

be noticed that they do not ripen all at the same time ; gather them then as they ripen, for this is naturally often far more convenient for domestic purposes. King John, we must remember, it has been said, died of eating too many peaches at once, so let us take warning from him. The wasp and blue-bottle, how-

ever, seem to thrive by following his example, so it is well to leave one for them which they appear to single out for attack in preference to the rest. Sometimes this generosity helps to divert them from feasting upon those that remain. The insect question is certainly a difficulty in the garden.

HOW TO DRESS YOUR CHILDREN.

BY A MAIDEN AUNT.



IT is a very true saying that "onlookers see most of the game" — therefore it may be supposed that people who have no children of their own are pretty well able to criticise the clothing and costumes of the rising generation.

A maiden aunt is constantly in the way of hearing discussions about the children's garments, and her opinion is, if not always accepted, at least often asked for. "Here is summer coming on, and I have no thin frocks ready for the children. What shall I get them? Do suggest something." Or "What shall I get the girls for Mrs. Friendly's party? I want something pretty and cheap. Fred complains dreadfully of how much I spend on the girls' gowns." These are questions often asked, and not so easily answered; children's dress, even where expense has not to be seriously considered, is an important thing, and they are often made quite unhappy by being unbecomingly, or, worse still, over-smartly dressed. Many a girl's pleasure, at her first party, is completely spoiled by an injudicious mother's way of dressing her ; and many a boy's first term at school is made a misery to him from the same cause.

As to a schoolboy's clothing, however, I really do not feel at all competent to pronounce an opinion. Every one who has read Mrs. Ewing's tale of a "Flat Iron for a Farthing" will remember the amusing conversation which takes place between Reginald and his nurse, on his first return home from Eton, when she asks him what has become of "them bran-new fine linen shirts of his," and "where them rubbishing cotton rags in his box have come from ;" and he loftily replies that he has used the former "to clean Damer's lamp," and that the latter are the "correct thing." This shows that a boy's dress is a thing not to be lightly tampered with—the colour of a necktie, the shape of a hat, the depth of a collar, are matters far too abstruse to be entered upon here, and most mothers will find that on this subject they had better refrain from too much interference.

But the dress of a little boy still in the nursery is quite another thing. Here the maternal fancy may have full play. There are countless charming little suits for these urchins of tender years. The "Jack Tar," for instance, is one of the most popular just now ; and though, to my thinking, it looks decidedly out of place in town, it is just the thing for the country or the seaside, where the small wearer may dabble in sea-water or bedaub himself with mud to his heart's content. There are also the Jersey suits, in navy blue, red, or white, with the "jelly-bag" cap of the same material ; while for London wear, I think there is nothing prettier than the "Patience suit," in cloth, velvet, or plush, with either a Tam o' Shanter or a plain polo cap as head-gear. There seems to have been rather an attempt lately to revive the Highland kilt, but in cold weather it is decidedly out of place, and even dangerous, for a child to go about with semi-bare legs ; besides, these said legs must be very bonny ones to look well in this kind of costume.

A midshipman's dress is charmingly piquant on a very little boy. In Kensington Gardens, not long ago, I saw two little fellows, who looked about six and seven years of age, dressed as two complete miniature midshipmen, "pin for pin alike" ; the effect was very pretty, and it had all the merit of being uncommon.

But *place aux dames*. As to materials and styles for little girls' costumes, the only difficulty is to choose among the many exquisite things that one sees everywhere. Some of the shops in Regent Street and Bond Street constantly exhibit the most ravishing little frocks in their windows, and these can be very easily and cheaply copied at home, it takes so very little material. One cannot do better than make a study of them.

As to colours for children's frocks, I think, as a rule, anything bright and pretty in itself may be worn by them ; all young children have good complexions, and most of them are pretty. Bright red, so trying, and, as a rule, so conspicuous and unbecoming a colour on a grown-up person, is quite charming for a child's frock, worn with a "granny" bonnet in velvet or plush of the same bright shade.

Peacock-blue, moss-green, and mustard-colour are also effective and pretty shades for young children of both sexes.

