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HINTS ON THE CARE OF THE FEET.

By "MEDICUS."

"Like dew on the gowans lyin'
Is the fa' o' her fairy feet,
And like winds in summer sighing,
Her voice is low and sweet."

DON'T say these words, reader—sing them. If you do not know the charming old melody, find it out in some of your books—it is certain to be in your collection. Sit down before your instrument and touch the strings, oh, ever so lightly; let the music breathe forth, sigh out, and sing low and sweet, so as not to drown it. Then, as if by the touch of some great magician's wand, you will see the heroine of

the lovely song-story come modestly tripping forth to cross the daisied lawn, her bare white feet scarcely brushing the early morning dew from the grass and the "gowans."

Few girls, however, may be possessed of the fairy feet of an Annie Laurie. And there really is no way of making one's feet smaller; *but* it is nevertheless not to be forgotten that the wearing of badly-made and shapeless boots or shoes may tend to make them spread.

"Her little feet like mice
Peeped in and out."

The poet who wrote that was complimentary

to the fair lady he was trying to describe. Probably after all if he had said "like rats," he would have been much nearer to the mark.

I happened to be over in America the other day, and although comparisons are odious, I could not help noticing that, taken as a whole, the ladies of New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, where I sojourned, had smaller and more shapely feet than the girls of our own old-fashioned "countrie." I had not gone to the great Republic to study feet, I can assure you, nor faces either—I was on a round tour of observation.



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"A HAPPY TIME."

What about the American hand? some-one may ask. Here I must candidly confess the Republic also beats us. Now, although wearing very well-chosen boots or shoes and walking well may to some extent account for the smallness of the national foot, I can only explain the tiny hand on the hypothesis that American ladies are more delicate in frame altogether—smaller in bone, in fact—than our sisters in England.

I hope none of my readers will be cross with me for talking thus plainly. If I thought I should not continue to bask in the smiles of those who do me the honour of reading my health-sermons, I should pine away like Narcissus, and nothing would be left of me save a shadow.

Well, then, girls, especially young girls, should study as far as lies in their power to wear neat and well-made boots, and stockings that are a soft warm happy medium 'twixt thick and thin. Never under any consideration be prevailed upon to buy ready-made boots or shoes. It is quite impossible for these to fit properly and well. Moreover, if, when a pair of boots that you have been measured for come home, it turns out that they do not fit like a kid glove, or if they pinch or squeeze at any particular point, return them at once; the man who made them is no proper tradesman. Do not think of the boot-maker's feelings—think of your own feet.

The leather of which a lady's boot is made should be pliant, soft, and thin. It should have sufficient elasticity to press the foot softly in every direction, and it must have been properly prepared, else it will give. The foot gives with it, and becomes "splay." Of course you yourself may be no judge of leather, but if you deal with a really good maker, and find that he fits you well, you ought on no account to change; but if, on the other hand, the boots supplied you soon go out of shape, the man is no artist, and you must avoid the shop.

No girl can have a well-shaped or neat foot who wears very high heels. A girl is not a horse—I am not joking. The horse, you know—or ought to know—walks upon his toes; the heels of his hind feet, say, are the hocks, and there is a pedal deformity which surgeons call *talipes equinus*, in which the human foot has this equine shape. Strange, then, is it not, that this very deformity is one which, by wearing tremendously high heels, many young ladies seem to court? They positively walk about with their heels in the air; and if the absurd fashion continues, in a few generations ladies will not have any heels at all—they will be hocks.

I am bound to say that neither in this country nor in America are young girls very often taught to walk properly. And if a lady cannot walk well and gracefully, the foot will soon accommodate itself to the gait. One has to go to India to see graceful walking. I have been rude enough more than once to sit in a park in India, simply to admire the beautiful carriage of many of the native women. The upright gait, the well-carried shoulders, the beautiful elasticity of every movement, and the charming poise of head, combine to make their walking the very poetry of motion.

Only on the stage do we see such a gait as this at home, for it is, singularly enough, absent even from the Queen's drawing-room—as a rule, I mean.

No girl can be taught to walk well or gracefully after the age of seventeen. Mothers should bear this in mind. And bad walking causes flatness of feet and absence of instep.

"Slouch along, Sairah!" I heard a Berkshire mother call after her daughter one day. Sairah was going on an errand, and her mother meant her to hurry up—to walk briskly. Well, Sairah did slouch along. She was a most amusing study. Her feet were flat and

large, you must know, and the ground was crisp with frost; so as Sairah walked there was music in the village. Her nose was well ahead of her, her arms waved to and fro like a Dutch doll's, her shoulders worked like pistons, and at every step her knees appeared to double up like a couple of jack-knives. Oh, she was a beauty, was Sairah! Still, she wore no high heels, and was as guiltless of tight-lacing as a jelly-fish.

Now, walking improves the shape of the feet if it be done gracefully, for it causes the feet to be well nourished, and prevents corns, bunions, chilblains, and even deformities. But then one must be taught to walk well, else it will be a case of "Slouch-along-Sairah."

