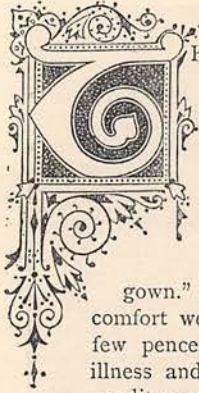


HOW TO KNIT A SOCK.



HERE is in almost every human heart a love of thrift. Wonderful extravagances have often been committed in the name of economy, such as those for which Sir Thomas More good-humouredly reproached his wife, saying that "she would save a candle-end and spoil a satin gown." It often seems as if temper and comfort were deemed of less value than a few pence, and pounds are often spent in illness and anxiety where the judicious expenditure of as many shillings might have secured health and enjoyment. Such is the economy of those people who can never "afford" to take a holiday until they have paid a physician a fee to bid them do so. Such was the economy of a young lady, actually of considerable wealth in her own right, who waded through damp heather in a worn pair of boots, because she knew the upland way was rough, and feared lest the stones might cut her new ones, preferring, as a friend remarked, to spoil her constitution rather than her boots.

But all this is only the perversion of a feeling which at bottom is one of the most wholesome in nature—the hatred of waste: the intense delight of making the most of everything, and especially of doing it in some unexpected way. It is foolish to cut off from one end of our cloth to join it on at the other, but it is wise to join together that which was originally separate. Economy, being derived from the classic words for a house and a law, is not necessarily saving, it is rather making the best of things. It is more economical to spend a pound wisely than a shilling badly. It is far thriftier to buy materials for work than to sit in idleness.

And that brings us to the consideration of the fortune which is entrusted to each of us, alike to prince and to peasant, either to husband or to squander. We all have Time.

There is, probably, not more difference between different incomes, than there is between the amount of work done by divers men. In our own day, on a large scale, we have seen those who have combined politics, literature, social science, and philanthropy. And in many families there is one person who writes most of the letters, entertains the visitors, knows all about the books from the library, keeps up with the newspaper, hires the servants, and in some cases earns a fair income and looks after its expenditure into the bargain, while there is probably another who finds it the business of a morning to make out a washing-bill, and who has "no time" for anything but doing nothing!

And yet the most industrious of us often feel that if we let money slip through our fingers as we let time we should be spendthrifts indeed! Still, it is no prudent policy to be always bustling about, straining

brain and nerve over tasks which make us feel responsible and anxious. We should do our resting as considerably as we do our work, after the fashion of that old Scotchwoman who, when she had accomplished her household duties, always retired in a businesslike fashion "to do her sleeping." We should be ready in due seasons, with unpreoccupied minds, when somebody wants to read aloud. We should keep a still season with which to answer the quaint Quaker question, "Friend, when dost thou think?"

It is not easy for an active hand to lie idle, and yet so many of the tasks which are taken up at spare times, also tax the eyesight and the brain, and by doing the latter withdraw the mind from ready social responsiveness. It cannot be easy to talk philosophy to a lady engaged on art-embroidery. What is really wanted at these seasons is something which can presently be done, as it were, by a sixth sense.

What may we think of the old sock-knitting of our grandmothers, not yet out of date among ourselves, still popular with quiet elderly people in the North, and quite the regulation work of Germany? When once the art is mastered, all is done, and the nimble fingers can go on almost as unconsciously as the heart beats. It is work which can be done at the fireside, away from the central lamp, or it can be carried out into the fields or garden. It does not rustle, nor rattle. It requires no constant consideration: a little counting now and then is its utmost demand. Three pairs of magnificently strong socks of the very best wool can be made for little more than the shop price of one ordinarily good pair. It appeals to pleasant feelings, for as a modern poet says—

"It is the pride of woman true
To cover from the cold."

In solitude, it goes on with that sort of restful jog-trot which quiets fagged nerves, and lets in pleasant memories and kindly thoughts. It has been said that sock-knitting is to women what some men claim that the pipe is to them, but certainly with this difference, that it results in garments instead of in dust and ashes!

As to its influence on conversation, many people talk much better if their hands are occupied. Madame de Staël liked to keep fingering a piece of pencil, and we have all heard of the unfortunate barrister who was struck dumb when he rose to plead, because the acute solicitor of the opposite side had abstracted the piece of red tape which seemed magically to unlock the floods of his eloquence. One writer says:—"I have a strange notion that my sister's knitting is to her strength of mind something like Samson's hair was to his bodily prowess. When we two are in argument, I have a wild wish to snatch that mysterious web from her agile fingers. Its very continuance daunts one with the reproach, 'Behold, in spite of idle clatter, these needles go on, and so does the world!'"

