

tical Courses is needed in New York City, and in other cities throughout the land. In New York particularly the end should be primarily to instruct the teachers and to put the first proper work of the schools on a basis that will meet the hardest criticism that can be brought against anything—that it does not and cannot accomplish the first object of its existence.

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Fifty Tucks instead of One.

ONE does not need to be a Mrs. Methuselah to remember the breeze that stirred the waters of domestic life when the sewing-machine first became an actual, practical fact, and the world began to realize that a new and positive working power was at hand. It was, to begin with, a real godsend to the gentlemen of the press. Such eloquent paragraphs as they scattered broadcast from Dan to Beersheba! The emancipation of woman from the drudgery of the needle—what a theme it was for the glowing pens of the young journalists of, say, twenty-five summers ago! There were to be no more "Songs of the Shirt"; no more pallid women in dreary attics, stitching away for dear life between the daylight and the dark. Learned divines did not scorn to leave their Bibles and commentaries in unwonted tranquillity while they wrote column after column in praise of this new wonder. Poets sang pæans to it, and in plainest prose manufacturers and agents told us what it could accomplish. Long statements were tabulated, with hand-work and machine-work in opposing columns. A man's shirt, stitched bosom and all, could be made in so many minutes,—or was it an hour?—a woman's dress in an astonishingly brief period, and a child's apron in just no time at all. Well does the writer remember one ecstatic editorial in a famous religious weekly, in which the workroom was made the arena of a merry contest between the cutter and the machine, and save at some especially critical juncture, "like the rounding of a sleeve," the machine always came out ahead. It was very eloquent and impressive, even though by the uninitiated it had always been supposed that "the rounding of the sleeve" was the work of the scissors rather than of the needle.

Some of the brethren took another tack, and wondered what this evil world was coming to. The weaker sex was constitutionally lazy, as every one knew. American women, especially, were always ready to shirk their duties and responsibilities. Had they not forgotten how to spin and to weave? And now if they were to give up the sharp, disciplining needle, well might the lover of his country stand aghast.

But it must be acknowledged that this tone was taken by but few. By most of the writers and speakers of the day the sewing-machine was hailed as the benefactor of womankind—the herald of release from an intolerable bondage. An hour or two was to accomplish the labor of days. Then would follow abundant leisure—long, quiet hours with book or pen; time to think, time to grow, time for one's long neglected music, or for art; time for the cultivation of all the minor graces, and of that genial hospitality which can be found in its perfection only where there is leisure for social enjoyment. In the mo-

notonous measure of that tireless arm of steel lay the hope of the nation. For, as are the mothers, so are the sons.

That was the dream of twenty-five years ago. Has it gone by contraries, like other dreams, or has it come true? How is it, O my country-women? Have we any more leisure than we used to have? Or do we put fifty tucks where we used to put one, and find a dozen ruffles indispensable where two used to suffice—to say nothing of the fact that we make garments now by dozens, where we used to make them by pairs?

The relative prettiness of the garments is not now under discussion. The question is not one of taste, or of elegance, but of leisure. We all complain of being tired. High or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, we are all in a hurry—all trying to crowd ten hours of work, or study, or pleasure into six. Alike in city and in country, we meet women with harassed faces and tired eyes, nervous, restless, robbed of their birth-right—the quiet, restful grace which is one of woman's highest charms. And, more's the pity, when it all seems so needless, they are by no means the women who have the most really necessary work to do. Is there no way to help it?

Let the fifty tucks, which are good in their place and by no means to be quarreled with, unless they cost too much, stand for the many things that bring into our lives useless toil, useless burdens, useless perplexities; and then ask the Yankee question, Does it pay? Does it pay to have the tucks at the cost of what is better worth having?

Not long ago a friend showed me some dainty bits of needlework, the clothing of a little child, that had come down to her from her grandmother's mother. Fine as gossamer were the fabrics used, and the infinitesimal tucks and hems, the exquisite hemstitching and drawn-work, the delicate fagoting, the fairy-like stitches, were a wonder to behold. One could hardly believe that the lovely little garments had been made for actual use; had belonged to the wardrobe of a living child, intended for real service and not for mere show-pieces to be wondered at and admired.

"Doesn't this rather take the wind out of your sails?" asked one who stood near. "Talk about work and the hurry and flurry of this nineteenth century, and then look at this! Who can imagine a woman of to-day setting so many patient stitches into one little garment? Confess now that your theories are put to naught."

"On the contrary, they are only confirmed," I answered. "The hand that pulled these airy threads and set these minute, even stitches was neither hurried, nor flurried, nor worried. It was the willing servitor of a cool and quiet brain. This morsel of a frock was not caught up with a beating heart and throbbing nerves in the brief pauses of a heated, overwrought life, and hurried on to completion that the child might display it at next week's fancy ball or garden party. It was a long, happy labor of love, begun months before it was actually needed, and slowly touched and retouched as an artist finishes a picture. Its every fold speaks of calm and quiet, of summer afternoons in shaded porches, or winter nights by glowing firesides. It tells of motherly love and sisterly confidences, of merry chats and friendly greetings."

