

# FOOTPRINTS ON THE SANDS

By ESTELLE M. KERR

WITH two Atlantic sea-coasts, a chain of great lakes and innumerable smaller water-ways, there comes to most of us a heritage of love of the water, and in the hot summer weather all true sons and daughters of Canada long to disport themselves in or on the water.

From the clean shelving beaches of a secluded retreat in Prince Edward Island, to the populous, joyous bathing grounds of the city of Vancouver, the tiny tots are running barefoot in the sand while their elders wade or swim, paddle or sail, each enjoying the water in his own special way.

There is hardly an inland town that does not possess some sort of "swimming hole" known to the boys, but dwellers in the city are apt to be self-conscious about following their aquatic sports in town. Perhaps this is the fault of the civic governments which have allowed the water-fronts to be appropriated by railway yards and factories, but the newer western cities have guarded against this and in Vancouver the bathing beach is one of the great attractions of the town and, though excellent bathing houses are provided, people who prefer to dress at home do not hesitate to take the street car when dressed in their bathing suits and rain-coats.

Until recent years in Toronto bathers have taken the ferry to the Island, but as the result of the labours of the Harbour Commission they are now provided with a wide, sandy beach at the western end of the city and here the people flock in hundreds daily, some to play in the sands, some to swim, and still greater numbers to watch the others and perhaps register a vow that next time they will come provided with a bathing suit. It is not an uncommon sight to see a party of girls in rain-coats or dusters driving a motor car, and no one would expect from their appearance while going through the city that, arrived at the lake-front, they will throw aside their light wraps and dashing into the lake swim far out with the grace of half a dozen Annette Kellermans.

As an envious onlooker, last Saturday, I speculated as to the nature and occupations of the bathers, who, in their swimming suits, looked curiously alike. It was impossible to tell soldier from civilian, society girl from factory hand, or that blending of the two found in the munitioneer. It was only when they emerged from the bathing houses that they betrayed their stations in life, their tastes, and, to some extent, their occupations. Some of the girls dressed quickly and, when they came from the bathing cabin in middy blouses and canvas shoes, ran about the sands with the same nymph-like grace they displayed in the water, others, after a prolonged stay, came out transformed into a mass of artificiality by corsets, high heels and powder, and sank exhausted on the sands. With the men the change was less

noticeable. There was a variety in the material and cut of their garments, to be sure, but not one of them, fat or lean, had his movements restricted by tight clothing; not one of them limped along in shoes that were a size too small for him, or hobbled uncertainly on tapering heels!

BETWEEN me and the water stretched a long line of foot-prints in the moist sand, and I thought of the lines in Longfellow's Psalm of Life:

"Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints in the sands of time;  
Footprints, that perhaps another,  
Sailing o'er life's solemn train,  
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again."

Of course, the footprints before us would be obliterated by the next storm, or the next crowd of merry-makers, but the same feet are leaving their marks in other soil, other places.

One little trail of footsteps—a deep round hole in the sand and a small, pointed impression in front of it, I traced to the pretty girl dressed in white with a pink sleeveless jersey of knitted silk who reclined on the sand, shading a handsome young officer with her rose-coloured parasol. It was an alluring picture. The soldier gazed at her in a way that made me think he had chosen her for his partner in life, but I could not help wondering how she would cope with discomfort and trouble that in those little high-heeled shoes. Even now they prevented her from being really companionable. He wanted to walk farther, to get away from the crowd, but her shoe was hurting her.

"Let's go back to the motor," she said, and he followed her reluctantly. She was a beautiful creature, graceful in the movement of her hands, the turn of her head, but her walk compared with the girl in the running-shoes who passed her was like the movement of the camel to the flight of the seagull.

SHOE wisdom comes out of the mouths of babes, who cry to be allowed to go barefoot, who scream when a shoe pinches and prefer comfort to style. Their little brown feet are a delight to look upon and their simple leather-sandals they wear are so perfectly adapted for the burning August weather that we long to adopt them for our own, but the fear of looking ridiculous, combined with the difficulty of having them made, holds us back.

After children have passed the unconscious stage they become imitative and want to do as their elders do, the little girls are glad to lay aside their comfortable flat shoes for the added height and dignity of a French heel, while the joy of appearing for the first time in patent leather makes them bear uncomplainingly the discomfort of hot and swollen feet till the little corns have started to grow. This love of the diminutive foot persists until at a very ripe, old age we are glad to rest our long-suffering feet in the ridiculed list slippers of our grandmothers with a sigh of content.

NO woman can be a truly useful citizen till she kicks aside her high-heeled slippers. We scorn the Chinese women for binding their feet, but are we not almost as foolish? What virtue is there in small feet? Yet it is an attribute that every woman envies. The fat woman whose feet are too small to support her great unwieldy body is proud of the fact that she "takes threes," and when the salesman advises a larger size, she protests,

"But I never wore such a large size in all my life!"

Then follows a broken leg or a sprained ankle. The small, daintily-shod foot looks attractive as it swings from a hammock, or peeps beneath the folds



of a gown, but when upright or in motion the women in modern fashionable shoes reminds one of a statue on an inadequate pedestal, and there is nothing uglier than her movements as she runs over cobble stones in pursuit of street cars—the only time one sees her try to run.

Have we boasted that our feet are smaller than those of English women? Shame on us! We don't boast of the number of chiropodists that flourish in our midst, of the advertisements for corn removers that appear in our daily papers, of the fact that, as a nation, we are forgetting how to walk?

Many girls who are accustomed to wearing high-heeled shoes adopt the canvas "sneaker" in the summer-time, and the result is a fallen arch.

"There, you see," exclaims the girl. "I told you I was far more comfortable in high-heeled shoes!"

For people with high arches a heel is essential, but there is a vast difference between a broad heel an inch or a trifle more in height and a tapering French heel, or the more sensible looking, but equally insecure "Cuban" variety. The fact that the French heel makes your feet look smaller is indisputable. And though the young men—particularly those who stay at home and are fond of dancing—may admire a girl's dainty feet, a real man likes the woman he loves to be comfortably dressed, to run no risk of sprained ankles, to keep her feet free from disfiguring callouses, bunions and corns. He may like to see her fashionably dressed, but now, for once, flat heels are fashionable. Of course we know it will not last, that next year when we try to replace our comfortable brown shoes we shall be told firmly that "low heels are not being worn this year—we're not showing any of them! They can't possibly be had in the better-grade shoes."

Boots and shoes should be varied according to the occasions on which they are to be worn. Labourers in marshy districts in England find clogs, or shoes with soles of wood, are more suitable than leather boots, the Japanese are excellent pedestrians and travel many miles through mountainous districts in thin shoes of plaited grass, which they renew frequently. Indians and Esquimaux prefer moccasins, and the only successful Arctic expeditions have been carried out by men who adopted that form of foot gear. An army that is ill shod fights just as badly as one that is ill fed—and it is even worse for marching order.

A lady from Vancouver recently came to live in Toronto and was amazed to find that the women here walked so little. In Vancouver, she says, they went for all-day tramps at least once a week, but when she tried to get companions for country walks in her new place of residence, she discovered, to her amazement, that very few of the young women possessed comfortable walking boots!

"Of course the scenery is not to be compared with that around Vancouver," she said, "but how can their health stand it? Will not a nation deteriorate if its mothers do not develop their muscles with exercise and fill their lungs with fresh country air? I judge a woman's brains by the boots she wears. What girls lack in their heads they make up in their heels!"

I think the lady from Vancouver speaks the truth.

