

Putting American Women "On Another Footing"

Campaign Is Under Way Against the High Heel and the Pointed Toe, Which Are Accused of Deforming the Female of the Species

NO other country except China has set itself up seriously as a rival to America in the business of mutilating women's feet, and China has reformed. Footbinding is obsolete there, or at least obsolescent. In the United States footbinding by a somewhat more modern process, with the aid of high-heeled and pointed shoes, continues almost unabated. The female of the species hereabout is becoming a one-toed, sharp-footed animal.

Even women who are so vain of their feet that they decline to squeeze their toes cannot resist the seductive high heel, which emphasizes the curve of the arch. And those who have no occasion to be vain wear shoes which, they fondly

all of the women and girls have adopted the normal shoe. In discarding the old and taking up the new shoes a difficulty of conscience arose—what was it right to do with the old, unhygienic shoe? As representing a physiological crime it should have been burned. In giving it away, selling it, or even in putting it in the ashcan to be carried off by the ashman for his wife or some of his presumably many children was in the way of propagating a serious evil. It seemed equally a sin to dispose of any kind of a foot covering in these days when the cost of leather is so high. The question was solved in some cases by giving the shoes to the present irreclaimable sinners in the way of shoes, with the hope that by

wearing a round-toe, moderately high-heeled Oxford, which she purchased as an "American" shoe in Italy, but here she finds only the high-heeled pointed shoe worn by American women.

"I was amazed to see the shoes here," says Dr. Yvonne Pouzin, who is from Nantes. "When we see a shoe in France that is broad and comfortable, that is shaped like the human foot, we say 'that is an American shoe.' We say the American people are logical and sensible, and that they wear a sensible shoe. We may have shoes with high heels, but always with room at the toe. Here I see the shoe with the very high heel and no room at all at the toe. It must be that we in France are the logical and sensible people."

Dr. Natalie Wintsch-Maleeff says that in Lausanne, Switzerland, her home, they have pointed shoes only in the museums, as showing the amusing things worn in the days of the grandmothers.

Dr. Tomo Inouye, a Japanese doctor and Government Health Inspector of Schools in Japan, tells of a wide variety of sensible footwear in her country. There is the native sandal with light-weight boxwood soles, several inches high for wet weather, a little lower for weather not quite as wet, and lower for ordinary walking—a half-dozen kinds all told—with fine embroidered straps for court wear and less elaborate for ordinary people. Many of the schoolgirls wear the ordinary leather shoe of a kind that Dr. Inouye herself was wearing, with round toe and low heel.

The Y. W. C. A. is conducting a physical examination of all the girls who will take it.

It is not pleasant to reveal the true inwardness of one's physical condition and disabilities. Age, weight, the real color of one's hair, the number of one's teeth, whether one had any or none, whether the feet are lovely or distorted by tight shoes—all these records are carefully locked up and not the most intimate friend or relative can get a glimpse of them.

The physical director must be taken into the secret, for one of the philosophies of physical well-being which the Y. W. C. A. most emphatically believes is the remedy for many disabilities.

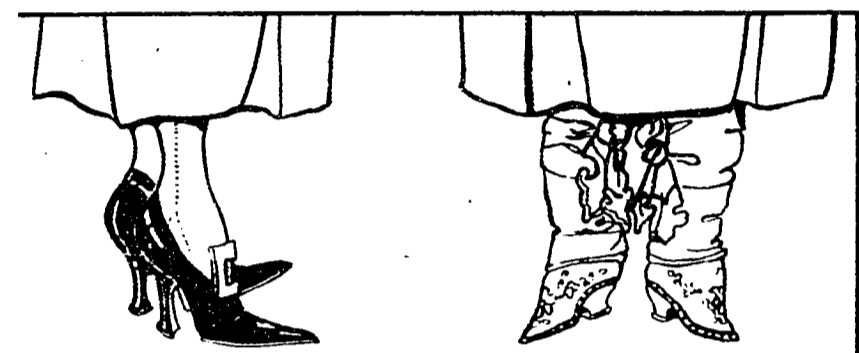
"We believe in abandoning drugs and

the drug store for the gymnasium," says Dr. Augusta Rucker, head of the Department of Health of the association.

The first start in this system of making over women was begun in a health centre for women and girls opened at 43 East Twenty-second Street a month ago, long enough to lead to the belief that it is to be a success. No other requisite for admission is required than that the girl or woman shall be self-supporting. From notices sent to all kinds of places where women are employed, factories, shops, schools, and banks, women and girls have gone to receive their examinations.

Other health centres were begun in other places, but it was found that the expense of carrying these on would be too great and they were given up. The work of promulgating the idea will be done by individual groups all over the country.

One of the aids to the physical examination which the association finds of



Can We Criticise China? The Human Foot Tilted to the Angle of a Horse's Hoof.

believe, will make the observer think they have reason. In consequence the five pink toes, on which in an earlier day their mothers told off the nursery jingle about the five little pigs, have become sadly cramped.

A physician delegate to the doctors' conference in session at the headquarters of the National Y. W. C. A. in New York was examining the strange little sharp-pointed feet of a girl the other day.

"Now, wiggle your toes, my dear," she said in a maternal tone.

But never a wiggle followed. It couldn't be done. And so the doctors at the convention decided to campaign against nonsensical shoes.

The association now has a list of retail shoe shops in this city and all over the country and in Canada where shoes of which it approves can be found. One firm, having 7,000 retail shops all over the world, is on the list. There is another with 2,000 retail stores, and there are innumerable others with fewer stores. The names of all are well known.

