

HOURS IN MY LAUNDRY.

IN THREE PAPERS.—FIRST PAPER.



“WHY did you leave your last situation?” said a mistress in a preliminary conversation with the new maid she was about to engage.

“I left because the washing-machine did not agree with me,” was the reply.

It is quite usual in these days for the washing-machines not to agree with those who ought to work them; and the consequence is that many of us are compelled to send out the family washing, whether we like it or not, and so run the risk of having our precious linen—the linen which, if we had lived forty years ago, would have been our pride—dark in colour, and speedily worn out and torn. There are honest folks, we know, in every trade, and therefore there are honest laundresses to be met with—laundresses who would feel that they sinned against conscience if they destroyed their customers' goods by using chemicals which would almost melt them to tatters. But ladies who have to preside over households where the weekly washing-bill is a most serious item of expense, tell us that these honest laundresses are difficult to find, and they even hint that there must be something about the laundry business which tends to lower the standard of morality in the minds of those who are engaged therein, so that they get into the habit of saying, and (what is worse) of believing, that there is nothing wrong in actions which they would think very wrong indeed if they had to look at the subject from the standpoint of the owner of the linen.

Whether this be true or not, it is certain that it is almost the universal testimony of those who understand laundry work, that clothes put out to wash will be worn out years before linen of the same quality which has been carefully washed at home. This fact has been proved again and again. Also it is certain that where housekeepers want to reduce their weekly bills, and effect a little of that domestic saving which is welcome to most of us in these hard times, there is no more effectual way of attaining this object than by beginning to wash at home.

Of course there are trials connected with domestic laundry operations. Individuals with whom hard work and washing-machines do not agree, think that it must be most delightful to put all the dirty clothes into a bag on Monday morning, and to hear and see nothing more of them until they are brought back on Friday evening, washed and ironed, with the laces deftly goffered, and the “starch things” stiff and glossy—all ready to be aired and put away.

The housekeeper, however, who has to investigate affairs more closely, knows that this good is not always unmixed with evil. Sometimes she discovers that it is quite usual for articles to be lost in the wash, and so

the household supply of linen continually needs to be renewed. Sometimes she finds that buttons and strings have been wrenched off in a most cruel fashion, taking with them a portion of the band to which they were attached. More mortifying still, sometimes she finds that in linen which is comparatively new, and in parts of the garment where there is no great strain, small round holes make their appearance—a clear sign that lime has been used for the washing. Even when all these annoyances are absent, the housekeeper who sends her washing to a small private laundry may become uneasy, for fear that infectious fever may be conveyed to her children through the carelessness and ignorance of those who wash her clothes. A consciousness of this danger is a strong argument in favour of the establishment of a home laundry, and we cannot wonder that in several quarters housekeepers are beginning to inquire into the secrets of laundry work, and lay plans for the performance of the business in their own homes. They show their wisdom by doing this. There is no doubt whatever that if they possess sufficient energy to take this unpleasant domestic bull by the horns, and if they can rely on the willing and intelligent support of those on whom the burden of the work will rest, they may so arrange matters that they will gain enormously by making a change and establishing a domestic laundry under their own roof.

There is no department of domestic work in which invention has been more busy in constructing utensils which shall save labour than laundry work. For a long time a good deal of space in our industrial exhibitions, and a prominent place in the advertising columns of newspapers, have been occupied by washing-machines of various kinds; and the excellences of the productions of different manufacturers have been so enthusiastically lauded, that one has felt half inclined to believe that the discomforts of washing-day were a thing of the past, and that it was quite possible, by availing oneself of the latest appliances, for “every man to be his own washerwoman” in the intervals of intellectual enjoyment. Those who know what washing is, however, know quite well that all this is nonsense. Mrs. Poyser said very truly that you could not make a pudding by thinking of the batter; and in the same way we may say that no one could do the washing of a family by dipping the tips of the fingers in cold water and turning the handle of a machine. There is no washing without work; and, no matter what our method may be, those who work with a will are much more likely to be successful than are those whose object it is to avoid exertion in working.

There is, however, no reason why, because we acknowledge this, we should refuse to avail ourselves of the best assistance we can get. And there is no doubt whatever that in these days the labour of washing may be lessened amazingly for those who can

get a good supply of hot water, without needing to lift it backwards and forwards, and who have a good washing-machine and a wringing-machine at command. The curious part of the business is that where machines are provided in private houses, the average domestic servant will not use them. Oftener than not she is a most prejudiced person, and with an excellent machine waiting for her needs, will be constant to her old-fashioned tubs, and will go through the old routine of soaking, firsting, seconding, rubbing, brushing, boiling, rinsing, blueing, and wringing in most wearisome detail, being evidently sustained throughout by the thought that she presents in her own person a bulwark against innovation and new-fangled ways. It is certainly trying, when a house-mistress has selected a washing-machine with great care and judgment, to find that her laundry-maid will, whenever it is possible, refrain from using it, and persists in adopting the old methods of washing. There is nothing for it but patience, however. Prejudice is the child of ignorance, and in time we hope that even this ignorance will be overcome.

