

OPPOSITIONS BOOKS

translated by Jane O. Newman
and John H. Smith
Introduction by Aldo Rossi

Adolf Loos

Spoken Into the Void

Collected Essays 1897–1900



THE LONDON SHOE COMPANY.

CYCLING being the new fashionable amusement for Ladies of the "upper ten thousand," THE LONDON SHOE COMPANY is as usual, the first to come to the front with a suitable novelty.

This invention, for which a patent No. 20,200 has been granted, consists of a High Leg Cloth Gaiter of special design, and Cycling Shoe combined. The advantages from the hygienic as well as from the cyclist's standpoint, are: protection of the leg, perfect freedom of the foot for rattle play, efficient ventilation, and a sole of most ingenious construction, giving extreme pliability to the waist of foot, and with rigid forepart. These practical features were introduced under advice from leading cycling experts.

LADIES' CYCLING BOOTS AND SHOES.



No. 20.

THE "LONSHOCO" CYCLING BOOT.
Patented. Price 28 0.

At the same time, the general appearance was the result of special study. With a Detachable Gaiter and sole of Cycling Shoe, the foot is apt to look plump and clumsy, and the Gaiters never fit sufficiently close, but with the patent

"LONSHOCO" CYCLING BOOT

these defects are entirely obviated, and the foot seems as if the boot is extremely smart and elegant. The Gaiter fits as closely as a skin.

The "Lonshoco" Boot is at the same time a very comfortable and smart Walking Boot, for a new model. The price is 28 0 and it can be obtained only from

THE LONDON SHOE COMPANY.

LADY'S CYCLING SHOE.



No. 100.

Glass Kid with Rubber Sole.
Price 10 0.

LADY'S CYCLING SHOE.



No. 101. Black. No. 102. Tan Calf.

The "Dunlop" (Bicycle) Shoe.
In Tan Calf or Glass Kid. Rubber Sole. Price 10 0.
Can be adapted to suit any motor.

LADY'S CYCLING SHOE.



No. 103. The "Buckie".

In Glass Kid with Patent Gaiter.
Fitted with the Flexible Rubber Waist, price 18 0.

LADY'S CYCLING SHOE.



No. 104. Black. No. 105. Tan Calf.

Tan or Black Calf with the Patent Flexible Rubber Waist.
Price 10 0.

LADY'S CYCLING SHOE.



No. 106. Tan. No. 107. Black.

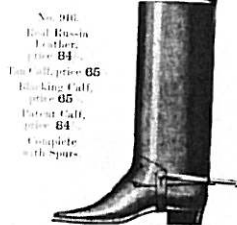
Tan or Black Calf Buckie Shoe.
Specially adapted for Cycling. Price 8 11.

Figures 100.

City Warehouse: 123 & 125, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET, E.C.

THE LONDON SHOE COMPANY.

COL. HEMMING'S PATENT.



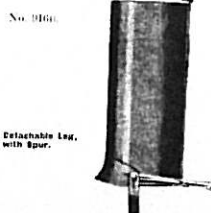
No. 986.
Real Russian Leather.
Price 24.
Tan Calf, price 65.
Black Calf, price 65.
Patent Calf, price 84.
Complete with Spurs.

COL. HEMMING'S PATENT.



No. 987. The Detached Gump Boot.

COL. HEMMING'S PATENT.



The Detachable Leg, with Spur.

GROOM'S BOOT.



No. 988.
Price 47.
Jack Legs, 4 extra.
Can be fitted with
Tops of any Colour.

Mellon Brown Top.



No. 989. Blacking Calf.
Smart, Medium, or Square Toe.
Best Hand Made, price 21 0.



No. 990. Blacking Calf, with Gump Fronts.
Smart or Square Toe, price 16 0.



No. 991. Blacking Calf.
Smart or Square Toe, price 13 0.



No. 992. Patent Calf.
Smart Toe. Price 17 0.
No. 993. Best Hand Sewn, 24 0.



No. 994. Real Russian Leather.
Smart Toe, Best Hand Made, price 29 0.
No. 995. 18 0.



No. 996. Real Brown Russian Calf.
Smart or Broad Toe, price 13 0.



No. 997. Brague Calf Shoe.
Hand Made, Medium Toe.
Price 28 0.
No. 998. Tan Calf, price 28 0.



No. 999. White M.M. Buck Skin.
For Cricket or for Polo wear.
Price 12 0.
No. 1000. Price 12 0.
Naval Regulation, without Gaps.