"But it was work, nevertheless," said my friend;

"and life is life, everywhere and always. I don't see how women ever had time or strength to put so much work on one baby dress."

"You've hit the nail on the very head this time," I replied. "That 'one' tells the whole story. Our children have dozens every season, and there is no end to the tucks and puffs and ruffles. Little Miss Mischief is arrayed in a fresh white robe in the morning. By noon it is soiled and must go into the wash-tub with all its dainty superfluities. Do you suppose this little robe was ever played in? — that it ever knew the meaning of a game at romps, or a mud-pie? By no means. The quaint little eighteenth century maiden who once owned it had a plenty of plain dimity 'slips,' easily made and easily washed, for everyday wear. *This* was laid away in a chest sweet with rose-leaves and lavender, and only brought out on great occasions. Do not fancy for one moment that it was ever consigned to the tender mercies of Chloe, or Bridget (if there were any Bridgets in those days), or even of Yankee Hannah. My lady herself 'did up' the pretty trifle, clear-starching and patting and pulling into shape without so much as breaking a single thread. How long, think you, would it have endured the rough handling of our day? But this little frock descended from child to child and did good service for a whole generation. One needs keen eyes to detect it, but it has been mended more than once — darned with such slow patience that the interwoven threads seem a part of the fabric itself."

Fifty tucks instead of one — tucks that speedily "perish with the using." The principle of the thing runs through the whole warp and woof of our modern life. As has been said before, there is no need to quarrel with the tucks. They are all well enough in their places. But to put our whole time and strength into them, even while we give utterance to the frequent complaint that there is no peace, no rest, no time for the grand old books or the bright new ones, or even to read the newspapers and thus follow the onward march of the stirring events of our own day — surely this is an absurdity. It is paying too dear for the whistle. It is selling one's birthright for a very poor and unsavory mess of pottage.

If they were always and everywhere beautiful — these tucks for which we are ready to sacrifice so much — there might be some excuse for yielding to their fascinations. For the woman who does not love beauty is an anomaly, a monstrosity. But fuss and feathers are *not* beauty; and there can be no true elegance that does not rest on the solid foundation of fitness. Therefore to most of us beauty must mean simplicity — the simplicity of life, dress, and manners, that would bring with it ease and leisure, and the peace that passeth understanding.

Tucks are not all alike, by any means; and they are not all made on the sewing-machine. Tucks mean one thing to me and another to you and still another to our neighbor. We have our own little private dictionaries, every soul of us, in the pages of which words bear the strangest and most contradictory significations. It would be laughable sometimes, and sometimes pitiable, if we could but read the definitions, never thought of by Worcester, Webster, or other authorities, that are given in these individual lexicons of ours to this one word — tucks! What it means in mine I

do not intend to say in this presence, nor what it means in yours. That is our secret, and we will keep it. But there are women to whom it means just this: a relentless war with flies and dust, speckless windows, mirrors on the polished surfaces of which there is never a spot or blemish, and rooms too prim to be comfortable. It means keeping the blessed children, with their toys and trumpery and pretty confusion, out of the parlor, little finger-prints off the piano, and every daisy and buttercup off the carpet. To some it means the handsomest and costliest house in town, with the most elaborate furnishings, and perfection in every detail. It means the finest and whitest linen, the most lustrous silver, the daintiest china. To some, on the other hand, it means the saving of every penny, the adding of dollar unto dollar, no matter at what cost of strength and health and womanly loveliness. To others it stands for the latest fashion, the last new wrinkle in drapery, the newest fancy in laces, or for whatever may chance to be the brief rage of the moment. To others still it means puff-paste and kickshaws, and all the countless dainty devices of the table that are a delight to the eye but a weariness to the flesh.

No one has a right to quarrel with these definitions. They stand, in most instances, for things good and desirable in themselves — these harlequin tucks that take so many forms, and appear in such differing phases. If only there were not so many of them! It is the whole fifty that weigh us down. One straw does not break the camel's back. It is the last one of many that breaks it.

The difficulty lies in learning just where to draw the line, which certainly must be drawn somewhere. Just what good thing is it that we should give up for the sake of having something better still? He or she who can satisfactorily answer this query will deserve the thanks of all womankind.

The question of household service grows year by year more perplexing and harder to solve. When one takes this fact into consideration and remembers that it is stated on good authority that three-fourths of the women in this country do their own work and that of the other fourth full one-half employ but one servant, how to make life more simple and easy seems a matter of the utmost importance. It is not a mere question of money. The having it or the lack of it does not settle the matter. There are many parts of the country in which anything like competent service cannot be obtained for love or money. Of the three-fourths above referred to, it is safe to say that at least one-half of them do *not* belong to the class that is content to be merely drudges. They, like their sisters, are fond of books, of art in so far as they know it, of beauty in all its forms. They long for leisure with all its golden possibilities.

But, in full accord with the spirit of our institutions, they are proud and ambitious — if not for themselves, yet for their children. And if there is one thing that the average American woman cannot calmly endure it is to be supposed ignorant of what is or is not "good form." Not that she uses that expression. She wishes it to be understood that she knows what it is "the thing" to do as well as her neighbor does. Shall she have hash — the hash of her grandmother, savory and toothsome, on her table when the last new cook-book abases that plebeian dish and exacts patties, croquettes and rissoles?

