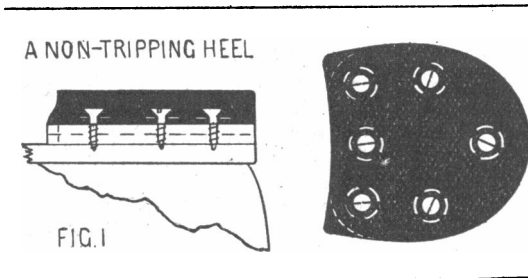


LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

"Heel Reform"

Dr. PERCY TACHELL writes: "She caught her heel in the carpet and fell." How often is that statement heard in the casualty department! On the stretcher lies an elderly woman, with a fairly obvious fracture of the neck of the femur, to judge by the position of the foot. Searching for the reason why people trip on carpets and fall downstairs, attention fixes on the sharp points at the sides of the heel, relics perhaps of days when we had to scramble up and down stony paths and really no longer essential under present conditions except for hill-climbing. Fig. 1 is an attempt to design an improved



form of heel. Gone are the points at the side, yet the vertical wall in front in the middle is retained as a safeguard against slipping. This heel has strong economic advantages too. Secured simply by six screws it could easily be replaced at home: also being twice as thick as the standard rubber heel, it should last a year, at a cost of about 10d. a pair. Contrast this with having to send shoes away every six months to have the heels rebuilt: generally a delay in execution of several weeks, and a bill of three or four shillings to pay.

RUBBER HEELS WILL TAKE THE CURVE OF THE WORN SURFACE

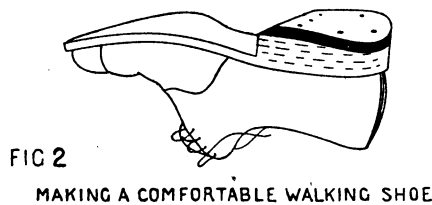


Fig. 2 suggests that the ordinary rubber heel sold in the cheap stores will take the curve of a worn leather heel, and give a reasonably finished appearance. To apply them they are first stuck on with rubber solution, and then nailed with the nails thoughtfully provided by the makers with each pair. To fix to the worn heel, after solutioning both surfaces, and when the solution is nearly dry, get the bend-up portion in position first, and secure with a brad or a small screw; afterwards press down the rest of the heel, drill out the holes, and knock the nails in with a punch. Finally, with a pocket knife pare away the angles in front, and so lessen the risk of tripping.

Ingrowing Toenail

Dr. EVA MCCALL (Sunninghill) writes: With reference to the answer in the *Journal* of Sept. 16 (p. 390), I have found powdered lead nitrate packed round the nail very effective. Vaseline or lanolin rubbed into and round the nail is also useful. Most important, too, is the choice of footwear. Shoes or boots made with a raised toe, to obviate pressure on the nail, are a great comfort.

Brandy as an Anaesthetic

Dr. R. K. BROOKS (Chipping Sodbury) writes: A fortnight ago I was in attendance on a multipara and successfully delivered her of a female child with the use of instruments. Before cutting the cord I noticed an unusually large stump continuous with a protruding umbilicus. On close examination this was not mere jelly but what appeared to me to be mesentery. Under the unusual anaesthetic of brandy Miss Betty Fox of the Bristol Royal Infirmary operated an hour later, and this child is alive to-day and should do well. The details of the findings at the operation and what was done have been supplied to me by Miss Fox. "The caecum, appendix, and some 8 in. of the terminal ileum was found to be protruding through the umbilicus along the side of the cord, and encased in a fine membrane and a coating of jelly. The umbilical ring was made slightly larger by a niche in the skin and the bowel returned to the abdomen; two purse-string catgut sutures were tied closely round

the peritoneal margin of the umbilical opening, and a pressure dressing applied. The child was returned to its mother the following morning, and the umbilicus on inspection about a fortnight later was soundly healed." I write to inquire as a point of interest if there is on record an account of any such or similar operation being performed on a baby an hour and a half old and under the influence of brandy.

