

Thirty years ago, Banning undertook to effect a cure of pelvic disorders by means of braces which supported the trunk in a natural position. The weak point in this system was its inability to give strength to the weakened muscles. An external skeleton consisting of an iron framework is no more efficient in developing the muscles of the trunk than one composed of hickory or whalebone stays. The "Neptune's girdle," or "*umschlag*" of the old German water-cures, not infrequently perfected cures by allaying local congestions, irritation of the abdominal sympathetic ganglia, and especially by supporting the relaxed abdominal walls, and holding up in position the prolapsed viscera. Patients are sometimes cured by being sent on long journeys abroad, in which they gain muscular strength and vigour by mountain-climbing, horseback-riding, and the active exercise necessarily involved in sight-seeing.

Cures have been effected by each of these and other haphazard methods of treatment, but they were accidental, and not due to scientific methods, and patients were not infrequently made worse. I have known of cases in which young women were injured for life by being advised by their physicians to exercise in a gymnasium, without the same careful prescription as to the kind and amount of exercise to be taken, as a judicious physician would give respecting the administration of a powerful drug.

(2) It must be evident that a large share of the symptoms present in cases belonging to the class which is generally referred to the gynæcologist, are really due to disorders of other organs which are involved in the general disturbance, or, as the French call it, *desequilibrium*, of the viscera of the lower half of the trunk.

Most women suffering from pelvic diseases complain of pain when on the feet, dragging pain in the bowels and the lower portion of the back, pain at the extreme lower end of the spine, soreness and pain in the region of the navel, a feeling of lack of support in the lower abdomen, a sensation commonly described as "goneness" at the pit of the stomach, weakness of the lower limbs, pain in the back, crawling, tingling, numbness, stinging, and other sensations in the legs, cold hands and feet, burning of the soles and palms. Sometimes the patient says she is only comfortable, when on her feet, when holding up the bowels with the hands. Such patients tenaciously cling to the corset, because they evidently need some support. These patients also often complain that when they undertake to stand without a corset, there is such a sinking at the stomach that they are compelled to sit down. The evident cause is the dragging of the prolapsed bowels and

stomach, occasioned by the relaxation of the abdominal muscles by which the branches of the pneumogastric and sympathetic nerves are put under an unnatural strain. It is evident that in these cases a large part of the symptoms are due, not to the pelvic disorder, but to the general disease of which this is a part.

If we expect to cure a woman who is a chronic sufferer from pelvic disorders, we must treat the patient rather than the malady. This is a principle which applies, in fact, to most chronic disorders; and a failure to recognise this principle is the rock upon which professional effort often splits. It is as hopeless to undertake to cure such maladies by the usual routine methods, which are addressed to local symptoms and conditions only, as to expect to kill a noxious weed by picking off its flowers or a few of its leaves. The whole disease must be eradicated, root and branch. This can only be accomplished by the removal of all the morbid conditions which are the real causes of the multitudinous symptoms by which the disorder is recognised and for which it is often named. Rational treatment of this class of diseases must, then, include, first of all, the adoption of a proper dress, which will be one in which every muscle of the trunk will have perfect freedom to act. The patient must be instructed to have her dress measure taken with the waist fully expanded, and to allow an inch or two for growth, in the hope that to some degree she may overcome the deformed condition which she has induced by ignorant obedience to fashion, rather than to the laws of physiology and the dictates of common sense.

Health corsets are a device of the devil to keep women in bondage who are seeking for deliverance from the weakness and misery from which a really healthful mode of dress might emancipate her. Shoulder braces and harnesses of every description are, on the whole, a snare and a delusion. The only correct principle is to suspend everything from the shoulders by means of a waist which will equally distribute the weight upon natural bearings, and at the same time give latitude for the greatest freedom of waist movement.

If all women would at once adopt a healthful mode of dress, probably half of our profession would be obliged to seek some other calling. Certainly, at the present time, more than half our business consists in efforts to repair damages which ignorant women have inflicted upon themselves. Neither a proper knowledge of the requirements of the body, nor a just consideration of the principles of beauty, justifies the popular mode of dress. The idea that a small waist or a round waist is beautiful, is a mis-

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