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"If the Shoe Fits--"

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If the Shoe Fits—"

Vera Kurtz

Shoes have been a conspicuous article of dress among northern countries for centuries. The Romans added a leg covering to the Greek sandal and thus fashioned a boot which was worn during the Middle Ages. Carved shoes with leather tops were worn. There developed a style of shoe with a curved-up toe, which was sometimes attached to the knee with a gold chain. The length of the shoe depended on the wearer's social or political standing. A prince could wear a shoe thirty inches long; a baron, twenty-four inches, and a knight, eighteen inches long.

High heels have been popular since they were first introduced. The Persians first used high heels to avoid the condescension of their tall neighbor. Louis XIV of France, who was short in stature, revived and popularized the narrow high heel for all of Europe. Louis XV and his court wore the high French heel placed under the center of the foot to aid in dancing. After the French Revolution, fashion, influenced by the poverty of the times, popularized the simple Roman and Greek sandal.

The forces of civilization contribute to foot troubles by way of hard sidewalks, hard wood and tile floors instead of soft dirt paths. We contribute by indiscriminate buying. Particularly is the young girl, who is choosing her shiny patent leathers, susceptible to fad and fashion. Her feet are strong and free from aches. Why shouldn't she wear twinkly heels that click as she walks along the boulevard?

Many colleges and women's organizations in the United States and in England are undertaking campaigns to further the choice of hygienic shoes. The Paris Academy appealed to the public to end the wearing of high heels and lessen the evil effects on the health of women. The Y. W. C. A. in 1918 was the first organization to undertake a campaign to obtain normal shoes for normal women.

They conferred with manufacturers to obtain a shoe of the following description: a low shoe with a medium heel and flexible Shank that will allow enough exercise of the muscles of the arch to keep the foot in good condition; the toe broad enough to allow the great toe to have its natural gripping position with a straight inner line. However, due to difficulties of manufacturing and distributing the shoes, the campaign was withdrawn.

The Women's Federation of Health recommended a shoe which was manufactured, stamped with WFH, the initial letters of the organization, and sold for a time. Difficulties arose so that it was no longer possible to carry on the work. Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio, took up the experiment and as a result there is on the market the Antioch shoe, which embodies style and does not disregard health and comfort. The Universities of Pennsylvania and Wisconsin have conducted shoe campaigns. The latter has reached many people through county supervisors, county extension workers, and shoe merchants by means of X-ray shoe fitting machines, which determine whether the shoe fits the foot or the foot fits the shoe.

The company which manufactures the Tripedic shoe conducted a research to determine whether a standard shoe could be recommended for all people. Many people of different races in various occupations in many parts of the world were examined. The result was to show that three types of feet were prevalent: the inflare, which has more of the surface across the ball of the foot to the inside of the center longitudinal line of the sole; the straight type, which has the surface across the ball equal on either side of the longitudinal line, and the outflare, which has more of the surface across the ball to the outside of the longitudinal line.

Educational programs on the selection of shoes are becoming quite general in high schools. These programs are especially useful to upper classmen who do their personal shopping without parental advice.

Mrs. Maude Littie and Mrs. Iva White Merchand, former students of Iowa State College, have given us much valuable data in their studies on the effect of shoes on the feet and posture of high school girls. Out of 311 girls examined, only one had normal feet. Twenty-seven percent of this number bought shoes without being fitted. Three hundred out of the 311 were wearing shoes that were too short and too narrow.

Upon examination of 107 senior high school girls, it was found that 87 percent having good feet had good posture. Forty-two of these girls were wearing high heels and only two had normal posture. Some of the evil effects of wearing high heels noted were round shoulders caused by necks bent forward, protruding abdomens, pelvis tilted, muscles in the upper leg undeveloped, lower leg over-developed, the muscles in the leg pushed to the back of the calf. In examining this same group of girls in 1923 an improvement of 37 percent in the choice of shoes and an improvement of 14 percent in the condition of the feet was noted. The girls whose feet were outstandingly good or bad in 1927 were the same in 1928.

In choosing shoes, attention should be given to fitting the feet. To fit the foot, the shoe should be broadest at the end of the little toe. The big joint of the big toe should conform to the rounding in of the sole on the inside edge of the instep. Back of the toes the vamp seam should be free from the foot. The counter, which holds the back part of the shoe upper in shape, should center the heel of the foot in the heel seat of the shoe. The shoe should fit snugly, but be comfortable, since the weight of the body is borne by the feet.

"We may live without poetry, music and art,
We may live without conscience and live without heart,
We may live without friends,
We may live without books,
But civilized man cannot live without cooks."

—Owen Meredith.