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FOOTWEAR IN RELATION TO CATARRH

By J. H. McCASSY, M.A., M.D.

THE condition of the foot to-day is deplorable, and we are forced to turn to the foot of the child, or the savage, or to that model of the foot of the ancients which has been chiseled on marble, for a perfect classic standard. The natural foot within its leathern prison has been distorted by the tyranny of fashion and the cruelty of restraint. The toes are twisted out of shape, thick projections from the toes at points of contact, clubbed nails, ingrowing toe nails, corns in uncanny situations, and bunions on the joints make the actual foot so far from being anything of beauty that it is only to be viewed in private by the chiropodist (thank heaven not the physician). Women are silly in trying to squeeze their feet into small, ill-shaped shoes that respect neither the form nor the mechanism of the foot. High heels are added to this which complete the conditions of deformity and discomfort, driving the foot forward, producing a walking-down-hill-effect. Such a thing as a natural female foot no longer exists. The instep has been contracted. The well-marked great toe has been partially obliterated leaving the second one in the lead. The little toe has been pinched and squeezed until it has crouched and retreated like the rudiment of a supernumerary.

The feet of oxen, asses, and horses receive more attention than the human feet, because the proper

condition and preservation of the foot of domestic animals represent in value so much coin or bullion.

It is the special development of the great toe that enables man to stand erect and balance himself with greater ease. The further the great toe is spread from the little one the greater prestige is given to the individual, because more leverage is gained. The construction of the pointed-toe shoe is calculated to destroy the God-given leverage of the foot, converging the little and the great toes to a point. In the natural foot the great toe should continue in a straight line from the heel.

The insane vanity of the wearers of shoes combined with the ignorance of the shoemaker have caused to be made a style of shoes that must result in great and lasting damage to our race. The so-called elegant shoes have produced a painful picture of misery, inducing alteration and paralysis of the small muscles of the foot, which has resulted in the loss of the proper elastic step in the walk of many individuals. Compression of the blood vessels of the foot retards the circulation and prevents the full development of the bones and muscles of the foot, leg, thigh, and pelvis. The stalwart race of yore is being rapidly transformed into a race of spindle-shanks since our people have become slaves of fashion.

Tight and ill-fitting shoes cause depression of spirits, headaches, heartaches, fainting, general fatigue, bad humor, and loss of serenity. The many fainting spells of women in public have been laid to tight corsets. The truth is tight, ill-fitting shoes are responsible for a large share of this.

NAPOLEON said he made war not with the arms but the legs of his soldiers. By inspecting the lasts in the Patent Office and in the shops of the shoemakers one is forced to the conclusion that the morbid taste of the age is for the perpetuation of the Spanish Inquisition. The Chinese limit the deforming of the feet to the female sex, but we go one better and spare neither childhood, maturity, nor old age. The Chinaman wears a serviceable, well-ventilated shoe, with a wooden sole and cloth upper, well suited to the city pavements in hot weather. The Indian moccasin and the baseball shoe meet the natural requirements of the foot better than the solid, unyielding shoes of our times.

Enamel and patent leather is surely the invention of the enemy of the human race. The former consists of calfskin with celluloid finish on the grain side, while the latter has the celluloid finish on the flesh side of the leather. The natural circulation of the feet gives rise to perspiration, which must remain in contact with the foot and macerate and excoriate the skin, because the patent and enamel leather is impervious to moisture With our feet cribbed, coffined, and confined in tight, ill-shaped shoes having the hermetic seal of the varnish, we are not far above Chinese civilization.

A radical reform in footwear is necessary to secure well-shaped feet, and the nature of the material of which the shoe is made is of the highest hygienic importance. The proper shoe has a broad, low heel and flexible upper and sole. Unyielding canvas lining in shoes prevents the leather from stretching and interferes with the suppleness and

elasticity of the foot. I am glad to say that dealers have assured me that the pointed-toe shoe is rapidly being displaced by the round, full-toe shoe; and that of late enterprising tanners have invented a process of tanning by which a soft, pliable, though heavy, serviceable water-proof leather is produced, known as box-calf, willow-calf, and Russian leather. Shoes made of this leather with a heavy double sole and invisible cork sole are now in the market for winter wear. The enameled leather shoe with invisible cork sole and the shoe just described are suitable for winter wear, but the patent-leather shoe is neither fit for summer nor winter wear. In summer it is too hot and devoid of ventilation, and in the winter it is too cold and thin. Shoes made of tan leather are preferable for summer wear, because they permit the greatest evaporation and ventilation.

Sleeplessness from cold feet lead to the use of hot bricks and hot irons to the feet at night, while the cause of the insomnia, viz.: compression of the blood vessels of the feet by tight shoes, bad fitting stockings, and tight garters received no attention.

Compression of the feet during cold weather is a prolific source of frost-bites and chilblains. Frost-bites are scarcely seen among Arctic travelers and the Eskimo, because they wear reindeer stockings and sealskin boots having a layer of dried grass or straw in the bottom.

Washing the feet frequently does not make them tender, as many people erroneously believe. It really promotes nutrition and the general health, and prevents the formation of corns, ingrowing toe nails, and callosities. Sir ASTLEY COOPER, the

father of surgery, who passed thirty years without contracting a cold, attributed this immunity to the daily habit of bathing his feet and entire body, not with warm, but cold water. The best time to bathe the feet is just before going to bed. Water is the cheapest and best deodorant for the feet. Even the most delicate may perform the Dunkard act with benefit and safety by first using warm water which may be gradually cooled by the addition of cold water. Ointments and lotions so much in vogue for the preservation of the feet need only be mentioned to be condemned. Proper shoes and stockings and rigid cleanliness are the safeguards.

Unsuitable footwear is a menace to the proper development of our race. It causes chilling of the surface of the body in cold weather and the excretory function of the skin is stopped. Extra work is thrown upon the mucous membrane of the upper respiratory passages, causing congestion and infiltration of it. No wonder about eighty per cent. of the American people are afflicted with catarrh, our national disease.

Many people inquire if their removal to a warm climate would benefit their catarrh. Persons suffering from dry catarrh would be made worse by residing in a dry, warm climate. A rather moist and bracing climate benefits such cases. It would be more prudent to remain in this climate even if one suffers the ill-effect of catarrh of the upper air passages than to go to a tropical climate and die of disease of the liver or yellow fever. "It is better to suffer the ills we have than fly to those we know not of."

Constant chilling of the feet and the surface of the body facilitates the formation of an excess of uric and lactic acid in the blood inducing the rheumatic and lithemic diathesis, and also causes the development of hyperasthesia of the nasal mucous membrane. These conditions put together frequently result in hay fever. Persons who work long hours in musty, ill-ventilated rooms are liable to have the rheumatic or lithemic diathesis and catarrh, particularly if bathing and exercise are neglected. Wet feet have been the initial step in the causation of more sickness and deaths than any other agent known to us. The old adage "keep the feet warm and the head cool" is the great safeguard of health. Thorough bathing and brisk rubbing of the skin from one to several times a week are essential for the prevention and the cure of catarrh. In many cases under my observation, even after the footwear had been properly reformed, it required a long course of treatment consisting of local applications, sprays, cauterization, and operative measures to cure the catarrh.

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