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nach des manes to be so leduc von des manes testes. Di beneken vii phlechhaften hetzen vii tes fchulthetzen donc fuchen-ten gibir man pumferen fahillinge er burevii cenphunces wergelte von ten muz man wal kifer eme punenbore abman des bedarfo monte ten des binie have ten fal kulen å ndrer vin di fdrephe off nære vine lip te in lancfezen heizen di kome va varu ingaftes wife va en haben kem eigen-mieme lante-ten gibir ma euch vormf cen landinge con buse urugelins cen phunt-covene wil lme houseden vii eme unfigabele is its ragewood te hise for wemelr is embackvol weizis vo cavelfrine. alfe idide rure van d andere de emes valemes lanc idide rute fol haben emelfungele of werr-idich nagel fal bo te me antere den alle d ma lancis bez an di fchultere d uith daz mā ten barih geheben moge võ nagele ezv nagele. idich nagel fal haben czwelfbürele idich burel c welf fihil linge D haffen kuntere vin di vinelich geboen far ten ge burman can buize em voter hannes-alle camene terrae odifen gewen mogen. S jullupæ vii alle di fich opergen geben den geberman cerbuze den febate emes mannes-



A Kiss and its Consequences

Many everyday actions are legal matters as well. In the 'Deutsches Rechtswörterbuch', you can look up the historical legal language of the German-speaking countries.

The famous movie song 'As time goes by' claims that 'a kiss is just a kiss'. We would gladly believe it, but the project of a German legal dictionary undertaken at the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities might change your mind.

For many centuries, a kiss was not so much an expression of spontaneous erotic enthusiasm as a rather serious matter. As a sign of legal validity, it was part of numerous rituals of self-degradation, deference and acceptance into a community. Even if it arose from passion, a kiss could quickly become a bone of contention in court. Two legal sources from the 18th century claim that a mere kiss does not express the intention to marry one another nor 'any other valid commitment'. J.G. Krünitz, on the other hand, is convinced that 'according to scholars, a kiss between bride and groom does not mean that marriage has taken place. By kissing the bride, though, the groom has shown that marriage surely will follow'.

These treasures from the **Deutsches Rechtswörterbuch** (DRW) show that many everyday actions are – often controversial – legal matters as well. The DRW is neither a dictionary of today's legal terms nor a lexicon for lawyers, but a historical dictionary whose sources cover the period from the 5th century to the Napoleonic era. Not only legal texts, but also excerpts from travel descriptions, religious and literary texts and economic records have found their way into the archives in Heidelberg that today contain two million slips recording examples of usage and an electronic text database.



For historical reasons, the DRW includes records from the whole West Germanic language family, following the decision of the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences when the project was begun in the late 19th century. Out of the planned 16 volumes, eleven have already been printed, containing around 90,000 articles. The dictionary has long been available online at no cost, at www.deutsches-rechtswoerterbuch.de. The complete work with 120,000 articles will be published by 2035.

As a 'unique and extremely impressive mirror of the values and customs of the past', the DRW explains life in bygone times from a distinctive perspective and also shows us the sources of modern legal thinking.

Annette Zerpner

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