

## HANDS AND FEET: THEIR CARE AND COMFORT.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



S AID Pope, "One truth is clear: whatever is, is right." I myself think that, although there certainly is some degree of truth in this adage, it is by no means applicable to all cases. I very much doubt, for example, whether it is right for parents to have favourites among their children, who are allowed to lord it, and rule king and priest over all the other members of the family. And yet I have seen this over and over again: a favourite son or daughter, who is supposed by the parents to possess a greater degree of delicacy and refinement—sometimes it is even designated by the high-sounding title of genius—than the rest of the olive-branches, and these latter in consequence having often to do all the hard work, the drudgery, and even go more poorly clad, less tastefully dressed, in order that the beloved one may live in luxury and idleness.

Just in the same way, by metaphor, if we imagine the different members of the human body to be the individuals of a family, with the head as governor, guide, and ruler, we shall find that the hand is treated as first favourite, and the foot as quite the reverse. The hand is ever before us, and always busied in carrying out our behests, and so it gets coaxed and petted accordingly. No speck or spot, no corn or disfiguring wart, must be permitted to mar its beauty; we wash it fifty times a day, if need be; we trim the nails filbert-fashion; we begird its digits with gold and gems; and before we have crossed our porch we bedeck it in the softest of kid, lest it should be bronzed by the summer's sun, or chilled by the frosts of winter. But how different is it with the foot!

I am going to try to prove to you that, as far as health is concerned, the foot is a much more important member than the hand, and deserving of greater care and attention.

John Locke says, "Whoever considers how mischievous and mortal a thing taking wet in the feet is to those who have been bred nicely, will wish he had, like the poor people's children, gone barefoot; who by that means come to be so reconciled by custom to wet in their feet, that they take no more cold or harm by it than if they were wet in their hands."

John Locke spoke truly and wisely; but then our mothers would not permit us to run barefoot. When I was a little boy I used to go to a far-off day-school, where all, or nearly all, the children, although by no means poor, went barefoot in summer. This was a luxury which my parents would not permit; and so, like a good little boy, I met their wishes half-way, and when a little distance from home I used to hide my boots and stockings in a friendly furze-bush, where, if a cow didn't eat them, I found them on my return.

But one unlucky day, on crossing a white clovery lea that was all a-hum with hive-bees, I got viciously stung. Of course this let the cat out of the bag. Repentance and confession ensued, followed in their turn by forgiveness and erysipelas and three weeks in bed, all through this naughty bee that "had been sent specially to punish me;" so you see that going barefoot is not without its drawbacks. And this leads me to say something which I hope sincerely mothers will take to heart. Although I by no means approve of children running barefoot, still as a rule, in this country, the feet of our little ones are *much* too warmly clad, and the consequence is that they grow up tender-footed, and this in itself is a great evil, and one that can never in after-life be properly remedied. This should be the golden rule: Let the child wear sufficient woollen covering on his feet to protect from cold, and no more; and never encourage the habit of running to the fire and warming the feet. Cold feet are often the result of insufficient circulation of the blood. Let the child, therefore, trot about to warm his little feet; by so doing he not only obtains the desired result, but the circulation is increased, the blood sent dancing joyously through every vessel in the body, and all the functions of the body are correctly carried on, and rosy cheeks and ruddy health are the happy results, especially if the trotting about has taken place in the open air. If, on the other hand, too thick stockings are worn, and toe-toasting winked at, relaxed blood-vessels are the result, and a soft, flabby foot, quite unfitted to carry its owner through life with any degree of comfort.

Even we grown-up folks should not wear socks or stockings thick enough to cause our feet to perspire with the slightest exertion. Let the stockings, then, be only of medium thickness, but the softer and warmer they are the better. Hence I think that in winter we can derive the greatest comfort from socks of Shetland wool. In summer, again, the very thinness of woollen socks should be worn, or, if you prefer it, silk; but few of us can afford to wear cotton, and expect to retain perfect health. A lining sole of cork is a great protection from damp, if there be room for it in the boot or shoe. As to slippers, we should have a summer pair—I prefer a thin leather pump—and a warmer pair for winter wear.

Those who suffer from tender feet should never sit too close to the fire, even in the coldest day in winter; and—N.B.—nobody else should.

