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THE EVILS OF MODERN FEMININE ATTIRE.

In recent years attention has been frequently directed to the evils resulting to the mental and physical organization of the gentler sex by over-education and over-pressure. The profession has been more reticent on the universal evils which necessarily follow the modes of modern feminine attire, possibly recognizing the magnitude of the task and the overwhelming difficulties to be encountered. Yet, while it is Utopian to hope that woman will adopt and maintain, a style of dress which would be at once suitable and healthful, it is instructive to investigate some of the many troubles distinctly traceable to prevailing fashions.

Dr. C. M. Jessop, in a paper on "Ancient Dress Compared with Modern Dress in Relation to Disease," read before the British Medical Association, ("British Medical Journal," Sept. 17th, 1887) reviews the question of dress from the early period of 5,890 years ago to the present day in a comprehensive and interesting manner. From this it would appear that the costume of the ancient Greeks and Romans had the advantage of beauty, simplicity and harmlessness; but such an innovation would be out of the question at this date under the changed condition of social life in our modern civilization. The author first discusses the XIXth Century corset, tracing it from its prototype, the *strophium*, a broad band used by the Roman ladies to support the bosom, through its evolution into the stays of wondrous dimensions during the Georgian era. He reviews the mechanism of the ribs during respiration, the movements of which are classified

as upwards and outwards for the superior six and downwards and outwards for the remainder; the rise and fall of the diaphragm carrying with it the abdominal and thoracic viscera is also explained. This motion is estimated at 720 yards per diem for the heart, and double that amount for the liver, during tranquillity. These movements are of service by increasing the suction power of the right heart and therefore accelerating the circulation in the liver and emptying the venous system. This natural cycle is prevented by the combined constriction and displacing force of the corset, which crowds the viscera together, arrests or prevents their movements and lessens the vital capacity of the lungs.

The author says "ignorance, therefore, of the positions and actions of the organs of respiration, circulation and digestion, along with inherited custom, perpetuates an article of dress faulty in construction, and leave the apices of the lungs, as they rise above the collar bones, unclothed." He quotes Dr. Walshe as believing that whether this article of dress shall or shall not inflict mischief on the lungs will probably depend upon the amount of constriction; however, there is no doubt that "drawing in the lower ribs by an apparatus more or less unyielding must lessen their capacity, for the respiratory murmur is almost inaudible in the lower lobes until the constrictor is removed." Dr. Jessop holds that while costal respiration in women may to some extent be inherited, it is mainly due to stays. "Increased work creates increased flow of blood and exaltation of nervous sensibility to atmospheric changes. If there be superadded the impure air of heated and crowded rooms and insufficient clothing of the upper part of the chest, the maximum conditions are present to produce frequent short colds, ending in chronic congestion, which paves the way for the inception of more serious disease." He argues that because joints subject to injury are prone to rheumatic disorders, and because the heart is the organ which earliest exhibits movement; therefore, as the ratio of rheumatic affection of the heart in women is greater than that

in men, it may be inferred that constriction of the chest-wall by unyielding apparatus is inadvisable.

The liver suffers more obviously than other organs from artificial constriction, as the appearances which are familiar to every anatomical student so frequently testify. The organ may be displaced upwards or downwards, according to the direction of pressure. The most common effect is the production of deep grooves and fissures which penetrate deeply, till in some cases only a loose ligamentous connection remains between the separated portions. The removal of hepatic tissue along these grooves diminishes the functional capacity of the organ and so reacts on the system at large. Frerichs describes the results of this morbid condition as commencing with gastric and intestinal derangement, anorexia flatulence and borborygm (so common in young ladies with fashionable figures) alternate constipation and diarrhoea, with sooner or later defective sanguinification and nutrition.

The author asserts that the pelvic viscera suffer as much, if not more, than other organs by these constrictions. Several authorities, notably Graily Hewitt, hold that many cases of uterine flexion can be ascribed to this cause alone. Compression on the abdominal walls, which in turn produces loss of muscular tone, the forcing downwards of the liver and intestines, puts a strain upon the uterine ligaments which they are unable to withstand and displacement of that organ is the result. "Whatever the evil of corsets may be the habit of tying tight bands around the waist is vastly more dangerous, because it finally prevents any little movement amongst the pelvic viscera which might have escaped the stays. From this practice many evils other than uterine displacements may follow which requires a race of practitioners never contemplated by nature to successfully combat."

Dr. Jessop favors a short skirt in preference to the long dress, for many obvious reasons, chief amongst which are that in times of danger or emergency there would be "nothing to encumber or interfere with the preservation of life,

while modesty is in no ways outraged." He has a word to say regarding "a custom fertile in disease and death," namely: the décolleté style of dress, or undress, now happily less fashionable than some years ago. "The back, shoulders and arms with half the bosom exposed is nakedness without modesty. It is not beautiful, for the witchery of dress is absent. Duplicate hollows, prominences and angularities detract from that assemblage of properties which attracts and pleases the eye, the impression of oneness is lost."

