

THE BABY'S LAYETTE

By Isabel A. Mallon



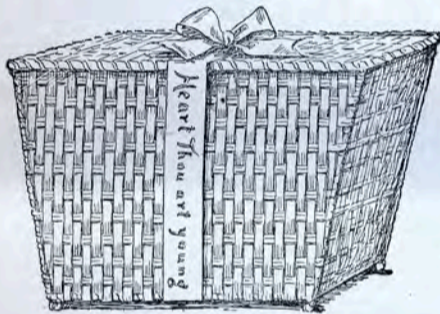
A WOMAN is something less than a woman who does not find the greatest charm possible in the outfit, or layette, of a baby. The little clothes, so dainty and so prettily fashioned, all the tiny belongings waiting for the little stranger, have about them something that seems to cause all the motherhood in one to rise in the heart. Nothing is too good for the baby. Nothing is too good for this little stranger who, when he comes, reigns supremely over the best of all kingdoms—a mother's heart. Nothing can be too fine and delicate for this king who, not reigning over his father, yet evokes that most attractive of emotions—parental pride.

But it is to his mother that the wee baby is dearest; when he gets so he can look and talk and say words that to him are a special language which the fond papa believes that he can understand, then he gets to be of interest to mankind, but before that he simply seems a funny little bundle at which a father may look with pride, but of which he has a certain fear. So for a few months baby is essentially mother's, and as he sleeps in her arms and she realizes his littleness, his weakness and his implicit confidence in her, she draws him a bit closer, leans over and kisses the pink little face and whispers: "God bless you all the day, and God keep you all the night."

THE BABY'S WARDROBE

THE woman who has learned to do fine sewing gives a thanksgiving for it when the time comes for her to prepare the layette for the little baby who is coming. She knows that the most aristocratic baby of to-day has no lace on his frock, is not weighted down with heavy embroideries, but instead has all his clothes beautifully decorated with hemstitching and fine drawn work, and this it gives her intense pleasure to do. Each stitch set in means so much love and so much hope, and the little gowns themselves become mute expressions of her happiness.

For the baby's frocks nainsook, or cambric, is usually chosen, a preference being given to the first, as it is so much softer. Little silk



THE DESIRABLE BABY HAMPER

frocks are shown, but a refined taste rather hints at their inappropriateness, and the clear white nainsook is preferred. For very simple little gowns, that is, those finished with a plain hem and a few tucks done by hand, cambric is generally used, nainsook forming the finer and more elaborately wrought dresses, while the very sheerest of it is used for the christening robe. A very delightful baby who came as a Christmas gift had in his wardrobe six cambric gowns, six nainsook ones and his christening robe. The nainsook ones were made with either round or square yokes of hemstitch or drawn work, while the christening robe had what seemed like a little bodice formed of Valenciennes insertion alternating with drawn work. The tiny collar was a frill of the same lace, and the little sleeves had deep cuffs like the bodice. The skirt had two rows of lace insertion and two of drawn work, and then came the hem, which was the finish to it. Other designs for an elaborate dress show round or square jacket outlines set into the yoke. The petticoat worn with this dress is of nainsook, made elaborate with drawn work, while the flannel one has white satin ribbon alternating with a lace, and lace frill as its finish.

HIS OTHER BELONGINGS

AFTER his honor, the baby, has had his bath and been powdered and made to feel as if life was indeed worth living, then he is dressed. He first puts on either his fine flannel band, or, if mamma prefers it, there is slipped over his head the knitted silk one that takes its place. The flannel band has for its finish, at the top and bottom, a row of fine feather stitching done with linen floss; of these he possesses six; next comes his little shirt which is of linen, finished either with a frill of real baby lace, which is about a third of an inch wide, or better still a tiny scallop finely embroidered. By-the-by, you must remember that everything must be perfectly smooth, otherwise the tender flesh will be irritated. Six little shirts are the number that this autocrat of the nursery requires. Then come his flannel petticoats; these will be very simply made, a narrow embroidery outlining the edge or a simple feather stitching taking its place. He will have four of these, and the one elaborate petticoat to be worn with his christening robe. Of white petticoats there will be six, and where nainsook is not used I advise cambric in preference to cotton; there is not more than a couple of pennies difference in the price and it is wider; these are very simple, the hand sewing upon them making them beautiful.

