

The Evils of Tight-Lacing.

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NO doubt whatever exists in my mind but that a large percentage of ailments from which the female sex suffer, and to obtain relief for which they, sooner or later, consult a member of the medical profession, owe their origin to the pernicious habit of tight-lacing.

The object of tight-lacing is with the idea of securing beauty in form. A small waist is thought beautiful, elegant, the perfection of figure. The idea originates in no correct perception of beauty, and is in violation of nature. It has its foundation in caprice and ignorance. In all probability it began with some fashionable lady of the Court, whose waist was admired for its handsome shape; and to have waists equally neat, all the other ladies would commence lacing, and squeezing themselves without any regard to proportion or bulk of figure. Be this as it may, tight-lacing has been followed as a fashion by all classes of females, from the highest to the lowest; and now it may be spoken of as a universal frenzy, ruinous to comfort and destructive to health. How it should be injurious may be understood from the following explanation.

The whole of the beautiful apparatus for circulating the blood, inhaling and expiring air, receiving and digesting food, and otherwise keeping the animal economy in motion, is neatly packed together in the human frame, leaving no space unoccupied or to spare. Neither, however, is there any undue pressure of one part on another. All the parts are provided with exactly that degree of room which they require—no more and no less. On considering this ingenious arrangement, the mind must be struck with the folly, if not impiety, of any kind of undue compression from without. We can see at a glance that pressure must have the effect of forcing the organs out of their proper place, and of crushing them on each other. This crushing, of course, prevents freedom of action, the lower ribs are forced in upon the liver and stomach; and these members, to escape the torture imposed upon them, press partly down upon the bowels, and partly up against the diaphragm, which in turn presses against the heart and lungs. Although this lacing may be relaxed at night, the repeated daily pressure gives a prominent set to the bones, and the ribs are found irrevocably distorted—tapering towards a point where they should bulge out, and bulging out where they should taper. This alteration in the shape of the ribs is the

earliest and least distortion. Other and greater calamities follow.

Jammed out of their natural position, the heart and lungs press upon and make an effort to expand the chest and shoulder blades: this effort is partly restrained by the external pressure, and there are thus two pressures contending against each other. Nature outraged, has her revenge: *one shoulder becomes higher than the other*, and the lateral curvature of the spine is produced. Distortion of the ribs, distortion of the chest-bone and shoulder blades, distortion of the hip-bones, and distortion of the spine, are the almost inevitable result of tight lacing. As these distortions are not, or the most part, very conspicuous, some may be inclined to doubt their existence; but the cause of their generally being concealed from observation, is the mode of fashionable dressing, in which, by means of padding, the balance of the figure is externally served.

The internal disorders caused by this pernicious practice are so numerous that space would not permit them to be catalogued. The more common and obvious complaint of young females, subject to tight lacing, is anæmia and derangement of appetite. The digestive organs being deprived of the due space required for the performance of their functions, the appetite for food fails or becomes depressed, and occasional fainting ensues. A sickly fainting feeling is also caused by the loosening of the corsets at night. "For as soon as the thorax and abdomen are relaxed by being deprived of their usual support, blood rushing downwards, in consequence of the diminished resistance to its motion, empties the vessels of the head, and thus occasions fainting." The feelings of sickness, faintness, and general weakness, accompanied with lowness of spirits, so variously caused, too frequently tend to demoralise the mind.

Nature has prescribed but one law for strengthening the muscular system, and that is contained in three words: Air, Exercise, and Diet. The error in civilised society consists in first depriving nature of the exercise she demands, and then attempting to remedy the defect by artificial means.

On the unfortunate young females who too often fall victims to the pernicious habit of tight-lacing, the blame ought, I believe, in few cases to fall. Mothers are, in most instances, the guilty cause. Throughout British society, an insane anxiety is manifested in families about the marrying of daughters. There is a constant dread among mothers that their daughters will not make good matches; and to secure this important desideratum, they oblige them to submit to a variety of tortures, considered essential by that most senseless of all things—fashion.

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[previous page](#)

[next page](#)