The question is often asked, "Which really is the best washing-machine that can be bought for domestic use?" To this question only a relative answer can be given, and disappointment is often caused because people will take it for granted that there is a best machine which will be the best under all circumstances. But this is not the case. The value of a machine depends very much upon the intelligence, skill, and physical strength of the person who uses it; and therefore the machine which proves a great success with one laundress, may turn out a failure with another. The best thing that can be done is for the housekeeper to examine a number of machines, and to make her purchase after taking account of the strength and character of the woman who will have to work it.

It is with washing-machines as it is with soaps and starch, and other necessaries for the laundry: one person will approve one sort, and another person another sort; and the individual who will bring industry and common sense to bear upon her tools, and give them fair play, may produce a good result with almost any one of them. There is so much competition nowadays that every enterprising manufacturer introduces as many improvements as he can into his machine; and the consequence is that there is scarcely a modern machine now in the market which, properly used, is not vastly superior to the tubs and "peggys" common in our childhood. As a matter of fact, the difference is not so much between one machine and another as between one worker and another; and all modern appliances bought of a dealer of respectability are so certain to have their advantages that the possessor of a modern machine, no matter what the kind, has no occasion to despair of being able to accomplish a home-wash successfully. This comforting thought at least she may enjoy: she is far better off than were the laundresses of a few years ago.

Yet though our respect for modern inventions in the shape of washing-machines is so profound, it is

impossible for a person who is practically acquainted with several sorts not to have a preference for one, and it is difficult to refrain from declaring this preference on occasion. Perhaps, therefore, I may be allowed to declare that my individual preference for a family washing-machine is for the "Steam Washer." This is, I believe, the most recent invention in the way of washing-machines that we have, and it is really a most valuable article. Housekeepers who contemplate washing at home, and who are not already provided with a machine, should by all means look at this one. It is not expensive, and it can either be connected with the gas or heated by means of a coal stove; although in the latter case a smoke-pipe to carry away the smoke must be provided. The "Steam Washer" is well known to dealers in washing-machines, and can be easily obtained on application. The ordinary washing-machine is a great assistance to the laundress, because it does away with the necessity of rubbing and brushing the clothes; and both these processes are very fatiguing, and are also calculated to wear out the fabric. Yet even with a washing-machine the clothes, if they are to be made perfectly free from dirt, have to be put through two waters and boiled. But with the "Steam Washer" not only is rubbing dispensed with, but the clothes are "firsted," "seconded," and boiled, all at once; and after going through the machine they need only to be rinsed and blueed, and they are ready for the wringer. Moreover, they are rendered delightfully clean, and the expenditure of labour is most trifling. Altogether the process of washing by the help of a "Steam Washer" is more like magic than any other domestic achievement known to us. One needs to be in at a "big wash" where the "Steam Washer" is used, and to understand what a "big wash" is like where there is no "Steam Washer," in order to appreciate this most excellent machine.

The majority, however, of those who resolve to do the work of the laundry at home are already supplied with appliances for the business. What they want, therefore, is to be assisted to master the process of washing, and then they can adapt the means at their command to the end desired at their convenience. The first advice one would feel inclined to give to individuals thus circumstanced would be: "On no account be persuaded to dispense with the business of soaking the clothes for some hours before beginning to wash them." The domestic servant who is called upon to do the work of laundresses is nearly always unwilling to have the clothes put to soak; she thinks that to do so causes a waste of time, that it does no good, and only makes unnecessary work. She makes a great mistake.

After all, our purpose in washing clothes is to get out the dirt, and the more gently this is accomplished, the less injury is done to the fabric. Soaking in water dissolves and loosens the dirt, and that this is accomplished is made evident by the dirtiness of the water in which clothes have been soaked. Those who will not draw dirt out by the gentle method of soaking, are compelled to use the harsher method of

rubbing hard and brushing; and they will even employ injurious alkalis in washing, in order to do that quickly which would have been better done if done slowly. If the practice of soaking the clothes were more universally followed, laundresses would not be so strongly tempted to use lime and injurious washing preparations as they now are. Clothes that have been thoroughly soaked are half washed before the actual washing is commenced; while the difference of colour between clothes that are regularly soaked before washing, and those that are not, is most marked.