Girls' colleges and normal schools which have been consulted on the subject have been greatly interested, and the authorities say that they will do everything they can to promote the use of a shoe fitting the normal foot. Health is the thing the association is after, and it says that narrow toes and high heels cause a walk which puts a strain upon the spine and throws the internal organs out of place.

The shoe recommended by the Y. W. C. A. experts has a straight line on the inside of the foot, as in the natural foot. It has a flexible sole, so that the toes, which were intended to grip the ground in walking, may have a chance to perform their natural function, and it has low, broad heels.

"One can have as sprightly a gait at 90 as at 19 if the muscles of the ankles have not been weakened by lack of exercise and oversupport," says Dr. Augusta Rucker, head of the health department of the association.

"Spats can be worn if extra warmth is needed."

There are some 1,000 women doing the work of the National Y. W. C. A. at its big headquarters at 600 Lexington Avenue and in the several houses adjoining which have had to be taken over for its constantly growing work, and practically

the time they were worn out their shoe morals might have improved.

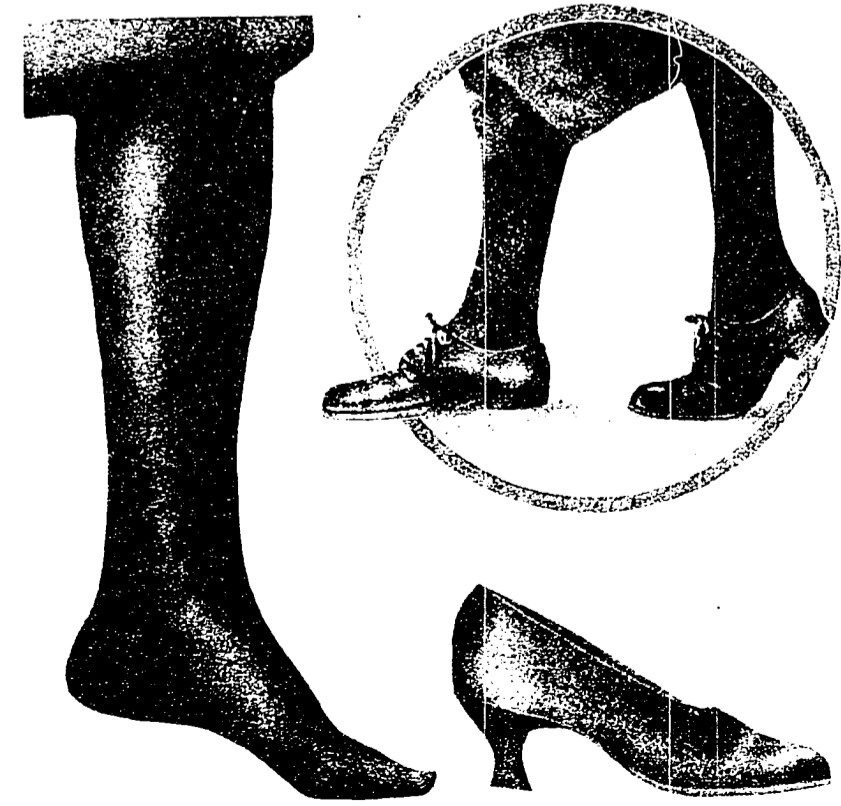
"I gave away five pairs of perfectly good shoes," said one attractive girl at the headquarters, "and now I have only one pair myself, and will have for some time, but I never would go back to the old kind."

But two of the prettiest and healthiest young women in the association room are wearing high heels and pointed toes, and say they could not possibly walk in any other kind of a shoe.

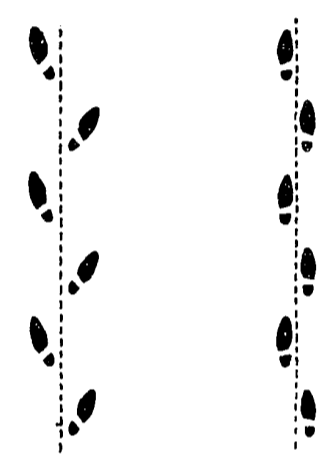
Wearers of the sensible shoe are instructed how to walk. Toeing out is wrong. The direct walk, like the Indians, the toes straight ahead, is the only correct and beautiful way.

"The wabblers tooth out," says the association. "Toeing ahead puts you on the straight road to success."

The Contessa Lorshi of Italy, who is the interpreter for the conference, is



Showing Position of the Foot When Wearing High Heels—(In the Circle,) Walking in Good Shoes.



A Footprint Record.

assistance is a big triple mirror before which the candidate sees herself as never before. Mirrors have a reputation for being aids to vanity, but, properly used, they may have an opposite effect.

"Oh, those mirrors are very chastening," says Dr. Eleanor Bertine, director of the Bureau of Social Education of the association.

The new Health Centre makes it possible for every self-supporting girl in the city to learn what her physical needs are and how in the gymnasium to correct her defects and to cure many of her ills. There is also a mirror in the Health Centre gymnasium where, after being shown the proper exercises, the girl can see for herself whether she does them correctly. Practically all the so-called minor disturbances of the physical health, but which are really menaces to both health and efficiency, can be cured by exercises, it has been proved. Records of the work already done show remarkable results.

"In the social morality campaign of the association during the war, conducted directly under the section of Woman's Work of the Commission on Training Camp Activities," says Dr. Bertine, "we came to see that there was not simply a question of right and wrong which we had to consider, but something more fundamental. Right and wrong depend upon the understanding of what is conducive to the finest human development. Physical health is physical morality. We found that women's philosophy of life was fundamentally wrong. The pasty-faced, candy-eating girl, who is willing to jog along through life with pains and aches of all kinds, has got to change her attitude toward physical health. The Bureau of Social Health grew out of this realization."

Y. W. C. A. Photos.