Injections for Osteo-arthritis

Dr. LEOPOLD MANDEL (London, W.1) writes: In your issue of Sept. 2 under "Any Questions?" (p. 326), your correspondent asked if procaine injected into the hip-joint in cases of intractable painful osteo-arthritis had met with any success. In the answer it was stated it had met with but short-lived success. I quite agree. I have also tried it combined with histamine; this also gives transient relief. More recently I have been using a solution of acid potassium phosphate, with the addition of a small amount of procaine, with quite striking results. Relief from pain is practically instantaneous, and in several cases has lasted for 2 months while under observation.

Pest of Flies

Mr. J. COSSEY (Leatherhead, Surrey) writes: In the *Journal* of Aug. 26 you published a communication from Lieut.-Col. R. M. Barron in which he writes: "Breeding places outside houses should be searched for and, if found, dealt with." How this is to be done is not stated. However, he does give some useful hints for dealing with the flies themselves. Undoubtedly the remedy lies in destruction of, or in rendering the breeding places incapable of supporting, larval growth. It may interest your readers to know that powdered borax or boric acid, if used correctly, are most satisfactory for dealing with fly-breeding places, such as garbage stands or similar areas. The borax or boric acid should be dusted lightly at intervals over the surface as the pile of refuse builds up, or they may be dissolved in water (3% solution) and the solution sprinkled. About 5 lb. of borax or boric acid per ton of garbage or manure is considered sufficient. These recommendations come from the Vermont University Agricultural Experimental Station, U.S.A., where investigations were carried out in 1942, the report being published in the *Journal of the American Society of Agronomy*, September, 1943, which should be consulted for more detailed information. Supporting evidence of the efficacy of borax is provided by the issue to the U.S. Army of packages of borax which bear the following instructions: "In pit latrines apply in the ratio of 1 lb. per 8-hole latrine every 5 days. If the pit contents are moist, apply the dry powder directly by dusting it evenly over the surface. If the pit contents are dry, use just sufficient water to dissolve the borax and then spray pit contents. Do not use an excessive amount of water. If needed borax may be used in trench latrines in the same manner as in pit latrines. To control fly-breeding around garbage stands and similar areas powdered borax should be dusted lightly over the moist earth after each cleaning of the area. On compost piles use borax in the ratio of 1 lb. per 8 bushels of manure. The compost should be thoroughly wet when the borax is applied. *Caution:* For external use only. Store away from food."

Cracked Fingers

Dr. W. MURRAY (Hessle, Yorks) writes: I wonder if the doctor who writes for advice about cracked fingers (Sept. 9, p. 361) has ever heard of a method of treatment which was old when I started practice 53 years ago and which I have used both personally and in my practice with unflinching success ever since. It consists simply in filling the cracks with cobbler's wax. You obtain a small lump of cobbler's wax, and to keep it from sticking to everything you put it in a very small chip ointment box without a lid. You dry the crack, using alcohol if you don't mind the momentary stinging pain. You heat a large-sized needle in the flame of a spirit lamp to a dull-red heat. With the hot needle you take off the surface of the wax as much as you can get on to the needle and coax it by manipulating it in the flame until a drop of liquid wax hangs from the point of the needle, just as a Chinese manipulates his pellet of opium before he transfers it to the bowl of his pipe. You then open the crack as wide as you can and lay the drop of molten wax along the crack, using the needle, which can be gently heated several times, to get the wax well into the crack. Then press the wax-filled crack into the warm palm of the opposite hand. The result is just as if a piece of old-fashioned black silk court-plaster had been applied. The pain goes immediately. If the wax gives way before the crack is quite healed, repeat the process. Celluloid dissolved in acetone and amyl acetate can be used in the same way. The consistency has to be that of a thick syrup. This takes a few minutes to dry.

Correction

We regret that a mistake crept into the note by Lieut.-Col. Or Wilson (Oct. 14, p. 520) which made nonsense of his opening words. What he wrote was: "Another very good reason for cracks on the finger-tips, which are very painful and difficult to heal, is the use of methylated ether to cleanse the skin after the removal of plasters."