One reason why clothes so frequently escape being soaked is that so many housekeepers have a fixed prejudice in favour of washing on Monday. This prejudice rests upon an old proverb which says—

“They who wash on Monday have all the week to dry.”

Now, in a business like washing, where there is a

possibility that many unforeseen contingencies may arise, it is always well to take time by the forelock. But where Monday must be the washing-day, why not put the clothes to soak on Saturday night? Sunday is the day of rest; nothing can be done then, we know; but the pans would take no harm if left standing in the washhouse, and they would be all ready for Monday morning. It is usual in many families to have clean underlinen on Sunday; but there is no charm about this regulation; linen might be changed on Saturday just as well as on Sunday, and the alteration would be an advantage in making still less work for Sunday. In many families this change has been made, and the arrangement has answered admirably; the long soaking has been an advantage rather than otherwise. As to the routine to be followed when the soaking has been accomplished, we may perhaps deal with it on another occasion.

PHYLIS BROWNE.



CHARACTERS IN FEET.

BY THE AUTHOR OF “IMPRESSIONS OF A NOTICING EYE.”

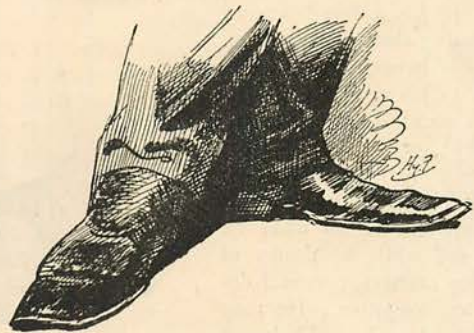


THE use of feet is more characteristic than the feet themselves. Of course there is some character even in the shape: there is the common and careless flat foot, and the neat foot, and the vain foot, and the quick foot. In Herrick's old poem the whole

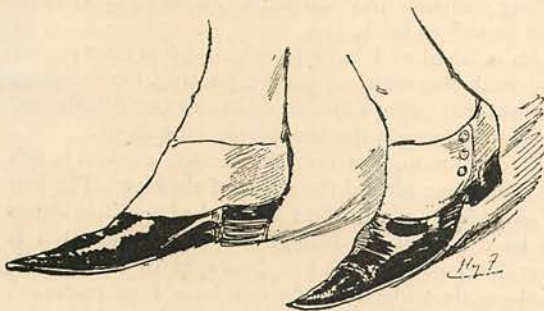
portrait of a dainty white-slipped girl is suggested by the words—

“Like mice, beneath her petticoat,
Her little feet went in and out.”

But the distinctions of character are not seen, really, in the feet themselves, but in what their owner does



PHILANTHROPIC.



THE FOP.

with them. Sometimes it is significant that their owner does not know *what* to do with them. He is vulgarly, defiantly self-sufficient, and despises ceremony, so when he smokes a cigar he puts his feet on the mantel-piece, out of the way. Or he is a country bumpkin, painfully self-conscious, so he stands on one foot and then on the other, and shifts them about, perplexed what to do with them, as ill-bred folks, when they sit idle and sociable, are perplexed by possessing a pair of hands. On the contrary, the fop—whose feet are clad without spot or speck, and regardless of expense—knows very well what to do with them; they are part of the exhibition which is his constant care. In general, it is a sign of vanity to thrust forward

HOURS IN MY LAUNDRY.

BY PHYLLIS BROWNE.

IN THREE PAPERS.—SECOND PAPER.



Everyone knows that it is a great support to individuals with well-regulated minds to be able to quote proverbs which favour their arrangements. Housekeepers, therefore, who dare to depart from the orthodox rule, and to make Tuesday the washing-day instead of Monday, have reason to rejoice, because the same rhyme which has decided many energetic persons to wash on Monday goes on to say that—

“They that wash on Tuesday are not so much awry.”

No person of experience will venture to question the truth of this proverbial statement. Where washing is done on Tuesday, part of Monday can be devoted to preparing for washing. Here let it be noted that those who make washing at home a great success, always do a good deal of preparing the day before, and then commence early on the day; while those who find washing a great nuisance, and who say that, manage how one will, it makes a house miserable and fills it with steam, wet clothes, puddles, and bad tempers, never think about preparation, and are quite content to commence washing in the middle of the morning. A laundress who can do this has not entered into the spirit needed for a perfect family wash. Enthusiasm is the chief characteristic of a good laundress, and without enthusiasm laundry work is a dreary toil. The laundress, however, who feels that she is a thorough mistress of her work, who is sure that no linen is so white, no shirts are so perfectly got up, no flannels so soft, no “coloured things” so bright as hers will be when her day’s work is done, enters on her task with a light heart, and has the pleasing consciousness that on washing-day, at any rate, she is at the centre of the situation. But she would never have this consciousness if she did not rise betimes and begin her work while yet the day was young.