Now as to boots and shoes. They ought to fit well, and still be easy to the feet; the upper leather should be soft and pliant, yet strong withal; and the soles hard and strong. Strong especially ought the soles of the boots to be for men who walk much; and such will find a very broad sole and heel a great comfort. Most people are liable to "go over" the

sole or heel in some particular direction. Well, these portions should in all cases be protected by a plate of brass. In winter men's shoes ought to be rendered impervious to snow by daubing or rubbing with tallow, appearance in this case giving place to safety and comfort.

Never under any circumstances wear shoes with gutta-percha soles. I know that children's boots are often thus soled, but it is far from being either healthy or comfortable.

Our forefathers knew the great danger to the system from wet or damp feet; they, therefore, invented the patten, and all I have to say regarding it is, that I am sorry it is not more frequently worn, instead of that most inelegant article of apparel, the golosh, which, while it gives to the foot all the grace and beauty of a morning roll, secures for the wearer perpetual humidity of sock or stocking, all the benefits of an occasional catarrh, and the hope of a not far-distant attack of bronchitis. The treatment of the foot in disease has received much attention of late, and cheiropody has been very successfully practised by American specialists and others. Both feet and hands are liable to several very annoying, not to say distressing complaints. Let me now say a word on the more common of these.

First as to the management of the nails. Not only should they be kept perfectly clean, and neatly pared, but care should be taken to prevent what are called *agnails*—a ragged and painful condition of the skin of the finger adjoining the nail. This is very easily prevented by carefully pressing back, twice or thrice a week, that portion of the skin that overlaps the root of the nail. This should never be allowed to become adherent. The toe-nails should be cut square across, the tendency to ingrowth of nail—too serious a subject, by-the-way, to treat here—is thus averted.

Cleanliness of feet is most essential to health. Some people are too delicate in health to make use of the matutinal bath, but no one can be excused from the daily ablution of the feet.

Tender feet are often congenital. The complaint seems to descend in families, and little can be done to relieve it besides attending to my instructions regarding shoes and stockings; bathing them daily in salt and water, however, or in sea-water often does good.

Some people complain of excessive sweating of the feet, there being a difficulty therefore in keeping them

sweet and clean. Such would do well to change their socks at least once a day. After washing the feet, they may be done over with a mixture of tannic acid and eau-de-Cologne—ten grains to an ounce—and afterwards dusted with a little flannel bag of powdered starch, or a baby's puff.

Chilblain is a very distressing affection of the skin, common to either hands or feet. In children it is often caused by permitting them to run about for a long time with cold hands and feet, and then inducing reaction before the fire. Chilblains may at length become chronic; they may blister and even ulcerate. When the hands have become chilled and numbed, care must be taken to bring them to gradually, by gentle friction, away from the fire; for this purpose a little stimulating liniment, composed of an egg beaten up with an ounce each of turps and vinegar, to which may be added a drachm or two of laudanum, is useful. A strong solution of alum (half an ounce to eight ounces of water) is sometimes used to the unbroken chilblain. Or a liniment of equal parts of tincture of iodine and liquor ammonia may be used as a paint twice a day. Broken chilblains are best treated with calamine ointment, or the ointment of the benzoated oxide of zinc, or with simple water dressing.

Chapped hands should be well protected from the cold, kept very clean but not rubbed much, and either the tannin, camphor, or benzoated oxide of zinc ointment used.

Blisters of the feet or hands should not be rudely cut open, but a white cotton thread is to be passed through in order to drain them.

The frequent application of tincture of iodine to corns often gives great relief, and renders their removal more easy. The only way to prevent corns is by wearing boots or shoes, the uppers of which are tolerably pliant and soft, and which neither fit too tightly nor are too loose. The only radical cure for corns, whether hard or soft, is removal by the knife. After this has been accomplished, corn-plasters must be worn, softened by pouring a drop or two of oil into the little round hole in the centre. Those afflicted with soft corns should wash the feet well daily, and wear a little cotton wadding between the toes. Sponging the feet daily, after the washing, with camphorated spirit has been extolled as a good means of hardening the skin.

CONSTANCE.

**E**IGHTEEN, with just a touch of pride,  
And all of girlish grace beside;  
And, rich in simple charms, a queen  
By royal right of sweet eighteen.

O vain attempt of words to show  
What you by words can never know:  
For who would sketch the rose, and see  
The living blossom on the tree?

But search, and say when you have seen  
The face most fair of sweet eighteen;  
And find therewith the crowning grace,  
A soul to match the lovely face.

And even then, when this is done,  
You have not seen the sweetest one;  
And Constance will remain confest  
The chosen queen of all the rest.

J. R. EASTWOOD