THE WRAPPERS AND COATS

THE prettiest of wrappers is made of fine bedford cord in blue and white or pink and white; it is either shirred or tucked with feather stitching of silk at the neck, and then instead of a hem all the edges are bound with satin ribbon the color of the stripe. A round little collar bound with ribbon, and sleeves with cuffs matching the yoke, give a quaint appearance to the little garment and add to its beauty. The plain flannel wrappers are, however, liked by many, and are noted in pale pink or blue, and that delicate shade of grey which seems dedicated to such little people.

The coat or cloak is usually of white cashmere, silk or a light weight cloth, sometimes instead of white the grey shade being chosen. There is not much change in design, for they continue to be smocked at the neck to form a circular yoke, and some few have a broad ribbon coming around the waist and confining it slightly. The simplest of little caps is preferred, those made of material like the cloak and fitting the head closely like a Puritan cap, or if the weather be very warm those of shirred lawn being chosen. Just remember when the baby starts out in his coach that his eyes are not used to the strong light of the sunshine, and so fasten around his cap one of the long white veils that come over from France, and which spread out in the French fashion give to his lordship an air of concealing his charms from a world that might be dazzled by them.

WHEN THE BABY IS ASLEEP

I HOPE that when the baby goes to sleep he rests in an iron bed painted, not on rockers, but on strong legs; that he has in there a couch, that, while it is soft is not made of feathers, but instead of fine curled hair; this little mattress must be taken out and aired every day, or indeed every time after the baby has had a nap. The tiny pillow should have its slip hemstitched and "Baby" delicately embroidered in one corner, and his sheets should be finished in the same manner. The trimming of his white bed is usually a frill of white lace with a quille of colored ribbon above it, while at the foot is a ribbon bow of many loops and ends that fall far down. Here in the plainest of night-dresses, made of cambric, does the little gentleman sleep undisturbed by pins that prick or buttons that rub. The soft pink, blue or white blanket, light and fleecy as possible, is bound with ribbon and has his title embroidered on it. By-the-by, these blankets are often among the presents sent to happy mothers. A pretty one is of white bound with pale blue, having embroidered in the corner in blue a bunch of forget-me-nots, tied with a narrow white ribbon which is really ribbon appliquéd as it would be if a bow were tied. Then below this in quaint lettering is embroidered:

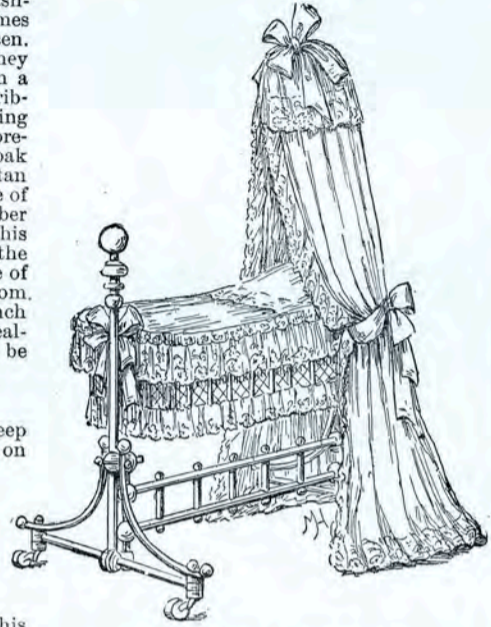
"Shut, little eyes, and shut in the blue;
Sleep, little baby, God loves you."

Some have simply the word "rest" upon them, others have "lie still and slumber." The bed is always white, and the pink or pale blue, so exclusively the baby colors, show very daintily against it.

THE BABY'S HAMPER

THE round baby basket has had its day, and in its place is found the dignified looking hamper enameled in white and having inside of it a lining formed of soft silk sachets redolent with orris root. In the lower part every thing required for the baby when he is first dressed is carefully spread out, while in the tray are the things that go to help make his toilet. There is the china soap dish with a partition so that the soap and the sponge are separated, there is the silver or ivory backed brush, the tiny little comb, the book with flannel leaves filled with dozens of safety pins of all different sizes one or two silk towels, the powder box and puff, the soft linen wash rags and two or three pairs of the tiny knitted socks that are to be put on the little feet that have never touched earth before. Usually these small belongings are presents, and so the choice of silver or china boxes and cups must be left to the giver. After the hamper is all filled the lid may be put down and strapped with a broad satin ribbon having upon it in letters of gold that sweetest of admonitions: "Sing, heart, thou art young and the world is in blossom."