To prepare for a family wash, the laundress needs to have all her wits about her, and to understand clearly what goes to the perfect cleansing of linen. Her first business will be to collect together all the clothes which need to be washed, look over them, mend them (to the extent, that is, of running together rents and tears, to prevent these going further), make a complete list of them, and then sort them—putting the starch things (linen cuffs, fronts, and collars) in one heap; the table-linen in another; the best body-linen in a third; the coloured things, flannels, and woollens in a fourth; the dirtier, coarser whites in a fifth; and the dusters and kitchen-cloths in a sixth. The tubs and earthenware pans likely to be required will then be got out. After the last wash they were doubt-

less put away clean in a cool, shady place; and if the weather is very dry, the tubs will have been filled with water to keep the wood from shrinking. In these tubs the different heaps of clothes can be put to soak in lukewarm water; and one of the most important points the laundress has to attend to in this part of her business is to keep the different heaps apart and soak them in separate tubs, according to their quality and condition, so that very dirty clothes shall not discolour clothes which are not particularly dirty.

Persons who do not realise what is aimed at in soaking clothes, very often bundle all sorts of articles—shirts, sheets, table-cloths, pocket-handkerchiefs, and dusters—in one tub, and the consequence is that the superior articles are injured, and the inferior ones not benefited. It would be better to leave the clothes unsoaked, rather than to put them all together.

While putting the clothes in soak, the accomplished laundress will be careful to rub a little soap on the dirtiest parts, such as the inside of the collars of shirts and night-gowns, the feet of socks and stockings. If the water is hard, she may dissolve a little soda in it, as soda helps to soften the water. She must be careful, however, not to use too much soda, as this would make the linen yellow, and cause the fabric to rot. It is not easy to say how much, because the quantity must depend on the quality of the water. For water which is not outrageously hard, a knob of soda about the size of a filbert would be enough for two or three gallons. Better than softening the water with soda only, however, is it to put a little melted soap into the soaking-tub. To make this, take a piece of soap, shave it very thinly, put a knob of soda in it, and pour boiling water over it to dissolve the soap. Put a cupful of the lye into the tub, pour lukewarm water over, and the preparation is ready. Dirty clothes soaked in this water for a few hours will have the dirt so much loosened that they can very easily be cleaned.

Clothes should not be crammed tightly in the tub in which they are put to soak, as they will not benefit by the process as much as if there were room for the water to go through and flow freely over them.

Pocket-handkerchiefs should always be laid to soak by themselves. Coloured things, prints, flannels, and woollens, on the other hand, should not be soaked at all on the day of preparation; they require special treatment, and must be dealt with separately.

The next step in the process of preparation will be to get out and put ready for the hand all things likely to be required on washing-day. These will consist of clothes-baskets, clothes-lines, pegs, soap, soda, blue, and whatever cans and bowls are needed. Soap jelly also should be made, ready to be used instead of soap for boiling the clothes in the copper. It is much more economical to use soap jelly than it is to use ordinary soap. To make soap jelly, shred finely a quarter of a

pound of soap and boil it till melted in five times its bulk of water; when melted, add a little soda, also dissolved; mix thoroughly, and pour into a bowl till firm. The quantity of soda used must depend upon the hardness of the water. An average allowance would be half a pound of soap and six ounces of soda to three quarts of water. Half a pint of the jelly would be sufficient for a good-sized copperful of water. Ready-made soap jelly is a very useful article to have at hand on the washing-day; it comes in useful at almost every turn, is not so expensive as soap, and does the work better.

The management of a copper is a very important detail connected with washing-day. A copper which is well set and draws well, and which has always been kept dry when out of use, so that there is no rust about it to stain the clothes, is a great source of satisfaction. But a copper that smokes and will not draw, and that has something wrong with it, so that it stains the clothes, is a trial to any one's patience and temper. Until the housekeeper is quite sure that her copper is in working order, she should never entertain the idea of washing at home. If it is out of order, she should send for a competent person to put it right before she takes another step. After it is put right, her great aim should be to keep it so.

The secret of keeping a copper in good order, is to have the flue swept every time after it has been used, with one of those flue-brushes with a long, flexible wire handle, which are sold specially for this purpose. There is no occasion to send for the sweep to do this business. The laundress may herself put the brush into the flue and work it round; and as very little soot will have accumulated in one day, there will be very little trouble in removing it. A copper smokes when the flue is choked up with soot. If a sweep is sent for to remedy this evil, he will at once proceed to take the copper out, and after it is out he will announce that it is not his work to put it back again. A sweep who can accomplish this feat is a happy man. The laundress, however, who finds her copper unset, and who does not exactly know how to have it made right again, will not sympathise with this happiness. If, however, she could be induced to invest in a long flue-brush, and to arrange that the flue should be swept every time the copper is used, she might go on for years without needing to let the sweep touch it. The chimney with which the flue communicates would of course have to be swept, but the flue itself would be kept clear. What this would mean in the way of comfort, expedition, cleanliness, and good temper to every one engaged in washing, only those laundresses know who have tried to maintain a sweet reasonableness on a washing-day with a copper-fire which would not draw because the flue was choked with soot. To have to wash in the midst of steam and smoke is more than ordinary mortals can endure.

