

Is it worth while to write against corsets again? It must be that constant dropping will at last make some impression, even upon the stony heart that attempts to beat within the rigid limitations of its fashionable surroundings. Successful advertisers have learned that people who do not see the first appearance of their advertisement, will glance at its tenth appearance, and carefully read and consider its fiftieth claim to attention. In like manner it is to be hoped that the confirmed-corset-wearer will first endure the ideas of those who persist in writing against her favorite implement of destruction, and at last embrace them.

One emancipated woman of my acquaintance tells me that twenty years ago, on the occasion of a visit from her English aunt, that rigid dame had scarcely said, "How do you do," before exclaiming, "What! seven years old and not yet in corsets!" Then turning to her mother, "This will never do; the child will have no shape at all." Surely there are no children of seven nowadays whose tender bodies are laced into "shape."

At the boarding-school which I attended six years ago it was a custom of many of the girls to loosen their clothing before sitting down to an evening of study in our rooms. One might have thought that we expected all the knowledge freshly assimilated to go direct to the region of the waist, but the physiological principle was sound. When respiration, digestion and circulation are impeded the brain cannot do its best work.

But there came a time when this deplorable custom, long continued in secret, threatened to be proclaimed on the housetops. Most of us were established at the tables in the girls' parlor, during that fatal hour when a party of ladies and gentlemen, escorted by the governess, were shown through the building. At each girl's room they rapped, and hearing no reply took a glance within—a glance sufficiently comprehensive to reveal a pair of corsets folded upon the bed, laid on a chair or even flung disdainfully upon the floor. "At the first three or four I saw," said the governess, who came to us afterwards with flaming cheeks, "I felt ashamed; at the next six or eight I was horrified, but at the last half dozen I could scarcely keep from laughing." Here the guilty crowd laughed, too, and one of us informed our preceptress that, according to a German scientist, no less than ninety-two diseases were directly traceable to the wearing of corsets.

"Oh, wear them or not, just as you like," cried she. "I'm sure I don't want any girl with ninety-two diseases under my care. But for pity's sake don't leave them about. Put them in the closet, or in the fire, or anywhere out of sight."

The trouble with many women is that they have advanced far enough to remove their chest contractors for a brief period, but not far enough to put them into the fire. They will go without them, perhaps for a morning, or for an invalid afternoon, or for some special occasion, when they are about to make an unusual mental or physical exertion. They may even develop independence of character sufficient to enable them to go uncorseted to church, to a concert, or to make a call. But still one could scarcely presume to say that such an one had discarded corsets forever. But show me the woman who, with brave heart, unbound with whalebone, can face her dressmaker, and be measured for a new dress, and I will show you one who has burned her ships behind her, and who doesn't care if she never sees another ship.

Miss Constance Fenimore Woolson, in her novel, "East Angels," says she never saw a woman with a large waist who was not proud of it, and it is certain that a woman with a naturally-formed waist has greater reason to be proud of it than she who has a deformed one. The signs of the times are favorable to the development of feminine bodies as well as of feminine minds, and though we often hear the remark, "Oh, my dress is very loose; I can almost turn round in it," contradicted by the involuntary deep breath which follows the removal of the "very loose" clothing at night, it is still some comfort to know that the modern corset is not such a grievous affliction as that old-fashioned instrument of torture that was bound upon helpless babies of seven and kept on them till they died. The old-fashioned corset ground slowly and it ground exceeding small. BEL THISTLETHWAITE.

A DEVOTEE OF THE CORSET.

DEAR EDITOR, — Reading "Woman's World" in THE GLOBE with great pleasure at all times and taking a personal interest in Bel Thistlethwaite's article on "Corsets Again," I hope you will permit me to occupy a small portion of your space. I do not agree with the writer that the corset is falling into desuetude, and I think the advertising columns of the papers bear me out. Certainly among a rather large circle of acquaintances I do not know of one who has abandoned the corset, while I know many mothers who are not only enthusiastic lacers themselves, but are very strict in employing this article of dress in the foundation of their children's figures. Each of my own daughters—I have four—on her seventh birthday was provided with a snugly fitting pair of corsets, which she wore from that time out, by night as well as by day, unless in case of decided illness. As the child grew, more bones were added, and the chest and hip measure was increased; but no alteration was made in the waist, and no expansion being allowed during the hours of sleep, its beauty was retained and there was no necessity of resorting to tight-lacing, which becomes requisite where corsets are not worn, until the figure has grown large. It goes without saying that I wear corsets myself, and though I have left youth far behind, I still have a figure that provokes admiration, and I cannot find that either my daughters or I have become unduly the victims of the "ninety-two" diseases mentioned by the German doctor referred to.

Toronto, Dec. 2. M. F.

Dec 14

THE

WOMAN'S WORLD.

TO THE "DEVOTEES OF CORSETS.

I was inclined to pride myself on the article "Corsets Again," partly on account of its intrinsic merits, partly because I got safely through it without a single reference to the Venus de Medici. The goddess of beauty has been measured so often in public, that it seems superfluous to say that though only five feet three inches in height, she was twenty-six inches about the waist, and that these proportions have been universally admired as the ideal of perfect womanly beauty.

Although several centuries old, this famous statue still has a figure that provokes admiration.

