

table Physiology. See a spine or backbone, composed of twenty-four joints called *vertebrae* all piled one upon another, and perforated from end to end by the spinal marrow—which is only an elongation or offshoot of the brain. From the upper half of the spine, proceed twelve ribs on each side, curving forwards and outwards, till they approach within one or two or three inches of the *sternum* or breastbone; when their bony substance ends, and they become mere gristles, seven of which are socketed or hinged into the breastbone; as the ribs are into the spine. The breastbone is long and flat—an inch or more broad—extending lengthwise about six or eight inches from the throat to the pit of the stomach; and it is held firm in its place chiefly by the rib-gristles above mentioned, and by the collar-bones, which come across from the shoulders and are fitted into its upper end. All these bones and gristles are very soft in childhood; but harden as we grow up, and are strongest at the age of 30 or 40. They, altogether, form a spacious, arched chamber or cavity, in which the heart, lungs, and innumerable arteries, veins, valves, and muscles, perform their important offices: contracting, dilating; inhaling fresh air with one set of cells, using part of it to purify the venous blood, and then exhaling the rest through another set; receiving from the veins blood which has gone its round—cleansing it with wonderful art in a few moments, and sending it on again by the arteries to meander through and renovate continually every part of the frame. At every breath the lungs dilate and contract, at every breath the heart receives a tide of blood into one of its divisions, and pours out an equal tide at another—propelling it with a force equal to 40 or 50 pounds weight. For all these delicate and momentous operations, the chamber which Nature has provided is exactly of the proper size; not a hair's breadth too small or a hair's breadth too large. Nay, it is large enough, and the vital movements can be performed only by certain motions of the bones which compose it. The ribs *hinge* into the spine, and the gristles and collar bones hinge into the sternum; there are joints where the ribs and gristles unite. By means of these hinges and joints, the bones and gristle incessantly play in and out, or up and down, at each movement of the lungs; and to their healthful movement the *freedom* of that play is indispensable. Now a corset, or tight lacing of any kind, fetters the free play of those bones; destroys all the advantage of the joints and hinges which Nature has provided; and thus lessens the room in which the lungs and heart move—besides depriving them of the aid, the impulse, they derive from the motion of the bones and muscles. But all this is not half the mischief. The ribs, especially at the joints or hinges, being soft in young people—and the gristles much softer—are compressed

by the lacing, so as to approach nearer and nearer to the breastbone in front; sometimes they lap over it, and meet each other: nay, there are instances of tight lacing where the ribs have not only passed the sternum and met, but have over-lapped each other! Far short of that extreme, however, fatal effects may be expected. Quite a moderate degree of lacing suffices to bring the points of the ribs several inches forward, and to press the sternum inwards: narrowing, just so much, that chamber which was at first *not a hair's breadth too large* for the lungs and heart to work in—besides stopping the auxiliary motion of the bones themselves. The consequences need not be detailed: that the lungs thus crippled and forced to beat in vain against the contracted walls of their prison should be inflamed and diseased—that the breathing should become short and difficult—that the heart should be subject to unnatural palpitations, and no longer drive the blood with regular and healthful vigor along the arteries—that youth's joyous and active sports must be prematurely abandoned—and that life itself, perhaps after years of suffering, should retire from its beleaguered and oppressed citadel—can excite no wonder.

One fact will show most strikingly the horrible violence done to Nature by tight lacing. The fabric I have described—composed of the spine, the sternum, the ribs, and their gristles—is naturally cone-shaped; smallest at top and broadest at bottom where the diaphragm separates it from the stomach, &c. Now by lacing, the lower ribs are so compressed—their greater portions being gristly—that the lowest part of the cone is made the smallest! And this it is, which makes those foolishly admired waists, *tapering downwards*. Let every man who does not wish to marry consumption, carditis, angina pectoris, or dyspepsy, beware of that taper waist!

When (as it always is) the lacing is carried below the diaphragm* injury little less fatal results. Then softer and more compressible parts are affected—various muscles, the stomach, and other viscera. I leave you to infer the inevitable mischief to these, from reducing them by force to half the volume which the all-wise Creator has given. Thus cramped and fettered, it is impossible that their nice and complicated functions can be well performed: and accordingly, in all my practice, I have met with no cases of inflamed stomach, disordered digestion, and dyspepsy in all its forms, half so malignant as those which sprung from tight-lacing. Not only cor-

* The diaphragm is a strong membrane, stretching somewhat horizontally across the hollow of the trunk, just below the lungs and heart; dividing the chest, or thorax, from the abdomen, or lower cavity, in which are the stomach, &c.

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