Many laundresses would dispose speedily of the difficulty with the copper-flue by adopting the common domestic remedy of clearing it with gunpowder. The first objection to this method is that it is exceedingly dangerous; the second is that it only remedies the

evil for a short time. It is most unsafe to allow irresponsible persons to use gunpowder, and the consequences of such a step might be most serious. We have all read Tom Hood's amusing poem called a "Report from Below," which tells of a certain washer-woman, named Mrs. Round, who, in order to make a copper-fire draw, put a pound of gunpowder into the grate. As might have been expected, the effect of this proceeding was that the copper flew up like a squib, Mrs. Round was thrown on her back, and—

"There she fainted dead away, and might have been cut shorter,
But Providence was kind, and brought her to with scalding water."

Mrs. Round on this occasion escaped, but laundresses generally cannot be advised to adopt her method. In their case a supply of scalding water might not be at hand.

It is a great advantage in washing clothes to have plenty of clean water. Some laundresses seem to be quite afraid of changing the water. They will pass three or four sets of clothes through the same water, and evidently think they are good managers to do this. They make a great mistake. It is impossible that clothes should be sweet and clean unless plenty of clean water is allowed for them. Of course we can understand that in order to save soap it is most undesirable to throw a good lather out before it has been made the most of, and therefore it is quite allowable to wash best whites for the first time—after they have been wrung out of the soak—in the water in which flannels have been rinsed, and to "first" coarse articles in the same water in which fine things have been "seconded." Yet even the routine of a simple arrangement like this must be determined by common sense, and the laundress who takes pride in the colour of her linen will be quite uneasy if there is a danger that they should be passed through dirty water.

According to the plan of procedure usually adopted in laundries where special machines do not call for special methods, all linen which is to be washed is, after being wrung out of the water in which it was soaked, passed through two waters, or in technical language, "firsted" and "seconded," firsted on one side and seconded on the other. To get rid of the dirt, the clothes must be either rubbed or brushed, and in these days there is no doubt that brushing is the favourite process. Certainly it is effectual, and where clothes are badly soiled it can scarcely be dispensed with. At the same time, it wears the fabric, and for superior, slightly-soiled articles rubbing is much to be preferred. Yet there is quite a knack in rubbing clothes properly. It is of no use to rub the soap upon the fabric, and then plunge it at once into the hot water, and so get rid of it as soon as possible. Instead of doing this, the worker should aim at using the soap. She should plunge the portion of the fabric to be cleansed into the water, soap it, and then rub it to get it clean, remembering all the time that what she has to do is not to rub her hand, but to rub one portion of the linen steadily against the other, giving a little squeeze or pressure with every downward movement, to squeeze out the dirt. Amateur laun-

dresses, who have not acquired the right knack of the thing, generally rub the skin off their hands, and consequently feel the effects of washing-day two or three days after it is past. There is no occasion for this. There is a right way of doing everything, even of rubbing clothes, and five minutes of the right way will do more to make the fabric clean than ten minutes of the wrong way. When clothes have been soaked, and when the right way of rubbing is adopted, it is wonderful how little rubbing will make them clean.

After washing, clothes must be boiled in water in which some of the soap jelly already mentioned has been dissolved. This water must on no account be boiling when the linen is put in. Boiling water would fix any stains there might be. The water must be lukewarm, and twenty minutes' boiling will be quite long enough to get rid of the dirt, and the clothes must be pressed well under the water while this is going on.

Even in the copper it is important that distinctions of quality should be respected. Fine linen will never be a good colour if coarse articles or stained articles are boiled with them at the same time.

After having been boiled, linen should be rinsed in cold water and blued, and if it is very superior it should be rinsed in one water and blued in another. To blue clothes properly is a very delicate process. Again and again it has happened that clothes which have been excellently washed have been spoiled in the blueing. When clothes are streaked or spotted with blue we may be almost sure either that the blue rinse has been carelessly made, or that too many articles have been put into it at once. The blue ought to be very gradually squeezed into the water through a thick flannel bag, and it ought to be mixed well in. Also not more than one article should be dealt with at once, and this should be dipped in once or twice, and then wrung out and shaken. Also clothes should never be allowed to lie in blue-water, and the water should be only slightly tinged with blue. There is nothing more vulgar than to have clothes too deeply blued, and we are justified in suspecting that laundresses who are partial to too much blue have a reason for their peculiar taste. At the same time, a little blue must be employed, or the linen will look yellow.

