

Care of the Feet in Illness and During Pregnancy

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. H. B. TURBOTT, Director of the Division of School Hygiene, Health Department)

IF you should happen to be nursing at home anybody with a long illness, remember that the feet will need attention. It is often forgotten that when an individual is forced to stay in bed for a long period the feet take up an abnormal position in relation to the leg. The pressure of the bed clothes extends the foot. The ligaments and muscles of the calf of the leg shorten in this position and, if the feet are neglected, these ligaments and muscles become lax and weak. The patient's attention needs drawing to the need to exercise the feet, bending and turning them in every direction every day. If the patient is too ill to do this for himself, the attendant should do it for him. With a little practice, a home attendant may become quite an expert masseuse, keeping the foot ligaments and muscles toned up by the combination of massage and movement as part of the patient's daily routine treatment.

Another time when special care should be paid to feet is during pregnancy. They have extra work to do at this time and get very tired. There are circulatory and weight changes. The body weight not only increases but shifts in position. The back becomes more arched. There is a thickening from fat increases at and above the buttocks. To compensate for heavier weight and changed distribution of it, the feet are turned out a little as the weight increases and the gait becomes abnormal—it is a gait much harder on the feet, tending to weaken them.

Feet therefore need special care during pregnancy. To help them carry the weight a maternity belt or binder is often advisable in the later months of pregnancy. The feet should be washed daily, dried and powdered between the toes. If there is marked flattening, appliances of felt padding or flexible materials may be needed to secure comfort in walking. The shoes worn should have a broad low heel—the lowest broad heel comfortable to the foot. They should have a broad toe to allow spreading of the toes to help support the body weight, and the shank of the shoes should be strong. Remember, too, to increase the stocking size with the temporary increase in size of the foot.

Often at this time the feet get very tired and sore. Try a foot bath of sodium bicarbonate or epsom salts solution. You need tepid water, to each quart of which add a tablespoonful of either soda bicarbonate, or epsom salts. If you are near the seaside, of course, natural salt sea water is the ideal sedative for weary feet. In these forms of foot bathing, let

the feet dry by themselves so that you leave a certain amount of salt crystals on the skin.

If tired feet become red and swollen, try immersing them in water, as hot as bearable, for two minutes, then transfer to cold water for half a minute. Repeat three or four times and finish with the cold plunge.

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Alc for Ye Bellringers." Long ago every church had its drinking pitcher for the special use of local ringers. One of these interesting curios made in the 16th century is carefully preserved in the parish church of Witney, in Oxfordshire. It holds no fewer than 16 quarts, the neck alone taking one.

Apparently a thirsty hobby, this bell-ringing.

Biographies You Should Read

ALBERT SCHWEITZER: His Work and His Philosophy, by Dr. Oskar Kraus, 10/4 posted. Schweitzer, doctor of music, medicine and philosophy, is an outstanding example of a man who has used his gifts in the service of humanity. Here in summary is an account of his amazing achievements.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY BY ERIC GILL, 21/3 posted. Although Gill describes his development as a sculptor, artist and typographer, and includes examples of his work, this is mainly a spiritual autobiography, the record of an unconventional but deeply sincere thinker.

A SUBALTERN IN OLD RUSSIA, by Lieutenant-General Ignatyev, 24/6 posted. Ignatyev is an interesting link between two worlds. An aristocrat by birth, he served for many years in the Czarist Army. Later he became an officer in the Red Army. A fascinating volume of memoirs which does much to explain the Russian revolution.

A SHORT LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE, 8/9 posted. Abridged by Charles Williams from the Life by Sir Edmund Chambers. This is both a scholarly and a popular work.

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