The present invention relates generally to shoe-cleaning accessories and more particularly is directed towards an improved mask for use in cleaning shoes of the type having portions of different colors or tones.

Shoes which have areas of different colors are difficult to clean in a satisfactory manner because of the colored stains or polishes running over from an area of one color to an area of a different color. Infants' shoes, for example, are made with white uppers, while the leather soles retain their natural color. When the shoes are new, the sole edge is clear of any whitening whereas, after the shoe has been cleaned once or twice, the sole edge becomes marked by the whitening unless extreme care is taken when applying the whitening to the upper.

Various types of guards and masks have been developed heretofore for the purpose of protecting one surface of a shoe from another surface when spraying, cleaning and polishing the same, but these have been unsatisfactory for various reasons. For example, some shoe-cleaning masks are complicated mechanical affairs which are useful only in the manufacture of shoes and would be unsuitable for home usage. Other types of guards designed for home use have been too expensive, awkward or inefficient for the purposes intended.

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide improvements in shoe-cleaning masks.

Another object of this invention is to provide a simple, low-cost shoe-cleaning mask that is completely effective and particularly useful for home cleaning and dyeing of multi-tone shoes.

More particularly, this invention features a shoe-cleaning mask in the form of a web of moisture-resistant thin sheet material that is self-supporting but laterally resilient. The mask is formed with a central opening conforming to the outline of the shoe and dimensioned to fit snugly between the sole and the upper to define an outwardly extending detachable flange between the sole and the upper. The web is split, preferably at the heel portion thereof, to permit quick and easy attachment and detachment of the mask from the shoe.

As another feature of the invention, a single mask may be employed for a pair of shoes since it may be turned over for use with either shoe. This invention also features a shoe-cleaning mask which may be conveniently adjusted to accommodate different sizes of shoes. In addition, the invention features a shoe-cleaning mask provided with attachment shields for use in cleaning and dyeing saddle shoes and other types having multiple-tone uppers.

But these and other features of the invention, along with further objects and advantages thereof, will become more fully apparent from the following detailed description of preferred embodiments of the invention, with reference being made to the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is a view in perspective of a shoe-shield made according to the invention.
FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a shield shown in operating position on a shoe.
FIG. 3 is a top plan view showing a modification of the invention.
FIG. 4 is a cross-sectional view taken along the line 4--4 of FIG. 3.
FIG. 5 is a fragmentary perspective view showing another modification of the invention.

Recollecting now to the drawings, the reference character generally indicates a mask for use in cleaning the upper 12 of a shoe 14. The mask 10 is in the form of a web of sheet material which is moisture impermeable with a smooth hard surface, self-supporting and yet laterally resilient. In the preferred form of this invention, the mask is fabricated from a relatively hard molded plastic material which lends itself to ready cleaning as by a damp cloth or die cut from a sheet of relatively stiff plastic material. Alternatively, the mask may be fabricated from semi-hardened rubber or a stiff sheet of paperboard material having a hard outer surface which may be coated or impregnated with a plastic film if desired to improve its moisture resistance and cleanliness characteristics. Other suitable materials such as celluloid or cellulose acetate may be used to advantage.

The mask is formed with a central opening 16 which conforms in size and shape to the outline of the shoe upper 12 where it joins the sole, this juncture being sometimes referred to as the well edge. The masking hard or strip typically is about ½ inch or so in width and is continuous about the entire shoe. In practice, the mask is split at 18 which is at the heel portion of the shoe to permit the butted ends of the sides to be flexed apart so that the mask may be conveniently mounted on the shoe as suggested in FIG. 2. With the mask 10 in position as shown in FIG. 2, a close fitting flange extends outwardly from the shoe 14 between the sole and the upper to permit shoe cleaning, dyeing or polishing agents to be applied freely to the shoe upper 12 without the same running down onto the sole. It will be appreciated that the mask 10 will prevent any shoe cleaning material from accidentally brushing against or running down onto the sole edge so that when the mask is removed the sole edge will be completely free of cleaning material used on the upper.

The mask may be fabricated for men, women and children's shoes in a number of different sizes corresponding to the various shoe sizes and a single mask will serve a pair of shoes by simply inverting the mask. Preferably, the mask should be wiped clean each time it is to be used to prevent any residue from rubbing off on the sole edge.

The mask may be readily mass produced at an extremely low cost and is particularly useful in cleaning infants' shoes and children's shoes. A single mask may be provided with each pair of shoes by a shoe manufacturer and may be fabricated at such a low cost that the masks may be discarded when new shoes are purchased.