There is much in this paper which is interesting from an historic aspect, but the foregoing indicates the points of most professional interest. The importance of the question, and of the further proposition, whether it may not be possible by earnest efforts to effect some wholesome reform, is one which merits our consideration. As we have said, the subject is one to which the profession has given but little attention, and yet when we consider that by pernicious customs women inflict lasting injury, not only on themselves, but on their progeny of either sex, it would seem that a more thorough understanding of these evils would in itself have some influence. The great difficulties in the way of the reformer are sentimental. Woman is a creature of habit, intensely imitative, and will blindly follow a particular style, because it is "the fashion," while readily admitting that it is not perfectly graceful, or even comfortable. As instances, we may cite the hoops of antiquity, the "pinback" of a later age, the high-heel shoes, so fertile in backache, in which the gait was assimilated to that of the tailless apes, and now in our own days that posterior protuberance which goes by many names, but which has at date surpassed the natural feature of the Hottentot Venus. Can we imagine a woman—unfortunate being—whose gluteal region would naturally exhibit this peculiarity? We must realize that no risk of life would deter her from submitting to any operative procedure which would rid her of the monstrosity.

Women dress first for their own sex, next for their own edi-

fication, and but little for the delectation of the masculine mind ; hence its feeble influence. If a suggestion in the direction of healthful improvement should be made, it will be met by the unanswerable objection that with the present style of dress it is impracticable ; and this is true. Modern dress is in harmony with its components, and if we would accomplish anything, there must be a total and radical change. Here it would be well to say that while the XIXth Century costume is accomodative to all styles of femininity, allowing the thin and lean to simulate and deceive, while it aids the redundant in pruning and restraining, yet a healthful mode of dress could be devised which, accomodating all proportions by subduing outlines and contrasts, would render all devices unnecessary. By this means true beauty would be preserved and undesirable extremes less hardly dealt with. There are few of the gentler sex who consider that the figure which fully and cunningly clothed is their pride and often the admiration of fallible man would unclothed be immeasurably removed from the realms of artistic beauty.

The lines on which reform should be directed would include the abolition of all constricting apparatus ; provision for supporting the breast when necessary ; suspension from the shoulders of a portion of the weight of each garment. The clothing of the upper parts of the chest, with under as well as outer clothes ; a reduction in the length of the skirt, so as to keep it clear of mud and dust, with sufficient amplitude to allow of freedom of motion. The clothing of the trunk and upper extremities to be so proportioned as to permit of unimpeded movement of the arms. This would abolish the modern absurdity of a woman when dressed being unable to put on her hat or button her shoes. These changes are not beyond the ingenuity of the sex, nor of the dressmaker, whose fertile imagination conjures up new distortions. It would require a radical reform ; the construction of the garments, first, for healthful clothing ; and next,

but subordinate, for artistic grace. In this connection we must bear in mind that grace and beauty, fashion or style, are very changeable terms, largely depending on habit and prevailing taste. What is well to-day, may be outrageous to-morrow, in illustration of which we may take any epoch in the previous centuries ; so that a change, however radical, would but seem so for a brief period. Meanwhile, who shall have the courage to take the initiative, "*c'est le premier pas qui coup.*"

NOTES.

THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF THE MEDICAL SCIENCES.—Commencing with January, 1888, this well known journal will be issued as a monthly.

PHILADELPHIA MEDICAL TIMES. The "Medical Times" has changed hands, and is now owned and published by the editors, Dr. Frank Woodbury and Dr. William F. Waugh, Dr. Geo. H. Rohé acting as associate editor. The editors have taken the very desirable step of abolishing insets. An innovation, in the form of signed editorials, has been introduced.

PROFESSIONAL SECRECY.—"L'Union Médicale" says that a Belgian physician has been found guilty of having refused to give the name of the mother of an infant, when registering the birth. Replying to a question put in the Chamber of Deputies, the Minister of Justice states that there was no law compelling a medical man to violate professional confidences. The Belgian Medical Society proposes to investigate this frequently recurring question with a view to attaining a satisfactory solution.

KOCHER'S SUTURE.—DR. N. SENN, in the "Journal of the American Medical Association," describes a method of suture adopted by Kocher, of Berne, which he says ought to be more generally known, as it is done rapidly and neatly. "It is a form of continued suture, either with fine silk or catgut. A long, straight needle is threaded with suturing material, and as an assistant makes traction with a blunt hook upon each angle of the wound, so as to straighten its margins (a procedure which greatly facilitates the suturing), the needle is passed alternately deeply and superficially, so that approximation and coaptation sutures follow one another. In this way a large wound can be stitched accurately in a few minutes.

ANTISEPSIS IN DUELS.—"Le Progrès Médical" gives the "Journal des Sciences Médicales de Lille" as the authority for a new application of the Listerian system, which was probably not foreseen by its