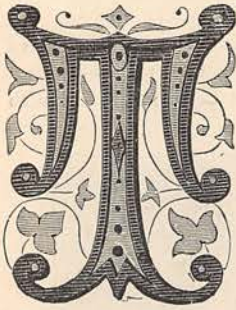


TOO TIGHT CLOTHING.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



HERE is an old French saying to the effect that we must suffer if we would be beautiful. However true this may be as regards moral characteristics, it is certainly erroneous when applied to physical appearance. There is no beauty in deformity—and to the trained and observant eye there is something repulsive in the pain-

fully distorted foot and the contracted waist—too often seen in those who faithfully follow the follies of fashion.

It is difficult to persuade some people that there is beauty merely in perfect health and vigorous life. Yet we cannot see a prettier sight than the healthy play of a group of children at an age when conventional clothing has not placed its restraints upon them. We do not think of the regularity of feature or of details of clothing at such a time; we admire the activity and grace of movement, and—above all—the natural healthiness of the children.

It is to be regretted that, in his exhaustive work on the Philosophy of Clothes, Carlyle did not add a chapter on the influence of tight clothing on happiness. Perhaps he thought the dignity of his subject was too great for him to descend to a criticism of the follies in dress for which so many women (and men) suffer in silence. The first and main object of wearing clothes is to protect the body—to keep it warm in cold weather and cool in hot weather. Mere personal adornment was originally a secondary consideration. Clothes act in virtue of being bad conductors of heat and so preventing the too quick passage of heat to or from the body. Different kinds of materials are efficacious according to the slowness or quickness with which they allow the conduction of heat. Woollen materials are best (hence the value of woollen underclothing, which tends to maintain a very equable temperature of the body—so that we are better able to withstand sudden changes of weather, draughts, etc.), and an order of comparative merit through furs, silk, and cotton, to linen might be drawn up. But in this paper I propose to consider more particularly the influence upon health of tight-fitting clothing.

The more loosely clothing fits, the less it conducts heat, because a layer of air is interposed between it and the body—and air is an exceedingly bad conductor of heat. This protecting layer of air enables the body in winter to keep its normal temperature the more easily, because the heat given off at the surface of the body passes slowly through it; whereas if the clothing fit too closely to the skin, heat is dissipated with much greater rapidity. In summer time, on the other hand, the air in which we move is not so warm as the objects upon

which the sun's rays fall directly, and so the surface of the clothes may become much hotter than the air surrounding them. The advantage of the layer of air is obvious also in this case. Therefore we see that in hot and in cold weather, too tightly-fitting clothing defeats the first and great object of wearing clothes and tends to exhaust the bodily strength and make it unfit for work.

Again, the clothing must be so constructed as not to interfere with the freedom of the movement of any part of the body; otherwise the due performance of some function is interfered with, so that injury results. There are two articles of clothing very frequently worn too tight. A small foot may be a desirable possession, but it is useless to attempt to obtain it by the compression of the foot by too small a pair of boots. Freedom of movement is at once impaired and graceful easy walking is a sheer impossibility. The victim of tight boots is self-revealed by the ungainly gait—a much more conspicuous infirmity than a large foot. In addition to the discomfort necessarily experienced, permanent injury may be caused to the structures of the foot. Deformity of the toes results, and one particular deformity, known as "Hammer toe," is often thus produced, the pressure of the boot causing the toes to override one another. The great toe becomes turned outwards, the ball becomes unduly prominent and walking becomes difficult. A commoner result of a tight shoe is the formation of corns. Whenever any part of the body is subjected to intermittent pressure, thickening of the tissues occurs at that spot, and a corn is the result—which is capable of causing extreme pain, especially if slightly inflamed. The ill-effects of tight shoes are sometimes increased by having the heel (which is generally much too high) placed almost under the middle of the foot and the climax of absurdity is reached by making the front of the shoe point sharply. By this type of shoe ingrowing toe nail—a most painful condition—is often induced.

The corset is also very frequently worn too tight. I recognise the futility of protest. I admit its usefulness, but I also assert its pernicious influence when too tight. As a means of support the corset is doubtless of use, but worn too tightly it presses down the diaphragm, and it interferes with the organs of digestion and circulation. It is notorious how frequently very tightly-laced ladies suffer from chronic indigestion. How often do they faint in church and other places where the heat may be excessive! Nor is the effect of tight clothing confined to such complaints. The bones and organs suffer from its influence, and after death they are found to be deeply grooved corresponding to the points of pressure and greatly displaced. I have no doubt whatever but that many of the nervous complaints from which women suffer originate in this way.

