

THE CARE OF THE FEET.*

A corn comes of an injury to the flesh, while the bunion comes of an injury to the joint. A specimen sketched from nature is shown in Fig. 1. Other than this their growth is quite similar, and quite frequently one is the outcome of the other. The corn may induce a bunion, or the bunion a corn. Bunions, I believe, are never found except upon the joint of the great toe. A hard corn at this point may press so severely against the joint as to injure it, giving growth to the bunion, while on the other hand the joint being injured produces a bunion, which as it grows fills the shoe, causing a friction that gives birth to a corn, making a flourishing combination.

In every joint of the body there is a membrane the function of which is to secrete a fluid that acts as a lubricant. In the joint of the great toe this membrane is called the *bursa mucosa*, and when injured, inflames and swells. This swelling is commonly known as a bunion. Thus it is seen that bunions are located in the joint, and the swelling is only its effect and not the bunion itself.

A bunion is very rarely found on a foot the great toe of which lies in direct line with the center of the heel, but the more the great toe is twisted to one side, the more susceptible is the joint to bunions. To effect a permanent cure it is imperative that the great toe be restored to its normal position. To do this first secure a pair of shoes that will permit it, but this will count as naught unless the hose is constructed upon the same principle. The ordinary stocking is shaped at the toe like Fig. 2. It will be seen at a glance that the toe is held in the same position here as in an ill-fitting, narrow-toed shoe—all bound together in a heap. We never think of binding the fingers together in such a manner, then why afflict the toes? for surely they are quite as important in their way as the more honorable members—the fingers. Not long ago Mrs. Amelie Rives Chanler startled the public in general, and newspaper reporters in particular, by donning a pair of digitated hose. While her ideas were a little beyond the times, I do thank her for breaking the way for digitated hosiery. While I am not prepared to advocate this idea in shoes, it is the correct one for hosiery, and the toes cannot assume their normal position when clothed otherwise. Not only would it be a preventive of bunions, but of soft corns.

If the reader is not prepared to make so radical a departure as digitated hose, and desires a cure, then the next best thing must be done by cutting open the stocking and separating the great toe from its neighbor, as in Fig. 3. Use the foot bath quite frequently to allay the inflammation, and remove whatever callous flesh there may be. At night bind the bunion with linen, well saturated with neat's foot oil. Wear a shoe that will allow the great toe to resume its normal position. The shoe must also be of some soft, pliable material. A felt shoe is the best that can be procured. If the swelling is on the under side of the joint, then use a thick, soft inner sole from which a portion has been cut away to "fit" the bunion. If, after this treatment has been followed for a few weeks, there is no relief, then the chiropodist must be visited, as the bunion is beyond ordinary treatment.

It cannot be too strongly impressed upon the mind that the feet require quite as much or more attention than the hands, yet no member of the body is so sadly neglected. If any physical ailment assails us, we straightway call in the physician and are dosed homeopathically or allopathically, according to his school; if we fracture a limb, then the surgeon attends; if our teeth trouble us, then we visit him who makes a specialty of their treatment—the dentist. Then when our feet are diseased, why not visit him who makes a specialty of their cure—the chiropodist?

It is now quite fashionable to have our hands and finger nails cared for by the specialist, for beauty's sake; why not have our feet so treated for comfort's sake? To enjoy comfort and preserve the health of the feet, we cannot be too careful in the selection of our footwear. Too often an ill-fitting shoe will be endured on the ground of economy, the wearer saying that as the shoes are bought, his money's worth must be gotten out of them, and so persists in wearing them. The wearing out of one pair of ill-fitting shoes will damage the feet to a greater extent than can be repaired during the lifetime of several pairs of perfect-fitting shoes, for unfortunately the evil that misfits do lives after them.

Of course the first essential is a shoe that fits the foot; then come some little points which, though they seem trifling, are of vital importance. Few persons give thought beyond the fit of a shoe, and most of us overlook as seemingly small matters the material from which the shoe is made or how the feet are clothed.

That cold feet are detrimental to good health as well as comfort, every one will admit, and they should also know that if the feet become overheated, it is quite as injurious to health; therefore, the desideratum is to wear only that which will preserve the normal temperature of the feet. It is a well known fact that woolen

garments next the body absorb perspiration better than linen or cotton, and thus protect the skin from that chill which accompanies the sudden cooling of the body. In accordance with this theory we often see writers recommending woolen stockings for the feet. In most cases this is a great mistake, and if followed, results in making the feet tender and very susceptible to cold. In the case of the woolen garment next the skin, the porous clothing over the woolen garment acts as a sort of safety valve, carrying off surplus heat and moisture; whereas the woolen stocking is surrounded by a comparatively non-porous leather, which only tends to increase the heat and moisture of the feet. If a cloth shoe is worn, then the woolen stocking is in place, for there is then an outlet for the exudation of the feet. The rule in the selection of hosiery should be to regulate the amount of wool according to the porosity of the leather. With porpoise or patent leather, wear silk or cotton; with calf, kangaroo or grain, wear a mixture of cotton and wool or merino; with cloth shoes, wear woolen stockings.



FIG. 1.—A Sketch from Life Showing a Bunion of Joint of Great Toe.

A very important item in the care of the feet is their frequent and judicious bathing. In order that the epidermis be clear of all exudations and the skin in healthy condition, the feet should receive at least a sponge bath in the morning and a warm-water bath at night. The former opens the pores and stimulates the circulation, while the latter cleanses the skin of all surplus epidermis and allays all inflammation. If the feet are very tender and have a tendency to perspire freely, then it might be well to occasionally add a little salt and alum to the water. If the perspiration is profuse and attended by odoriferous exhalations, sprinkle a little pulverized tannin in the shoes about once a week.