A RISING WELSH TOWN.

CARDIFF is rapidly becoming the metropolis of coal. It is the chief of the great ports of the Bristol Channel, and through its docks much of the fuel sent from this country finds its way abroad. It has claims to notice other than these. There are historical associations of interest attaching to its castle; it has been peopled by

British, Roman, Saxon, and Norman tribes; its growth has been wonderfully rapid in this century; and it furnishes a field almost unequalled for the study of the character of the many nationalities. Its coal-field is young beside that of Newcastle, but it encloses no small share now of the available fuel of our country; its river is small and of less note than the Tyne; yet



PENARTH GARDENS.

dragged forward to recite, and the champion girl is requested to play. The most clever boy in the world jerks up his collar and pulls down his vest, and takes a good breath, and makes a sign-post of his arm, and gets his voice well up into the top of his head, and seems to think that he is addressing a very large and deaf assembly. He gets slowly through some popular verses, leaving the poem to become a thing of horror and a bore for ever. Then the most talented girl in the world uses the piano as an instrument of torture; and if you don't like it, and make a bad attempt to pretend you do, she sees through it, and in her juvenile

heart is sorry for you as a "man who hath not music in his soul." She knows all the "ologies," and hopes to be a Bachelor of Arts some day.

But somehow in the last generation there were quite as many specimens of the most talented boy and girl that ever had been, and yet the world of to-day is not bristling all over with genius. There must have been sad disillusionings since these boys and girls grew up; and, after all, the ordinary Polly and Tommy seem to have had most in them, though they were never told of it when they and we were young.

HOURS IN MY LAUNDRY.

BY PHYLLIS BROWNE.

IN THREE PAPERS.—THIRD PAPER.



FLANNELS and coloured things are the next consideration; and here it may be remarked that the time when these articles should be taken in hand ought to be determined by the weather. It is most desirable that, when the day is fine, clothes should be hung

out to dry. Of late years the importance of this detail has been forgotten, and in large establishments where linen is washed wholesale, it is usual to have drying-closets, hot-air chambers, and other contrivances, where linen can be dried without being hung out of doors at all. This is unfortunate. There are no purifiers like fresh air, wind, and sun, and an experienced laundress could tell at once whether clothes had been dried in-doors or not.

Clever housekeepers, accustomed to washing, often speak strongly in favour of flannels and prints being washed at the commencement of the washing-day's proceedings; and they find the plan convenient, because they say that coloured things can be washed in the same water as flannels, and the water used for rinsing flannels will serve for "firsting" the best whites. All this is true; and yet, when we come to practice, we find it is best to let the state of the weather determine for us when flannels are to be washed. We have to remember that though linen and calico may lie for awhile after being washed without injury, yet flannel and coloured goods must be quickly dried, or they will spoil. To dry flannels slowly causes them to shrink; to dry coloured prints, chintzes, &c., slowly, is apt to make the colours run. Flannels and coloured things, therefore, should not be touched until there is a prospect that they can be dried off and be done with; and this is why we should consider the weather in deciding when they shall be washed.

Flannels should be put into a good, warm lather—that is, into soapy water, only a little warm; but on no account into cold water. As much as possible, rubbing should be avoided with them, because to rub flannel makes it thick. Wringing also is harmful to them, and it is better to squeeze and press the water out of them than to wring them. Soda also should never be used for flannels; and, if they are to be kept in good condition, they should be neither mangled nor ironed. Coloured goods, too, should not be put into very hot water, and soda should be dreaded for them. They should neither be starched with hot starch, nor ironed with a hot iron. After washing, they should be rinsed in cold water, in which a good handful of bay salt, or a little alum, has been dissolved. They should not be dried in the sun. Neither flannels nor coloured goods must be boiled. Many laundresses put several handfuls of common salt into the water in which coloured things are rinsed. This helps to make them look clean and bright, but it also tends to make them turn limp speedily. This objection does not apply quite as much to bay salt as to common salt.

