

OF INTEREST TO WOMEN.



SIT in a store window, on a bench in a park, in any position that commands a view of unconscious promenaders, how many women please by their form and carriage?

Setting aside the forms that are badly born, undersized, meagre, deformed, how many well proportioned people are distressing through personal neglect!

Women who by height, figure and faces might be strikingly effective, by clumsiness, untrained gaucheries and affectations, are unattractive, unimpressive, distressing.

The universal fault is that of position—the sagging shoulders, craned neck, retreating back, prominent stomach, arms hanging limp and aimless, wildly swinging like those of a windmill, braced out from the side like triangular iron supports, crossed in front, clutching the pocketbook with unconscious fierceness or one arm “steering” in stiff rhythmic paddles.

Some who imagine they are walking with great dignity and elegance look stiff, strained and awkward. Some are plunging along as though going to a fire, bodies pitched forward, out of step with their comrades—one with a heavy rolling motion, the other with a straight up and down churchstaff motion, the result of undue tension or stiffening of the ankle joints. The frivolous woman is known by her “niddling” tottering way, the termagant by her martial tread, the high heeled by her “hobble”—scarce anything easy meets the eye.

One allows the knees to bend excessively and continuously, producing a generally tumbledown flabbiness of personal expression, while the upper portion of the body is disproportionately stiffened. Some thud down with the whole force of the heel, producing a jar upon the earth and the brain at the same time, also upon the eyes of the beholder. I have seen a woman weighing 95 pounds who would make the glasses clank in the room across which she walked and another of 150 pounds slip around noiselessly as a cat—it is all in “the way.”

There is a mincing gait that is very unpleasant to look upon, also a broken unevenness of motion as though the mind were wandering and the foot catching in the braid of the dress. There is a certain dignity of mentality that produces a steady, even, rhythmic pace which, even when not exactly graceful, is impressive.

Some walk with an undue roll of the hips, produced by an alternate pushing forward of each hip—an extremely ungainly effect, supposed by the owners to be particularly voluptuous and fascinating. Others again walk with an over-straight strain, making an ugly hollow in the back, which milliners describe as “stylish.”

Excessive relaxation of the neck, pitching the head forward with the strain of the lower body, is a common expression

of fatigue. As for the third, who cannot walk in step with the other two—may she never be in our company!

The mass of care battered shopping women, upon whom time and want of money press hard, huddle along in miserable fashion, shoulders to ears, heads stretched out, wobbling from side to side, hands wildly clutching. The poor minds are three or four blocks ahead of the body and scattered in different directions. Faces are drawn into knotted cords and creases, eyes are starting in eager indecision between shop window and pocketbook contents. Nail dints may be found in the hands from the struggle. Poor souls! On wet days there is the added burden of a load of flapping skirts, loose packages, umbrellas. Under the excessive nerve and muscle strain there is a total disregard of personal appearance—which is expression.

One longs to hear some authoritative voice call out: Stop! stop! All stand



A CORRECT CARRIAGE.

still! Shake yourselves loose! Relax muscles! Gather back your scattered thoughts and steer them into direct channels! Let go the pressure! and then start them all over again placid and sane looking.

The rhythmic, swinging, poetic motion of an absolutely perfect gait is one of the greatest charms in the world. It is seldom seen in women, frequently in soldiers, but could be had by all.

It is almost impossible to give rules for graceful walking—indeed, with some this would be idle, as before obeying any rule it would be necessary to pass through a regular course of “limbering up,” for without suppleness and pliability of limb it is impossible to swing naturally. It would be necessary also to make some important changes in attire. It may be possible for a woman to assume a certain grace for a short time while wearing a corset and high heeled shoes or laden with a dry goods counter, but it is not easy. Yet the matter of correct street costume is one of slow evolution. It will right itself sooner or later—we will not enter upon it here. Meantime a few practical hints.

When changing from an ungraceful to a different walk it is necessary first of all to concentrate upon the act. This at first will produce stiffness, but stiff correctness is better than slovenly thoughtlessness. After correct position

is taken—as described in last letter—step lightly forward, resting first upon the ball of the foot. A total alteration is made in the gait by stepping upon the ball instead of the flat foot or heel, as the common practice (it is this thudding down upon the heel which “clanks the glasses”). Of course this must not be exaggerated, and it will not be after it has become natural, but in the change this toeing forward is absolutely necessary. Try it—see—it changes the whole makeup, the feelings even.

It is this feature of “toeing out” that makes the minuet the physical expression of refined mentality that it is, and its frequent practice would be invaluable to one who desired to walk well.

Leaning slightly forward, not stooping forward, but directing the mind in a straight line in front of the body, is aid in making speed. Bending the knees a little apart is also helpful. The swing of the gait should come from a symmetrized rhythm of the whole body, not through the motion of any part of it. The trunk should be motionless, which will not mean “stiff” if the body is in control, but there must be no “wobbling,” “hunching,” “ducking” or affecting mincing.

Both arms swinging by the side would produce a pedestrian appearance few women would care for in ordinary walking, yet this could be made graceful and would add greatly to speed. One arm should not be made to look like a windmill arm, neither should the triangular shape be made by crossing both hands in front. The length of step must be thoughtfully regulated, not one short step and one long one. Above all, the mind must be made the engine of the body, keeping in advance of every step, but never breaking away from it—at least not till after an unconscious connection is established.

Think where you are going and mind what you are about. Lookout for the loose stone, the puddle of water, the curb, the lamppost, the loose brick. Lookout for your neighbors. No need of colliding with people so. If one steps on your dress or it is caught in a store door, have poise sufficient to maintain the rhythm of your grace. Turn corners gracefully. What a test of woman's grace the way in which she turns a corner! Leave space sufficient for your friend to escape the iron grating, the cellar door, the obstruction on the inside. Go early rather than go off on a tangent, trotting, “jamming” and “banging” through space like a clumsy package. Assert your dignity, your grace and spare our eyes the many assaults to which they are now subject through thoughtless, graceless walking.

FANNIE EDGAR THOMAS.

Snakes Are Deaf.

In India and Africa snake charmers pretend the snakes dance to the music, but they do not, for they never hear it. A snake has no external ears, and perhaps gets evidence of sound only through his skin, when sound causes bodies in contact with him to vibrate. They hear also through the nerves of the tongue, but do not at all comprehend sound as we do. But the snake's eyes are very much alive to the motions of the charmer, or to the moving drumsticks of his confederate; and, being alarmed, he prepares to strike. A dancing cobra (and no other snakes dance) is simply a cobra alarmed and in a posture of attack. He is not dancing to the music, but is making ready to strike the charmer.—G. R. O'Reilly, in *May St. Nicholas*.

Meaning of the Word Captain.

The word captain, so often used in the Bible, simply means officer.