This has the effect of regulating the flow of perspiration without interfering with the healthy action of the skin. Abraham Lincoln, who suffered very much from tender feet, used quite often to remove his shoes, in order, as he said, "to give his feet a chance to breathe." Not only should our feet be given an occasional "breathing spell," but our shoes should be afforded the same opportunity. No shoe should be worn more than two days continuously, and then be given four days' rest. As this would necessitate having on hand three pairs of shoes, many might object on that account; then two pairs, if worn on alternate days, will nearly serve the purpose. If only one pair can be afforded, then the next best thing that can be done is



FIG. 2.—Ordinary Shape of Stocking.



FIG. 3.—Stocking in which the Great Toe is Separated from its Neighbors.

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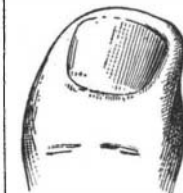


FIG. 4.—A Great Toe Having an Ingrowing Nail.

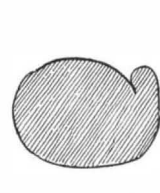


FIG. 5.—Sectional View of Same.



FIG. 6.—The Remedy.

a frequent change of innersoles. As these only involve an expenditure of ten cents a pair, at least three pairs should be at hand, giving each a day's wear and two days' "breathing spell."

Finger nails and toe nails are nothing more than hardened forms of the epidermis. When examined near their origin, they are found to consist of cells, which gradually dry into scales. These remain coherent after their formation. A new production is constantly taking place in the groove of the skin in which the root of the nail is embedded, and most likely, also, from the whole subjacent surface. The growth of the

nails is due to deposits of albumen at their roots and upon their under surface. The red lines seen at their base are due to the presence of a great number of capillary vessels, which provide for the formation of the nail, the whole structure being a wonderful and delicate one that should be well and properly cared for. The only occasion for the use of a sharp instrument in this case is that of the scissors in cutting them to reduce their length. An ivory presser should be used to remove the scarf skin from the free margin. The edge of the cuticle should never be pared, nor the surface of the nail scraped, the nails should be cleaned only with the nail brush to have them at their best, aided, of course, by soap and water. An observance of these simple rules will prevent much useless trouble with the nails of hands and feet.

When we wear a shoe that is too short for the foot, the end of the nail is brought against the leather. This interrupts its forward growth, and as new material is added to it, it spreads out on the sides and becomes unusually thick. It then presses upon the soft parts of the toe, and is said to "grow into the flesh," and is termed an ingrowing toe nail. A top view of one is seen in Fig. 4, and a sectional view in Fig. 5. The prevention of this is obvious, but its cure no pleasant operation.

Should the case be a severe one and attended by proud flesh, then it is a case for the surgeon, and should receive immediate attention, or the proud flesh will soon attain such growth as to require the removal of the nail, which is a more painful operation than that of removing the toe or a limb. The ordinary ingrowing nail can be cured by a little time and close attention. First of all, the cause must be removed and a shoe worn that is very soft and pliable, affording plenty of room for the free movement of the toe. Next soak the foot well in warm water, to remove inflammation and render the nail pliable. Do not cut the nail, particularly at the corners. Press small pellets of lint as far under the corner of the nail as possible without causing pain, and wrap the toe very lightly with linen well saturated with glycerine. Dress the toe at least twice a day, replacing the lint, and endeavor each time to slightly increase its quantity. When the nail becomes long, cut it so that the corners will project beyond the center.

Another remedy that has been found to be quite effectual is to cut a small notch at the center of the nail, leaving the corners square. Then begin about half way back on the nail and scrape toward the notch until the nail is quite thin, as shown in Fig. 6. This leaves the nail a thin strip through the center and relieves the pressure from the sides.

A Bridge Built by Red Ants.

The following remarkable story, told by an eye witness, is entitled to a place among the instances of intelligence among the lower animals. A cook was much annoyed to find his pastry shelves attacked by ants. By careful watching it was discovered that they came out twice a day in search of food, at about 7 in the morning and 4 in the afternoon. How were the pies to be protected against the invaders?

He did not have long to wait, for at 6:50 o'clock he noticed that off in the left hand corner of the pantry was a line of ants slowly making their way in the direction of the pies. They seemed like a vast army coming forth to attack the enemy. In front was a leader, who was larger than any of the others, and who always kept a little ahead of his troops.

They were of the sort known as the medium sized red ant, which is regarded as the most intelligent of its kind, whose scientific name is *Formica rubra*.

About 40 ants out of 500 stepped out and joined the leader. The general and his aids held a council and then proceeded to examine the circle of molasses. Certain portions of it seemed to be assigned to the different ants, and each selected unerringly the point in the section under his charge where the stream of molasses was narrowest. Then the leader made his tour of inspection.

The order to march was given, and the ants all made their way to a hole in the wall in which the plastering was loose.

Here they broke rank and set about carrying pieces of plaster to the place in the molasses which had been agreed upon as the narrowest. To and fro they went from the nail hole to the molasses until, at 11:30 o'clock, they had thrown a bridge across. They then formed themselves in line and marched over, and by 11:45 every ant was eating pie.—*Chicago Tribune*.

THE COBURN trolley track for step ladders, described in our issue of January 31, and which we have now had in practical use for the past two months, has proved itself to be a most convenient and labor-saving device. By its use all the compartments in a line of high shelving are rendered readily accessible, the ladder itself being so light and so easily moved that any special point can be reached with great facility. The manufacturers report their sales last month as larger than ever before in the same length of time.

*By A. J. Moore, in *Boots and Shoes Weekly*.