In these days, when so much attention is paid to sanitary matters, thousands of persons have accustomed themselves to wear sanitary woollen undergarments, made entirely of animal wool without any mixture of vegetable fibre. The manufacturers of these garments declare that not only do the garments wear out more quickly than they ought to do, but also that much of the benefit to health which might be obtained from wearing them is lost, because they are so seldom washed properly. Curiously enough, the method of washing recommended for these garments by the makers thereof, is quite different from that usually adopted for ordinary flannel. For the information, therefore, of persons who wear sanitary wool, and who do not know how to wash it, I copy from their pamphlet the directions there given for washing:—

“The clothes should be placed to soak in water (at about 100° Fahrenheit) in which soap has been boiled up. To about every six gallons of water add three table-spoonfuls of liquid ammonia, which removes grease deposited by perspiration. Any good soap may be used, but Ammonia Soap is recommended. The proportion is $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. to six gallons of water. Cover the clothes well up, as the sustained heat assists the removal of grease. After an hour's soaking, wash out by drawing through the hand, avoiding rubbing. Very dirty spots should be brushed with a soft brush. To thoroughly remove the soap, rinse out twice in lukewarm water. The use of a wringer is recommended, as it expels the water with the least friction. Hang up the clothes to dry lengthways. Iron while still damp, stretching the articles to the necessary length and width. The iron should not be unnecessarily hot. No soda or lye should be used.”

When hanging clothes out to dry, it should be remembered that all coloured things, all flannels and stockings, should be dried on the wrong side. All flannel petticoats, and other woollen garments set in a band, should be dried with the bands pegged to the line. If this were not done, the water would drain into the gathers and make them thick. All cotton and linen goods, on the other hand, should be hung with the bands downwards. Also it goes without saying that all clothes-lines, as well as clothes-pegs, must be perfectly clean.

After drying come folding and mangling. Fine muslin and laces do not need to be hung up to dry at all. All they need is to be folded, rolled up in a towel, and put aside to starch. (With regard to them, it may also be added that they must not be rubbed, but simply squeezed and dabbed in the soapy water.) Table-linen may be taken down when half dry, carefully folded ready to mangle, and afterwards to iron. Pocket-handkerchiefs need be very slightly dried; they may then be drawn straight, folded into four, and rolled tightly in a bundle ready for ironing. Body-linen should be dried thoroughly, then sprinkled with cold water, and smoothly and neatly folded. Unless this is done, there is little likelihood that they will look well when finished. After being folded and damped, they should lie for a few hours before they are mangled, in order that the dampness may be equally distributed all over. Mangling, it will be understood, makes ironing easier; with the commoner articles, it renders ironing unnecessary.

When washing and mangling are done with, starching and ironing follow as a matter of course. To “get up” fine linen well is a very refined accomplishment. At one time no girl was thought to be educated properly who was not an adept in the art. Later, skill with the iron seemed to be in danger of passing into the hands of professionals; the large laundries monopolised the work. Quite recently, however, clever domestic managers have taken starching and ironing into favour once more; they have realised the advantage connected with home laundry-work, and, as a consequence, girls have begun to practise ironing and clear-starching, and to be proud when

they are able to conquer its difficulties. This is a subject for congratulation.

It is a great thing in ironing to have proper tools for one's work. These are good, hot irons; a firm table covered with a good ironing-blanket, on the top of which is a clean cotton or linen cloth stretched tightly over; and a special narrow board firmly placed, for coloured dresses. The necessary requisites for the work are to be found in every house where washing is regularly done. Yet more important even than the proper tools is it to have practice if we would iron well. We often hear people talk as if skilled laundresses did everything by means of dodges. “How do laundresses get the gloss on the linen? How do they manage to make cuffs and collars so stiff? What sort of starch do they use?” &c. &c. These are questions constantly asked by amateurs who would like to unravel the mystery of laundry-work, and the probability is that every person interrogated would give a different reply.

The truth of the matter is that the “dodges” referred to have comparatively little to do with success, the secret of which depends really on the skill of the operator; and this skill is only to be acquired by practice, by trying and failing, and trying again. Few clever ironers would agree with this remark. Each one would say to herself, “Ah! my success is owing to my knowledge of such-and-such a secret.” And yet if we give one of these secrets in all its fulness, the piece ironed by the unskilled novice will look quite different from that which is ironed by the expert. The discouraging part of the business for the beginner is that every authority has a different secret. Thus she will hear from one that the thing that makes the difference is the way the starch is made, or the kind of starch used. One laundress will like cold starch, another hot starch, another will employ hot starch first, let the article dry, and use raw starch afterwards; one gets the much-desired “gloss” on her shirt-fronts by boiling the starch after it is mixed, another by adding a little dissolved borax, another by putting composite candle, spermaceti, and turpentine into it, another by pressing the edge of the iron heavily over the fabric the last thing, another by keeping on damping the article whilst ironing it, and then pressing it with a very hot iron; yet, likely as not, if these workers are accustomed to their work, they will every one turn out good work, though the methods employed are so dissimilar.