Who shall decide when doctors do not disagree? No intelligent physician will deny, even in the face of the most "enthusiastic lacer," that it is a dangerous thing to interfere with the three vital functions of the body—respiration, digestion and circulation. Will any thinking man or woman affirm that it makes no difference in the health of a woman, or in the health of her prospective children, whether her lungs are as well developed as those of her husband, or as insignificant as those of a child seven years old? Does any thinking or thoughtless person really believe that the health of the vital organs is not of vital importance? And how can they be healthy when they are deprived of strength to do their work and room to do it in? Wherever the waist is deformed by tight lacing, or by not being allowed its proper growth, the liver is thrust down from its proper place, and this causes other and more serious displacements, from which nearly every corset-wearing woman in the land is a sufferer.

Then I am not an admirer of a good figure? Indeed I am; but the goodness should be thorough, not superficial. A woman cannot have too good a form for the work that nature expects of her; but what is really good cannot be harmful—not even in the slightest degree. When a polite behavior covering a sneering heart is considered good manners, than a stovepipe waist concealing a pair of lungs that have been deprived of half their working power may constitute the attraction of a good figure.

Does M. F., whose letter in a recent GLOBE is the text of this article, remember what Lola Montez said on this subject, "How to obtain a Handsome Form?" Lola was not what could be called an old maidish sort of a person. She was entirely too fond of gadding about, for her own good. But in her time she was one of the famous women of Europe, and celebrated as much for her beauty as for her remarkable talent for political intrigue. "The foundation for a beautiful form," she says, "must undoubtedly be laid in childhood." On this point the Countess of Lands felt and M. F. are agreed. "That is," explains Madame Lola, "nothing should be done at that tender age to obstruct the natural swell and growth of all the parts." Please observe, *all* the parts.

"Common sense teaches us," continues the lady, "that the young fibres ought to be left unencumbered by obstacles of art, to shoot harmoniously into the shape that nature drew." Let me interrupt with the remark that, though I am capable of saying courageous things when necessary, I have never yet dared to begin a sentence with the words, "Common sense teaches." "Obstacles of art" is not a bad name for them. In speaking of the importance of a beautiful figure, Lola Montez further says, "The first thing to be thought of is *health* (the italics are not mine), for there can be no development of beauty in sickly fibres. Plenty of exercise in the open air is a great recipe. Exercise, not philosophically, and with religious gravity undertaken, but the wild, romping activities of a spirited girl, who runs up and down as though her veins were full of wine. If you would see the chest rise and swell in noble and hearty expansion, send out the girl to constant and vigorous exercise in the open air."

Not a word in the entire chapter in favor of compression; every word alive with the necessity of expansion; and these are the ideas of a woman whose beauty lives in the world's memory. How much "constant and vigorous exercise" can be taken by the girl who has worn corsets night and day since she was seven years old? Does she run about as though her veins were full of wine? Or does she dawdle along as though her veins were full of water?

One thing is sure: she cannot walk rapidly or make any extra exertion without panting or gasping, or declaring that she is all out of breath. My dear girl, no one has any right to be all out of breath—except dead people. The oftener you become breathless the sooner you will join the silent majority. But if you take vigorous exercise in snugly fitting corsets you will frequently lose breath, and if you never take vigorous exercise, then there is reason to fear that you will never be a vigorous person.

Let me make a confession. From a tight-lacing grandmother I inherited a body so weakly and meanly formed that when I had attained my full growth a twenty-inch belt easily encircled the waist. Of course there were not lacking ignorant fashionable people to tell me that this was a pretty figure, but in the other hand I met with a great many pitying glances from those whose opinions I valued most. But the heaviest humiliation was being obliged to give up cherished plans of work and study for lack of physical strength. What pleasure in life is there for the woman whose physician tells her that she must not read, or write, or think, or do anything in particular but rest and recuperate? "There is no disease," he said, "only a lack of vitality." "What do you mean by vitality?" I demanded rather savagely, for I dislike glib generalities. "Vitality, my dear young lady," said the doctor slowly, "is another name for breathing-power. It means great depth between breast-bone and back-bone, great width between the shoulders, twenty-seven inches waist measure, and the upper chest developed in proportion. It is not that likely you will ever know anything about it."

Well, I have learned something about it since; by discarding corsets and by gymnastic and other exercise I have added three inches to my chest and waist measurement. Let me assure every young lady who honors this article with her attention that the most delightful and profitable study imaginable is the culture of vitality.

I must make an end, and yet I have but just begun.

BEL. THISTLETHWAITE.

FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE.

"Do not marry without love," is frequently and sensibly said to young people, to which I would like to add, "and do not marry without friendship." If your lover is not your best friend it would be better to dismiss him at once, for there is no more melancholy spectacle under Heaven than that presented by a married pair, who, under the influences of returning sobriety, are constrained to view with something like disgust not only themselves, but the companion of their intoxication. To insure happiness in wedded life it is necessary not only that the blood should leap at glance of eye, or touch of hand, but also that if one is fond of society the other should be fond of it too; if one is a housekeeping youth the other should have comparatively homely wits; if one is interested in politics, or architecture, or machinery or poetry the other should not take a nap while these topics are being discussed.

"It is just as well," says the wise newspaper paragrapher, "not to marry your opposite, as you will grow opposite enough in a very short time." Physiologists advise the union of opposing temperaments—the fair with the dark, the brown eyes with the blue, the nervous with the serene, the melancholy with the hopeful, the impatient with the phlegmatic, the ideal with the practical. This is in the theory that the idiosyncrasy of each will be modified and improved by close association with its opposite. It is an experiment that is worth trying only when each values the other's peculiarity as much as the one that owns it.