Branch Warehouse: 116 & 117, NEW BOND STREET, W.

When a reply to the article on the activities of the Hatters Association was published in these pages, it was hard to imagine the ramifications of this action. The consequences have now become clear. The interested parties have been overcome by a frenzy of denials. Anyone who is of a different opinion finds it a matter of course that his views too be expressed. Denials of every sort are made. Thus, "Herr S."—who for twenty years has been active in the shoemaking business(!), as he asserts with exclamation points after his signature—"allows himself to request a favorable reception of the following lines of corrective commentary." Thereupon follows a list of paragraphs each beginning with "It is incorrect that . . ."

Perhaps my readers are curious as to just what Herr S. is correcting. Let us pick out a few points at random. It is incorrect, Herr S. asserts, to compare mountain climbing to bicycle riding. Or: it is incorrect that every student has his own nag. Or: it is incorrect that tie shoes will prevail in the next century. A second gentleman, Herr Sch., likewise requests consideration of his few lines in the hope of being able to contribute at least a few things to the resuscitation of our otherwise depressed Austrian shoe industry. In doing so, however, he has suffered a misfortune. He has taken my enthusiastic words dedicated to the Hatters Association at face value, for he polemicizes against my assertion that mountain climbing, marching, and bicycle riding have brought the tie shoe into favor, and then opines, and I quote, "Let us thus look for other reasons. I am thinking here of the lightweight footwear that made the tie shoe so popular. The shoemakers forced the issue with the tie shoe and brought out pretty forms of it. And that's the rub. The shoemaker creates the fashion. Herr Loos recently told us the story of the Hatters Association so nicely, how it determines fashion. It is the same thing here."

Now clearly one can't always expect a favorable reception to everything. The involuntary comic is always amusing. But this paper is not a comic strip. That mis-sive defending the activity of the Hatters Association offered an interesting complement to my attacks and helped to clarify the situation a great deal. It put an end forever to that voting method of theirs in a much stronger and more devastating way than my arguments and reproaches could have. It was stronger and more devastating because it originated in their own camp. The public may well ask what passes for good taste in this camp that determines the style in hats. I have never denied that there are people who consider the styles of the Hatters Association to be quite elegant. But what do these people look like? What kind of taste do they have? Herr Kessler's letter expresses it very precisely. He considers it compatible with his taste that the portrait of His Majesty is printed inside the lining of a hat. In doing so, he evokes Bukovina,¹ where portraits of national heroes are treated in a similar fashion. So now it should be clear to the public. On the one hand England, on the other Bukovina!

The letters from the gentlemen in the shoe business, however, do not contribute in any way to clarifying the issue. In general they all amount to the same thing, that the endorsement of the tie shoe will damage the Austrian shoemaking industry since the tie shoe will displace the ankle boot which, strange to say, is considered the Austrian national shoe. Such an accusation is certainly untenable. For shoes and boots are both worn regardless of whether they are of one style or the other. It is a matter of indifference to the shoemaker. Not so for the elastic manufacturers, who just now must begin to think about producing other products. No man can work against the march of the times; fifty million kilograms of printer's ink can no longer revive the ankle boot.

Shoemakers

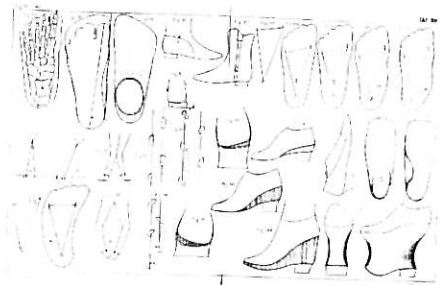
Neue Freie Presse, August 14, 1898

55 Page from The London Shoe Company Catalogue, London, c. 1890, advertising women's cycling boots and shoes.

56 Page from The London Shoe Company Catalogue, London, c. 1890, advertising men's riding boots and tie shoes.

The exhibition itself really teaches this to us. In the display window of the Shoemakers Union, we can count only three pairs of ladies' ankle boots, three pairs of men's ankle boots, and three pairs of uniform ankle boots among the 192 pairs of shoes brought to the exhibition. These statistics bespeak a cruel truth. And in ten years? We shall look for even these last nine pairs of boots in vain.