Over-tight lacing in young girls tends to what I may call exaggerated feet, because it interferes with the proper circulation of the blood. The feet or hands do not receive enough arterial blood, while the venous blood becomes to some extent confined in them; effete matter, therefore, is not carried away, the tendons lose their suppleness, and in girls liable to rheumatism deposits may be formed in them or in the joints. I do assure you, reader, that want of proper circulation through the feet, is the cause of one-half of the cases of enlarged joints that girls try to cure themselves of by foolishly wearing boots a size too small.

Perhaps I might be accused of going a little too far if I were to assert that no girl who has trouble of any kind with her feet can be good-tempered or happy. Still, such a statement would not be very far from the truth.

Some people take less care of their feet than they do of their hands, because the former are less seen. They certainly are less seen; at the same time, healthful shapely feet are far more important to the general well-being than pretty hands are.

I must suppose now that the reader is blessed not only with a small and shapely foot, but that she is altogether fairly healthy in herself. How is she to maintain her feet in their pristine beauty? That is the question I wish to answer.

The stockings I have already mentioned as well as the boots. These last, I may add, must be neither too large nor too small. To pinch the feet by wearing sizes that do not belong to you, is to cause a species of awkward lameness, from which, I am sorry to say, nine out of every ten girls in England suffer more or less. The boots *must* be big enough and elastic enough to permit the bones and joints to have a certain amount of play. If your feet do not have this, they might as well be made of cast-iron—simply hoofs, and you cannot have grace of gait or any of the poetry of motion about you.

The most perfect cleanliness is necessary to keep the feet in health. They ought to be steeped in hot water for a time if you are unfortunate enough to have corns; and the rough or thickened skin is to be removed by means of a not over-sharp knife.

Corns must be got rid of at any cost; and if afterwards you try a better bootmaker, probably they will not return.

When you have washed the feet and carefully dried them, attend to the toe-nails. Cut these straight across, not down the sides, else you may be afflicted with an in-growing nail; and nothing is more painful or distressing.

Be most careful to get rid of thickened skin between or underneath the toes.

As for *bunions*, it is unlikely any of my young readers are troubled with these; but if they are, a surgeon must be consulted without delay. Bunions are not amenable to self-treatment as a rule. However, perfect rest, and painting the swelling daily with tincture of iodine, may effect wonders in those who cannot obtain medical advice.

An enlarged joint is often caused by the

pressure of a tight boot. This is also a case that brooks no delay, or the deformity may become permanent. During the winter and spring months a great many girls suffer from chilblains. I need hardly describe the symptoms of this disagreeable complaint; but it cannot be too well known that chilblains are most liable to occur in delicate girls whose circulation is somewhat weak, therefore the treatment must be constitutional as well as local.

Prevention, then, is better than cure; and if mothers notice that some of their children are subject to chilblains, they may be sure they are not so strong or healthful as they ought to be, no matter how bright and cheerful they are. The diet must therefore be generous and nutritious.

If pale in face and gums, some mild preparation of iron, such as ten to fifteen drops of the dialysed iron taken in water after food, twice a day for weeks, will do good. So would cod liver oil, or the Kepler solution of cod liver oil in malt extract. The underclothing should be warm and rather loose; roomy boots and wool-lined gloves; and, above all, plenty of exercise in the open air. The feet must be kept dry.

As to local applications, their name is legion. If one thing does not suit, you must try another. Tincture of iodine with a little liquor ammoniac and laudanum, is a very good one. Iodine is also good. It must be used twice or thrice daily.

If, however, the chilblain is broken, a poultice may be necessary in order to reduce the inflammation, and afterwards glycerine of starch applied, or the benzoated ointment of zinc.

A medical man is often consulted about cases of offensively perspiring feet. Now here again, as a rule, the fault lies in the constitution. The health is usually below par, and should be seen to at once. Iron does good if there be thinness of blood. It must be taken for quite a long time, and in small doses. Quinine and iron would suit best if there was poverty of blood combined with loss of appetite. Cod liver oil deserves a prolonged trial. The cold bath, if one can stand it, should be taken every morning, and abundant out-of-door exercise. The feet should have plenty of room, the stockings being very frequently changed. I need hardly say that perfect cleanliness is a necessity, the feet being washed morning and night in tepid water, to which a little alum may be added. They should be thoroughly dried, and the insides of the socks dusted with a mixture of oxide of zinc and starch. If this simple treatment be not successful, there may be something wrong that needs the advice of your family doctor.

Many girls suffer much from cold feet, and, as a rule, they are delicate. Everything that tends to strengthen the system will tend to alleviate the complaint—good food, cold bathing, salt-water bathing, tonics and cod liver oil, with plenty of walking exercise. Bed socks may be worn, and the feet washed in cold water before putting these on; but dry the feet well with a rough towel to restore the circulation. Hot-water bottles or hot sand bags in bed are very often prejudicial to the health.

In conclusion, let me warn young girls against the awkward practice of leaning the weight on one side of the foot while sitting or standing—that of doubling the ankle.

If your boots wear too much at one side, it is wrong to have that side raised higher than the other; *but* the shoe or boot should be seen to whenever even the eighth of an inch out of the horizontal.

My next paper will be on "Beautiful Hands," and this I hope to give next month, and a particularly useful one I mean to make it.