Perish the thought! If she break her back in the slow process of molding the refractory things into shape, or scorch her face frying them, the croquettes she will have if Madame La Mode so ordains, even though, if they told the plain truth, the chances are that not only she, but her husband, and her children, and the stranger within her gates would be forced to acknowledge that they decidedly preferred the hash.

Is not this servitude of the worst description,—to say nothing of the folly of it,—this spending of precious strength and golden hours in doing what in the long run does not add one iota to our own happiness, or to that of any other living being, merely because somebody regards it as “the thing” to do, or to have it?

Undoubtedly, whether one lives in city or country, it is well to follow, as far as one can without the sacrifice of higher things, the customs and usages of so-called polite society. As a rule they have at the bottom some wise foundation. But when we are gravely told by those who speak with authority that “self-respect” demands of us this or that,—the observance of the merest trifles as to the etiquette of table service, or of anything of a like nature,—is it not time to pause and to take a fresh start? The loss of self-respect is a terrible thing. Its preservation is so vital a point that it seems hardly wise to set up standards that are absolutely out of reach of the vast majority of American housewives and home-makers.

Is it certain that the new ways are always better, and wiser, and more refined than the old ways? Then again, have we not all read something about the folly of putting new wine into old bottles?

There is such a thing, alas! as losing all the strength and dignity out of a life by ill-considered attempts to change its current. The broad, full stream is apt to dwindle away in numberless small channels, and its power dwindles likewise. After men and women have gone much beyond the middle mile-stone, sudden changes as to style of living, household service, and the like are not apt to add greatly either to their dignity or to their happiness. In short, there are many conceivable circumstances under which one tuck is infinitely better than fifty.

Julia C. R. Dorr.

“The Right Man for Our Church.”

ALTHOUGH some of the clerical abilities and accomplishments expected to be constantly in readiness at a moment's notice for the use of Christian congregations and the general public are to be found chiefly in the imaginations of inconsiderate and not over-intelligent laymen, the demand for them is none the less difficult to meet. As proved in the letters written by expectant committees, they sometimes mount up in number and variety till they reach the summit of absurdity. The professor of a theological seminary, receiving one of these epistles which enumerated the long and discouraging list of talents and requisites necessary in the character and attainments of one who should be fit for the pastorate of “our church,” replied to the committee to the effect that “we have no man now in this seminary such as you describe, and doubt if we ever had one.” Manners, dress, voice, elocution, public spirit, magnetic attraction for young people, wife, num-

ber of children, extravagance or parsimony in living, executive talent, interest in education and temperance, gracefulness at weddings, appropriateness of manner and speech at funerals—all these, besides those many qualifications which are really needed to make a good preacher, come in for a share of criticism, and form important factors in the layman's ideal of the clergyman he would like, or thinks he would like, as the pastor of his church.

It is here submitted, therefore, that in no other occupation is so much expected in things which are really non-essential to it. That a minister should be a good man, sound in the Christian faith, and an interesting and sensible preacher goes without saying. Every congregation should look for these things, and be thankful for all else that may chance to go with them; but is it not true that so much more than these is often demanded that it can truthfully be said that the follower of no other occupation is subjected to so many and so severe tests concerning matters which lie outside professional requirements? The carpenter, or plumber, or mason is simply required to do his work well; his opinions, and dress, and social powers, together with the qualities of his wife and the number of his family, are not subjects of public inquiry. We do not ask whether the lawyer has a pleasing voice, or the physician a becoming and stylish dress, or the architect a taking manner, or the army officer a charming wife, or the school-teacher a magnetic bearing in a drawing-room, although these may be desirable possessions: we ask whether the man understands his business in its essentials, is learned in its details, and skillful in the practice of it.

These demands made upon the ministerial profession are often more exacting among the less intelligent than among the educated, so that it is sometimes said in clerical circles that those who know the least concerning the long and laborious preparation required to fit men for the modern pulpit, and concerning the proper characteristics of a good preacher, are the most emphatic in their insistence on a great number and variety of qualifications in their minister. A small country church in Massachusetts, many years ago, criticised quite sharply the services of a man whom they supposed to be preaching for them as a candidate, and were much surprised afterwards to learn that he already occupied a position as pastor much more prominent and influential than they would have believed possible. I remember also a case where a small city congregation that had among its members scarcely a man that was even fairly well educated heard a man preach several Sabbaths. He was a graduate of a New England college and of one of the best of our theological seminaries, a man of good address, scholarly and gentlemanly in his pulpit manners, a careful, thoughtful sermonizer, and a fluent speaker. He was disliked; and when some of the chief men were questioned as to the cause of dissatisfaction, they replied, “He does not have a commanding presence.” The readers of this letter will recall one of old of whom it was said that his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible; but they will be forced to admit that Paul was, after all, something of a preacher. This congregation in search of a “commanding presence” were a feeble folk, numerically and financially; and though the Lord's people, however poor and weak, ought, theoretically, to