But nobody should attempt a stocking until they have first made themselves thoroughly expert in ordinary knitting stitches, and in picking them up if dropped. Still there are many people who can do all this, aye, and who can master the mysteries of those "feather and fan" and "shell" antimacassars, which irreverent men-folk angrily call "dish-towels," when a burst of laughter warns them that they have carried one off, attached to their coat-tail button. And yet there are comparatively few who can knit stockings. But all old Scotchwomen can do it, and so can all the country-folk in Wales and Germany and the Tyrol, and so can anybody else who has a reasonable share of those three invaluable "p's"—patience, perseverance, and practice.

Now we will suppose that you have learned to distinguish between "plain" and "purl," and that you have got your four bright steel needles and your ball of wool. Unwind about a yard from the ball. Do not break it off, but put it over the fore-finger of your left hand, holding it there with your thumb. Take a knitting needle in your right hand, insert it under the wool drawn over your fore-finger, and with the wool in your right hand, nearest to the ball, knit as for a "plain" stitch. This makes a nice, even, firm "casting on."

For an average-sized sock, you must "cast on" 32 stitches on the first needle, 32 stitches on the second, and 33 on the third. If the sock is large, you may want a little more; if small, a little less. But the rule is that on the two first needles an even number of stitches must be cast, while on the third one more stitch must be added.

In casting on the stitches on the second and third needles, see that you keep the needles drawn well together, or you will have an ugly loop between them.

When the stitches are on the three needles, take up your fourth needle and with it knit plain all the stitches on the first needle, with that needle thus set free knit plain all on the second needle, and with the second needle knit plain all on the third needle. This will make your first row, and will give you an idea how the four needles relieve each other, three in turn keeping the shape of the stocking, while the other in its turn carries on the work. You must remember that, in knitting, "a row" means all round the stocking.

For the second row, knit 2 plain, 2 purl, 2 plain, 2 purl, all round the stocking, till you come to the odd stitch at the end, purl it, that will make 3 purl stitches in that one place.

Do this again and again; take great care not to let your plain and purl stitches get out of place, the plain of one row must be always over the plain of the row before it, and so with the purl. Never forget that odd stitch. As you work you will see your knitting growing into nice close ribbing, which serves to hold the stocking neatly to the leg.

You must work all round the stocking 50 rows of this "purl and plain," and it will be a very good exercise for painstaking carefulness.

After the 50th row you purl no more. The rest is plain knitting, except that odd stitch at the end of every row. That must be always purled, which makes

a neat seam-like stitch, that marks the middle of the stocking and keeps you straight when you come to make the heel.

Knit 50 plain rows with 1 purl stitch at the end of each. Then knit another row plain, until you have only 4 stitches left, that which is always purled, and 3 others, then knit 2 together, knit 1 plain, then purl 1 as usual. We will call this reducing row No. 1.

Begin the next row by knitting 1 plain, then knitting 2 together, then knit plain to the end and purl as usual. We will call this reducing row No. 2.

Knit 7 plain rows with the purl stitch at the end of each.

Repeat the two "reducing rows," followed by the 7 plain rows, four times more.

Thus you will see that you have reduced the number of your stitches five times. Now you will have to re-arrange your needles, and to do this you must first count your stitches. You will find that you still have 32 on the middle needle, 27 and the purl stitch on another needle, and 27 on the third needle. You will now see the value of the purl stitch. It serves to mark the middle of the sock, and to guide you in making your heel.

The united number of your stitches will be 86 without the purl stitch. You must divide this number into two, which will give you 43 on one side and 43 and the purl stitch on the other. You must slip the stitches from one needle to another, until you have 43 on the middle needle, 21 and the purl stitch on another needle, and 22 on the third needle.

Your wool will now be standing at the end of a row—*i.e.*, at the purl stitch. Knit plain to the end of the 22 stitches, then turn back, and purl the 22 stitches, the purl stitch, and the 21 stitches.

Turn back again, and knit plain along these two needles, taking care to purl over the purl stitch which is now in the middle of this "row," since, at present, the needle holding the 43 stitches is standing still, and does not enter into our calculations; slip the first stitch of each row.

You must knit 14 more of these rows, alternately plain and purl. This will make a piece of knitting with the slip stitches making a sort of chain down each side. When you have finished the 16th row (which will be a plain one) turn back and purl to the purl stitch, then purl 1, purl 2 together, purl 1, and turn back. Continue as follows:—

Knit 3, purl 1, knit 1, knit 2 together, knit 1, and turn back.
Purl 6, purl 2 together, purl 1, and turn back.
Knit 4, purl 1, knit 2, knit 2 together, knit 1, and turn back.
Purl 8, purl 2 together, purl 1, and turn.
Knit 5, purl 1, knit 3, knit 2 together, knit 1, and turn.
Purl 10, purl 2 together, purl 1, and turn.
Knit 6, purl 1, knit 4, knit 2 together, knit 1, and turn.
Purl 12, purl 2 together, purl 1, and turn.
Knit 7, purl 1, knit 5, knit 2 together, knit 1, and turn.
Purl 14, purl 2 together, purl 1, and turn.
Knit 8, purl 1, knit 6, knit 2 together, knit 1, and turn.
Purl 16, purl 2 together, purl 1, and turn.
Knit 9, purl 1, knit 7, knit 2 together, knit 1, and turn.
Purl 18, purl 2 together, purl 1, and turn.