Speaking my own opinion, I may, perhaps, be allowed to say that in domestic practice hot starch is the best for shirts and all fine things; and that the most effectual way of getting a polish is to rub the article heavily with the edge of the iron, finishing off with a very hot iron. For making this starch I will give a recipe. Perhaps it is needless to add that, whatever sort of starch is used, the irons must be very hot, though not hot enough to scorch, and in good working order. A dirty iron will work incalculable mischief.

To make Starch.—Mix a little cold starch in a basin with cold water, to make a paste. Pour boiling water on it, and stir it without ceasing till it looks trans-

parent. Put it into a clean saucepan and boil it for about a minute, stirring it all the time. Turn it out and use it as required. If liked, a tea-spoonful of powdered borax, dissolved separately, can be added; and some laundresses would, instead of the borax, add about an inch of composite candle, three or four drops of turpentine, and a little knob of spermaceti. The suggestion of these additions gives room for experiment.

The great thing in starching fine things is to make the starch permeate the article all through, and to avoid lumps. The way to secure this is to dip them into the starch while rather damp, wring them out, and hang them up to dry. When quite dry they should be sprinkled with cold water, rolled tightly in a clean cloth, and put away until next day. As there is a knack in rubbing clothes to wash them, so there is a knack in ironing them. The idea should be not to rub them, but to *press* them, with the iron, and, whilst pressing, pass the iron along. Especially is this pressure needed for starched things. Linen collars and cuffs, for instance, should be first ironed very lightly on the right side, beginning at the outer edge, just to dry them a little. They should then be ironed smoothly on the wrong side, and then on the right side again. Linen collars need to be turned over thus because they are thick, and unless they are dried through they will be limp. For security's sake starched articles should be hung up after ironing, that they may get stiff and firm. Embroidery, on the other hand, should be ironed on the wrong side only. If ironed on the right side the stitched part would look flat and shiny, and consequently unlike new.

People who have begun to take an interest in laundry-work, usually feel a great ambition to iron shirts. They are courageous in this, for it is not easy to get up a shirt, and certainly an individual who could iron a shirt well could iron anything. To wash shirts at home is a very profitable employment. Shirts that are sent out to many common laundries either fall to pieces in no time through being washed with lime and various chemicals, or else they very soon become dark-coloured through not being properly washed at all.

To iron shirts well, it is not merely desirable—it is almost necessary—to have a small piece of board, of a size which can be slipped under the front while it is being ironed, and amply covered first with two layers of flannel, then with four of cotton. The front is the important part of the garment. If it is not firm and smooth, the shirt is badly ironed; if it is perfect, blemishes in parts less seen will pass muster. Yet it is almost impossible to make the front what it should be if we have to press over the back folds of the shirt; while if we try to draw the material back and lay the front evenly on the table, we can scarcely help creasing and tumbling the top of the front. By all means, therefore, let novices who want to give themselves a fair chance provide a “bosom-board” which they can slip under the front whilst it is being ironed. This being done, let them proceed as follows:—

Starch well the fronts, collars, and wrists of the shirts, dry them well, damp them, fold them double with the fronts inside, roll them up tightly and leave them till next day. Have ready a hot, clean, smooth iron. Begin by ironing the sleeves, and do the wrist-bands first on one side, then on the other, till dry and stiff. The final pressure should be on the right side. When the sleeves are done, go on to the shoulder-bands, and after these to the neck-bands. Do not relinquish any part till it is perfectly *dry*. Now take up the back of the shirt with both hands, shake it lightly to leave the back free, and lay the back double on the board. Iron the back all over—first on one side, then on the other. When this is done, take up the shirt and shake it lightly once more (holding it by the top of the sleeves on each side), lay it back downwards on the table, and iron all the front part that is not starched. Now slip the board under the breast, and iron this as thoroughly and smoothly as may be, pressing heavily to give a polish. When partly dry, lift up all the pleats with the fingers and press them down again. This gives the front a finished look. If any little mark or soil should appear, wipe it off with a damp rag, and iron again with a hot iron, and spare no pains to make it look well. Hang it before the fire when done, to dry it thoroughly.

THE GARDEN IN MAY.



THE transition month from spring to summer upon which we are just entering is, perhaps, one of the most difficult months of the year for the flower garden, for we must never forget that Dame Nature is somewhat wayward, and that the transition is sometimes not from spring to summer, but a retrospective transition from spring to winter; so that even the spectacle

of strawberry blossom in unfavourable contrast with the whiter snow which surrounds it is an anomaly within the memory of most of us. Not, of course, that this state of things ever lasts for long, but twenty-four hours of it is enough to make havoc among the bedding-out stock which our impatience has induced us, perhaps, to transfer on a prematurely warm May morning from the greenhouse to the open beds, without any thought of hardening-off first of all. This hardening-off, however, should have begun last month,