Nor are men altogether free from this fault of tight-

lacing. Many wear tight belts, especially when about to engage in violent exercise. Rupture may thus be caused.

The frequency with which soldiers are affected has been attributed—no other cause can be assigned—to the tight tunic in which they are habitually dressed. Tight cravats are also injurious; the neck should be loosely clothed. Tight garters interfere with the flow of blood through the veins, and a tendency to varicose veins results. How great the influence of tight clothing is, is shown by a comparison of the frequency with which soldiers and sailors suffer from diseases of the great blood vessels.

Pressure of clothing from its weight may also act injuriously. The full-flowing long skirts are suspended from the waist, which is thus tightly compressed.

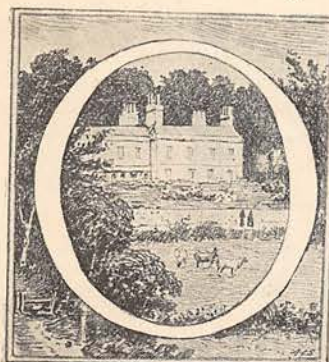
Lastly, tight gloves may cause much discomfort. I know of no more painful sensation than that produced by wearing a tightly-fitting pair of kid gloves on a cold day.

The only defence of tight clothing which has been offered is that it is a dictate of fashion and that it is artistic. It can never be too fully realised that a bust out of all proportion to a small waist is a defiance of the laws of symmetry, and its incongruity is its most definite and absolute condemnation. Any interference with the natural conformation of the body re-acts by interfering with some bodily function and when the bodily functions are hampered and checked, injury to some particular part generally results. Very often the general health suffers, and another victim is sacrificed to the ruthless dictates of fashion.

THE FORTUNES OF THE GREY HOUSE.

BY J. E. HODGSON, R.A.

I.



OUR village occupies a commanding position. It is scattered along the crest of a semicircular ridge, and if we take in one or two outlying houses and farms which seem naturally to belong to it, it covers more than two miles of ground. In the very centre of the semicircle

stands the Grey House. There are houses to which any name seems appropriate, and you may call them Towers, or Granges, or Manors: it is all the same, and when a new occupier takes a fancy to alter the name to some other, that seems to do just as well. But the Grey House could never have had any other name. Standing on the crest of a hill, with its long frontage of flint and brick and its slate roof, it is seen like a landmark for miles around. Every coach-driver and carrier, every travelling showman and tinker—every creature, in fact, that moves along the roads and lanes, must know it well, and recognise it to himself as the old Grey House. What helps to make it conspicuous is its dark setting of massive trees—old elms and chestnuts, into whose leafy recesses no ray of sunlight seems able to penetrate. The knowledge of those trees must have been propagated for centuries amongst the feathered tribes, and carried into far distant lands. It is the first resting place of the nightingales when they appear in April; there they assemble in such numbers that I have heard an

inmate of the Grey House, though the most patient and long-suffering of mortals, declare that it was even possible to have "too much nightingale."

In front of the house is a broad lawn flanked by two magnificent cedars. It slopes gently downward, and terminates abruptly in a ha-ha, or sunk fence, underneath which runs the highway, which is the main artery of our village.

When I have been reading history and my head has been full of battles, I have reconnoitred the situation from end to end, and it has always appeared to me to be the place I should pitch upon to fight an enemy advancing from the south. At the back of the village the ground slopes gently downwards for about a mile and a half. It is well supplied with interior lines of communication, such as roads, lanes, and foot-paths, all converging in the town of Great Wellerby, which lies in a low valley by the side of a sluggish stream. To the front the ground slopes steeply down all along the amphitheatre, and ends in a flat or slightly undulating country, which extends for miles. It is beautiful to sit dreamily on a stump and survey this vast stretch of land, chequered by hedgerows or broken by purple masses of beech woods; to follow it through its "changing zones of light and shade," until the eye rests on the dim blue line of the Chiltern Hills in the extreme distance.

About the flanks of the position, strategically considered, I feel a little doubtful, especially about the right flank, where the land slopes tamely, and ends in an almost level road which leads straight into Great Wellerby. I have had misgivings that an enterprising enemy might give me trouble in that quarter; but I feel a serene confidence that my centre would be quite impregnable.

The Grey House would, of course, be my headquarters. Seated on the verandah in front of the house, with a