In FIGS. 3, 4 and 5 there are illustrated modifications of the invention to permit adjustment of the mask to different sizes of shoes. In the FIG. 3 embodiment, a mask 20 is formed with two U-shaped portions 22 and 24, the legs of which are slidably connected to a pair of sleeves 26. It will be understood that the mask may be made to accommodate different size shoes by merely pulling apart or pushing together the two U-shaped portions 22 and 24.

In the FIG. 5 embodiment a mask 28 is again formed into two U-shaped portions 30 and 32 which connect together at either side of the instep of the shoe by means of a series of spaced bosses 34 formed at the end of each leg of the U-shaped portion 32 and adapted to be snapped into engagement with selected openings 36 spaced along both legs of the other U-shaped portion 30.

Recollecting now particularly to FIGS. 6 and 7, there is illustrated a shoe mask useful in cleaning and polishing saddle shoes or similar types having several areas of different colors. In the FIGS. 6 and 7, embody...
ment a mask 38, similar to the mask 10 of the principal embodiment, is adapted for mounting along the welt edge of the shoe between the sole and the upper to protect the sole edge from cleaners applied to the uppers. In a typical saddle shoe, such as shown in FIG. 6, a toe portion 40 is white as is the portion 41 at the sides of the heel. The shoe quarters 42 as well as the heel portion 44 are usually black, blue or some other contrasting color. In order to prevent shoe whitening from running over to the darker quarter portions, a mask 46 is detachably mounted on either side of the shoe to cover the shoe quarters and a heel mask 48 is similarly mounted in the rearward portion thereof.

As shown, the quarter mask 46 is formed with a bottom tongue 50 which is received in an edgewise slot 52 formed in the inner edge of the mask 38 so that the quarter mask 46 may be removed when polish is being applied to the shoe quarters 42. The quarter mask 46 conforms in outline to the shoe quarters 42 having a curved forward portion 54 and a transverse portion 56 which terminates at the forward end of the shoe quarters at the bottom of the lacing. It is unnecessary to extend the mask further since shoe whitening is not normally applied up into the tongue of the shoe. The quarter mask 46 is also formed with a generally vertical rearward edge 58 which follows the rear edge of the shoe quarter 42.

In the practice of the invention, the quarter shield 46 is formed with a shallow, inwardly turned marginal lip 60 which is formed along the forward edges of the shield, and another lip 62 is formed on the rearward edge thereof to precisely position the shield in place and to provide a mask for the forward and rearward edges of the shoe quarters which normally overlies other portions of the uppers. The heel mask 48 is similarly formed with a lip 64 on either side thereof having a tongue 66 for insertion in an arcuate slot formed in the heel portion of the mask 38.

While the invention has been described with particular reference to the illustrated embodiments, it will be understood that numerous modifications thereto will appear to those skilled in the art. Also it will be understood that the above description and accompanying drawings should be taken as illustrative of the invention and not in a limiting sense.

Having thus described my invention, what I claim and desire to obtain by Letters Patent of the United States is:

1. A shoe mask for protecting the sole of a shoe from polish applied to the upper, comprising a flat one-piece web of thin moisture-resistant sheet material, said material being self-supporting yet with sufficient lateral resiliency to permit limited flexing thereof, said mask being formed with an opening conforming in outline to the shape of a shoe and dimensioned to permit said mask to be fitted between said sole and said upper, said mask being split to facilitate attachment and detachment to and from said shoe by spreading said mask apart, said mask being formed with slots along the inner edges thereof and detachable panels each being formed with a tongue for insertion in said slots, said panels when mounted to said mask covering selected areas of the shoe upper.

2. A shoe mask according to claim 1 wherein each of said panels is formed with shallow marginal lips along portions overlying said uppers.

3. A shoe mask for protecting the sole of a shoe from polish applied to the upper, comprising a flat, one-piece web of a relatively stiff, thin, moisture-resistant sheet material, said material being self-supporting yet with sufficient lateral resiliency to permit limited flexing thereof, said mask being formed with an opening conforming in outline to the shape of the shoe upper where it joins the sole and dimensioned to permit said mask and to be fitted between said sole and said upper, said web being split at one end thereof to facilitate attachment and detachment to and from said shoe by spreading said mask apart at said split.

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FRANK J. COHEN, Primary Examiner.