According to the English shoemakers, our shoemakers may well make the best shoes in the world. Many outstanding shoemakers can be enumerated in the various capitals of Europe, but the typical skilled worker on the average ranks the Austrians—as far as footwear goes—over every other national people. This is all the more amazing since our shoemakers are very badly paid for their work. The public increasingly drives down the prices, and the deficit must be made up for in the shoes themselves if the craftsman is not to be ruined. But do not think that it makes the shoemaker happy to produce shoes of poor quality. You force him to it. He dreams of using the best leather and working it in the best manner. How gladly he would spend one day more on a pair of shoes! And how it pains him to force his assistants to work more quickly, knowing full well that because of the speed, many a careless piece of work will have to go unreprimanded. But life is relentless. He must, must, must produce shoes at a certain price, and so he must make the difficult decision to fire the good but slow worker and to economize with his raw materials. It already begins with the thread. But you, those of you who take a special pleasure in tricking your shoemaker out of another gulden and then readily spend it for a better armchair at the theater when your customary seats are sold out, you are the worst enemies of our crafts industry! Haggling, bargaining, pushing prices down—all have a demoralizing effect on both producer and consumer.



57 Diagram illustrating how foot shape and walking habits affect normal and corrective shoemaking. From Bernhard Rodegast, *Die Fusskleidungskunst*, Vienna, 1905.

But even so there are good shoes. Our shoemakers are simply capable men. There remain much spirit and personality in them. It is not by chance that the greatest poet and the greatest philosopher to have been bestowed on us by the artisan class were shoemakers. How many Hans Sachs and Jakob Böhme have sat and still sit on the shoemaker's stool,² who have thought and felt the same way, but have never written a word? Maybe that is why the Germans have such good shoemakers, since every able and individualistic (and thus in his parents' opinion naughty) young boy is warned, "If you don't obey, you'll be apprenticed to a shoemaker!" And it often comes true.

Less praiseworthy are our shoe wearers. I mentioned in my last essay that the shoemaker must make his shoes conform to the type of feet possessed by the dominant social class. It is to these feet that the shoes are fit. But people whose feet do not have this shape still demand the same style from their shoemakers. The result is numerous crippled feet, something one can only find among those people who do *not* belong to the dominant social class. For their vanity, however, the shoemaker is held responsible. The low prices do not allow him to fashion each shoe individually for the customer. Thus even if an old last might be made to fit by forcing it, the shoemaker cannot obtain an accurate line for the shoe, upon which an even tread depends. This accurate line of the sole of the shoe—probably one of the most difficult tasks of shoemaking—is not determined by the outline of the foot, but for the most part by the gait and walking habits of the wearer.

Shoemakers who produce expensive shoes unfortunately make a smaller profit than those who set out from the start to produce inferior goods. Let us take, for example, the eighteen-gulden shoemaker and the six-gulden shoemaker. The

first has a last cut that costs six gulden including his own work. He has the upper part made by an assistant, to whom he pays three gulden a day in consideration for his excellent work, and on the material for this upper part he spends three gulden. The six-gulden shoemaker takes an old last and orders the upper part from the factory for about two gulden. In this way, the first spends sixty-six percent, the second thirty-three percent of the whole price of the shoe. But too little also is done for the preservation of the shoes. By trying to save the money that a good shoe tree costs, one wears out more shoes than do those who put shoe trees in their shoes overnight.

The exhibition displays only honest shoewear since "indecent" shoes have been banned. That it took the decency code to eliminate shoes that served no other purpose than to attract the attention of spectators is regrettable. It would have been much more respectable for the whole industry if these shoes had been rejected from the very beginning because of their uselessness. We want to see what our shoemakers can do, their honest and sound work, not their self-advertisement. An exhibition should be a celebration of work and not of advertising. But wait. The "indecent" shoes are still fated to be represented by three pairs. These are made like walking shoes. They have green *peluche* soles, and one pair of them is even provided with gold lettering after the fashion of old bookbindings.

Our minds may be set at rest. We Austrians will be able to step out smartly in our shoes in the upcoming century. And good shoes will be necessary in the next century because we are going to be on the march. The American Walt Whitman, the greatest Germanic poet since Goethe, has seen this century with a prophetic eye. He sings:

Have the elder races halted?
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there beyond the seas?
We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the past we leave behind,
We debouch upon a newer mightier world, varied world,
Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the march,
Pioneers! O pioneers!³

No, we are not standing still, old Walt Whitman. The ancient Germanic blood still flows in our veins, and we are ready to march forward. We will do our best to help change the world of sitters and standers into a world of work and of marching.



58 Fashionable women's shoes. From
Der Bazar: Illustrierte Damen
Zeitung, Berlin, December 14, 1891.