eve. She withdraws her eyes from the stars, slowly, turns them dreamily upon yours, and you note that they are filled with astral fire. They roam idly over the shadowy garden, then close as

beneath a weight of weariness. Her head rests more heavily against your shoulder, and her bosom trembles with a half-audible sigh. There is now really no occasion for further delay. Do not swoop down upon the health germs like a hungry hen-hawk on a green gosling, but incline your head gently until your carefully deodorized breath is upon her lips—there pause, for the essence of enjoyment is in anticipation. The man who gulps down a glass of old wine without first inhaling its oenanthic and feasting his eyes upon its ruddy splendors, is simply a sot. Wait until you have noted the dark lashes reclining upon the cheek of sun-flushed snow, "the charm of married brows," the throat of alabaster, the dimple in her chin, the wine-tint of her half-parted lips, with their glint of pearl—wait until her eyes half open, look inquiringly into yours, and close again, then cincture her gently but firmly with one arm, support her chin with the other hand, and give the health germs ample time to change their home. A kiss, to have any scientific value, should last one minute and seven seconds by Shrewsbury clock, and be repeated seven times, not in swift succession, but with the usual interval between wine at a symposiac."

We here at the HS/HSL Historical Collections feel healthier already, just by reading this [article](#).

But perhaps you aren't as lucky in love this Valentine's Day and kissing will not be part of your day. Perhaps, instead, you are looking for a cure for "The Effects of Disappointed Love." Not to worry, Joseph McCoy Sitler, 1928 graduate of the School of Medicine, has some advice for you in his dissertation of that title.

Sitler's interesting [dissertation](#) differs from most at the time because it looks at a human emotion and mental state rather than an illness or disease or the anatomy of the body. Yet he claims it is an important ailment for doctors to consider:

"The subject, I have chosen as an Inaugural Dissertation, is one which from its novelty, may be deemed trifling, and uninteresting, but as it so materially concerns the health, happenings and welfare of that portion of the human family, whose lot it is to alleviate the misfortunes, and avert the miseries of ma imperiously demands our serious and considerate attention."

Arguably, Sitler is an early proponent of mental health. He argues that all humans can be victims of this debilitating ailment no matter their disposition. He also believes that many go without treatment because they 1) fail to seek treatment or 2) are treated for symptoms of an entirely different ailment. His dissertation describes an early attempt to understand human emotion and mental health and how to help someone with deficiencies in this area. Sitler identifies the best treatment for disappointed love as:

"...we should not as in the first which solely depends upon too much tone use the remunerative plan but rather endeavor to invigorate and strengthen the systems with mild but effective tonics. The best of these is cheerful conversation and agreeable company. Very often when medicine in all its forms initially fails to accomplish any desirable purpose towards the restoration of health a tour through some agreeable part of the country remote from the noise disturbances and ingeminated atmosphere of populous cities where the patient can enjoy the advantages of salubrious breezes accompanied by some intimate friend to whom she can communicate her sorrows and receive condolence will almost effect a total radical cure."

Sitler puts lesser value in medical tonics and medicines but does acknowledge the value of mineral waters when combined with sea air:

“Mineral waters...are very useful in the disease. Sea bathing has been practiced and its effects found to be very beneficial. Perhaps a great many of the advantages supposed to be derived from the use of the sea bath ought to be attributed to the change of scenery and company which the patient experiences rather than the tonic influence it exerts over the human consumption. Yet no doubt this is a powerful adjuvant to other measures.”

And with that should anyone look for us, we'll be at the beach, soaking up the healing powers of the sea. Happy Valentine's Day to all!