The weighing basket is not as generally known here as it is on the other side. It is usually elaborately trimmed, and while there is in it a soft silk mattress upon which the baby may rest it is used after that first test as to whether the baby weighs five or twenty pounds for the toilet basket. An illustration of the weighing basket and a full description of it was given in the JOURNAL of November, 1891, it being the one sent from across the water to the little niece of Ruth Ashmore. After each little gown has had all the stitches put into it, after it is certain that the deft fingers cannot make the garments of the king any more beautiful, then they should be done up in packages and tied with either pink or blue ribbons, while between the garments should be tiny linen sachets filled with orris root and having their ends fringed. It costs very little money to get the two or three



JUST FIT FOR A LITTLE KING

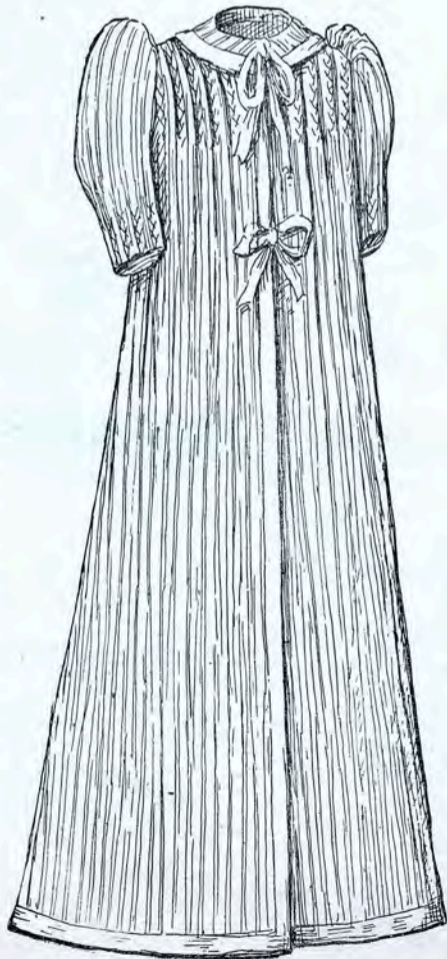
pieces of narrow ribbon to tie the dainty bundles together, and they look and are so much prettier and daintier than when they are simply folded away one at a time. The people who make a specialty of manufacturing fine baby clothes seldom have them washed.

THE LAST FEW WORDS

IT is your baby or mine, but whosoever it is, I say God bless it, and make it happy. It is in your power to help; are you going to do it? The little things in our arms are babies for only a very short while, then they are boys and girls, but from the minute the baby is taken into its mother's arms and drinks of its mother's milk it imbibes the goodness or evil that is in her. Cross and ill-tempered yourself, you make your baby so; full of happiness and the good-nature that is making the best of everything, means having a bonny baby that is more than a mere well-spring of pleasure. And before the baby comes. For its sake think of the good people in the world, think of the virtue in the world and cultivate in yourself every good quality, every sweetness, for the baby's sake. It may be hard to do. There may be times when even the thought of the little one coming does not seem

encouragement enough; then you must remember a Holy Baby, born centuries ago, and realize that to you as well as to His Mother there will be not only the pain but the pleasure, and that in becoming a mother you are honored among women. Pray God to make you strong and well, and when you are a little down cast go and look at the dainty little dresses, fondle the pretty basket and look into the little bed until in imagination you may see "beneath its coverlet a little sleeping head."

That will cheer you up, and then, when the baby is your very own, when it is close to you, when your arms are about it, and its little head is resting on your breast, you will only remember the happiness, you will only think of the joy, and you will feel like tiny Tim, as if you would like to ask the God above to think not only of you and your king but of all the women and children in the world. That is what motherhood does for a woman—it makes her divinely charitable.



A BABY'S COMFORTABLE WRAPPER