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The Home Doctor

Ticklishness and Kisses Explained by New Discoveries

By Dr. Leonard Keene Hirshberg, A.B., M.A., M.D. (Johns Hopkins University)

Are you ticklish? Offhand you will say that you are or you are not. Yet to be tickled to death is a form of pleasure pain, which no one hankers after. The art and science of ticklishness has never before been thoroughly understood. The laboratories of psychology have delved into it; volumes have been written about it; people have enjoyed and been punished by tickling, yet nothing has come out of Goth or Babylon except gossip.

Comes now Dr. Louis Robinson, the eminent psychologist with the first real tangible information to an awaiting world as to the real basis for the sensation of tickling.

If you tickle a child, it either ignores you, resents it, or laughs and plays according to its mood. Plainly, if the child is not in a playful and responsive mood, it cannot be tickled. If it be ill or if you are a stranger or someone disliked, resentment instead of pleasure at the undesired attempt will follow.

Indeed, you may soon tell whether a child likes you or dislikes you by trying the experiment of tickling the youngster. If the little one laughs to feel such sport, it is a sign of friendliness and good will. Then in its delight, the child will pretend

very thing which tickles the palate soon palls on it. "But," says Dr. Robinson, "no one can get even a smile out of himself—much less peals of convulsive laughter—by going into solitude and tickling his own ribs!"

Light touches of the nature of a caress, are the same as these sensations of ticklishness. The same sense of gratification is associated with both animals that lick their young, give them simultaneously a tickle and a caress. When your dog licks your hand, he tickles it and gives it a loving caress at the same moment.

The Esquimaux and the higher types of monkeys also lick their young. The great William Harvey held the idea, which is no doubt true, that the establishment of parental affection is founded upon this licking—tickling sensation.

Indeed the act of kissing is itself an act of tickling more than licking. If you analyze a kiss, it will be found to be a tickle and a caress of various degrees of moisture intermingled. A dry kiss is always pleasanter and filled more with gratification than a moist one, for the reason that it tickles more than a wet. Even children resentfully wipe away a moist kiss and exclaim: "You wet my mouth when you kiss me."

In a detailed map of the surface of the body to show the most ticklish parts, the lips and mouth stand out head and shoulders above all the rest. This is



Poster showing how Great Britain's Army has grown during the war period

to avoid, while yet inviting the tickling. This distinct appetite for tickling, discovered by Dr. Robinson, is held by him to be an animal appetite for the perpetuation of the human race. Like all human appetites, he says, there are times when this one of ticklishness is strong and gratification great, and also when it is absent and all provocation fails to take effect.

Ticklishness is like the alternations of an electric current. The craving for it is negative and positive by turns. Contact is wanted, invited and intensely enjoyed up to a certain point. Suddenly it pains, becomes unpleasant, and is avoided vigorously. Yet the appetite for tickling quickly returns. In the instance of the child, for example, if you push the tickling too far, you will see him throw himself down on his back and fence with his limbs to protect the more ticklish parts. This activity of a lively tacker will usually result in protecting the most ticklish parts such as the armpits.

If pursued too sharply, the child may show its teeth and bite, all in fun and with delighted laughter. If, however, anyone is tickled by means of a fly, an insect, a hair turned inside the nostrils or ears, a feather or something of this sort, the sensation of ticklishness takes on a protective character and the object is wiped away with vigor.

"To tickle your palate with something" is a phrase which has more than mere poetic license. A good taste means pleasure just as tickling the soles of the feet or back does. But just like them, the

only one of a multitude of proofs that a kiss is the acme and summation of the ticklishness of mankind, whether of children or of grown ups. A spot just above and to the outer side of the heart and near the armpits is like the hollows under the arm also extremely ticklish. Beneath the ribs and soles of the feet, palms of the hand and many other places known to everybody are known to be very ticklish.

Orang-outangs, gorillas and most young monkeys are exactly like children, when tickled. If sulky and morose, they resent the tickling; if friendly and playful they are actually the same as children when kissed or otherwise delighted. Often fox cubs and young puppies are the same way.

Fawns and calves to a much milder degree appreciate the sensation. They, however, enjoy licking the human skin and being in turn licked by their own parents. Lambs, kids and young colts are much the same. Colts are particularly sensitive between the forelegs and in the flanks.

Several of these experimenters are now convinced that the "amatory center" or

The worms that infest children from their birth are of two kinds, those that find lodgment in the stomach and those that are found in the intestines. The latter are the most destructive, as they cling to the walls of the intestines and if not interfered with work havoc there. Miller's Worm Powders dislodge both kinds and while expelling them from the system serve to repair the damage they have caused.