Knit 10, purl 1, knit 8, knit 2 together, knit 1, and turn.

Purl 20, purl 2 together, purl 1, and turn.

Knit 11, purl 1, knit 9, knit 2 together, knit 1, and turn.

Purl along the whole row and turn.

Knit 11, purl 1, knit 10, knit 2 together, knit 1, and turn.

Now pick up the slip stitches, of which there should be nine at each side, and re-arrange your needles, slipping the stitches from one to another, until they are arranged as follows:—the 43 still standing on the middle needle, 20 and the purl stitch on the other, and 20 on the third.

Plain knit all round the stocking, then plain knit the 43 stitches.

Knit 1, knit 2 together, knit 17, purl 1, knit 17, knit 2 together, knit 1.

Knit all round the stocking twice, purling 1 at the middle of the heel. Knit the 43 stitches.

Then knit 1, knit 2 together, knit 16, purl 1, knit 16, knit 2 together, knit 1.

Again knit twice round the stocking, and then knit the 43 stitches, and repeat, reducing the two needles at either side of the purl stitch. You must take notice that this reducing is done after every seventh "needle" is knitted, not after every seventh row, but in reality, as nearly as possible, at two rows and one-half of a row. Continue this reducing until there remain on one needle 13 stitches and the purl stitch, and on the other 13 stitches.

At this point you may discontinue the purl stitch in the middle of the heel; but you must be very careful never to shift a stitch from one needle to the other at this point, or you will deform your stocking by an ugly twist when you work the toe.

You may now relieve the needle burdened with 43 stitches, by transferring 4 stitches to the needle which has 13, and 4 to that which carries 13 and the odd stitch. You will find that this restores the balance of the stocking, giving 35 stitches to the middle, and 34 and the odd stitch to the two back needles.

Now knit all round the stocking not less than 58 plain rows.

Reducing begins again at this point. Begin with the middle needle and its 35 stitches, knit 1, knit 2 together, knit along the needle till 3 stitches remain, knit 2 together, knit 1. Then on the side needle, knit 1, knit 2 together, knit to the end of that needle; then on the last needle, knit till 3 stitches only remain, knit 2 together, knit 1.

Then knit a plain row all round the stocking to the same point.

Then repeat reducing row. You will notice that in each of these rows the number of stitches is reduced by 4: 2 on the middle needle and 1 on each of those at the side.

Then repeat the plain row; and go on, repeating these 2 rows alternately, until you have only 26 stitches on the needles—13 on the middle one, 6 on one side needle, and 7 on the other. Slip the last 13 on to one needle, put the needles side by side, and knit together one from each needle. Again knit together one from each needle. Then through the loop of the last stitch draw the loop of the first. Repeat this until all the stitches are fastened off, and the sock is complete.

You must remember that, when you have once mastered this task, you are put in possession of certain principles by which socks or stockings of any size may be made. Whatever are the number of the stitches cast on at the beginning, they must be of even numbers on two needles, with one additional stitch on the third. Whatever be the size of the sock, you must always count the stitches and divide them into two equal parts for making the heel, and the same again when you begin to reduce for the toe.

Of course the plain and purl ribbing with which the stocking begins, may be carried down to any length that taste or use may direct. For children's socks it should go all down the leg, and for socks to be worn with shoes it should even be continued in the upper half of the sock, over the instep.

Do not be daunted by finding that, in your early experiments, you do really require to give undivided attention to your work. By the time you have made two pairs of socks you will be quite expert, and if you always keep a sock on hand your acquirement will never grow rusty. In learning to knit a sock, you also learn many little secrets of the art, which will enable you without much further instruction to knit many little articles of clothing. And you have also learned something which, while it may be the pleasant pastime of some of your happiest hours, will not utterly fail you if days come of feeble health, and failing sight, and which in old age will certainly help to finish that pretty picture of "grandmamma," which stands in so many young hearts as an abiding type of contentment, helpfulness, and comfort.

A WIFE'S CONFESSION.

I DID not marry for love. Very few people do, so in this respect I am neither better nor worse than my neighbours. No, I certainly did not marry for love; I believe I married Mr. Cartwright simply because he asked me.

This was how it happened. He was the Rector of Doveton, and we lived at the Manor House, which was about ten minutes' walk from the church and the Rectory. We had daily service at Doveton, and I

nearly always attended it, and it came to pass that Mr. Cartwright invariably walked home with me. It was a matter of custom now, and I thought nothing of it; it pleased him, and on the whole it was rather pleasant to me also.

I must confess, however, I was rather surprised when, one morning as we got to the avenue which led up to the Manor House, Mr. Cartwright asked me to be his wife.