Just now, the usual thing is to see tiny maidens from two to five dressed completely in white, dead white in

the summer, and a cream shade, suitable to the thicker materials, in winter. Certainly, where expense is not the primary object, nothing can look better than these last, while they are fresh and clean; but the smuts of London necessitate a constant renewal, for the thick material will not often wash or even clean satisfactorily, and this falls heavily on mammas whose purses are not long. In the summer, however, when the little cambric or muslin frocks can be washed every week, they may very well be worn: at any rate, put on for going out of doors, with the pink or white sun-bonnets, which shade the little faces so charmingly. There is no doubt that white is the colour, *par excellence*, for children.

Children's frocks should always be made quite simply, and comfort be the first thing considered. The fashion of dressing up little folks in white open-work socks and thin kid shoes for an out-door walk has now happily disappeared, and the low necks and short sleeves are also going the same way; one now sees the tiniest "dots" in long black stockings and long-sleeved frocks. At the Health Exhibition, some two or three years ago, among the many ludicrous and ill-constructed monstrosities designated "rational costumes," there were some really charming frocks for little girls exhibited, though perhaps there was nothing startlingly new about the patterns, and many, no doubt, had been long familiar to mothers and nurses. Most of these little frocks were of the "smock" type, the dress hanging from the shoulders almost straight, the bodice part being made with a yoke prettily "honeycombed," the sleeves loose and drawn into a band at the wrist, the waist just "hinted at" by a broad soft silk sash. This is a very good and healthy style of dress for a girl in the schoolroom who has entered upon the "leggy" stage of her existence, for at nine or ten years old it is quite time to leave off dressing a little girl smartly and picturesquely. While they are in the schoolroom their dress cannot be too simple for good sense, good taste, and economy; though, at the same time, there is not the slightest reason why the frocks should be unbecomingly or badly made, and harmony of colours and suitability of materials should be always considered. There is not the least excuse for a girl being sent out for her daily walk in a brown dress, a black jacket, and a grey hat, because she is "only in the schoolroom," or that she should be made to go on wearing a winter felt hat into July for the same reason, and because "it is not worth while to get her another one for every day."

Incongruity of attire should no more be tolerated in a girl in the schoolroom than in a young lady making her *début* in London society, these things being precisely what make so many girls uncomfortable about themselves, and often seriously unhappy, especially when getting on in their teens, and beginning to consider their own dress for the first time.

As a rule, light-coloured materials, except in very hot weather, should be eschewed for, at any rate, every-day frocks, as they soon become soiled and messy-looking.

Navy blue serge is one of the best of materials for a

school frock, and it is almost unending wear; also the infinite variety of checks and stripes in neutral-tinted woollen stuffs make useful and neat dresses.

If no maid sufficiently advanced with her needle is kept, the frocks should always be made by a thoroughly good dressmaker. There are many who make quite a study of children's dress, and things last twice as long which are thoroughly well made and finished off at first. The neat little cloth jackets, and useful tweed ulster or Newmarket coats, should be always made by a tailor.

Hats, which are very expensive items if bought ready made and trimmed from a milliner, can generally be most successfully trimmed at home. Many mothers with a knowledge of and taste for millinery trim all their children's hats, and very easily this is done, and very neat and pretty the effect. The countless varieties of the sailor hat, either trimmed with a plain band of ribbon to match the frock, or a cluster of upstanding bows at front, side, or back, are quite the prettiest and most useful for the summer, and, trimmed with white bows of ribbon, are sufficient for the most dressy occasions. Even in the winter they can now be obtained of felt or velvet, and trimmed with a few bright silk pompons in the front, or a bow of velvet and a wing. Most mothers, I think, find the hats a pretty easy business, and there are quantities of pretty shapes brought out every season which, simply and quietly trimmed, may be worn by these "little maids from school."

Now as to boots and shoes, to go from one extreme to the other, I think that these, not excepting even gloves, are the most troublesome and expensive articles of all in a child's wardrobe, and bootmakers are perverse people. When choosing their boots, it should always be borne in mind that they should, if anything, be a little longer than the foot; a short boot is a most dangerous thing, often tending to produce that painful affection, ingrowth of nail. Boots that come tolerably high up the leg, also, should be worn, as they help to support the ankles; the heel should be always square and tolerably low. Indoor shoes perhaps wear out soonest, especially with school-girls, and many mothers have despaired over this, and almost wished to return to the old-fashioned copper-toed shoes. Except on the most dressy occasions, therefore, those with very thin soles should never be worn. Oxford shoes, with flat heels and a tolerably thick sole, are, I think, the best, though some people think house-boots should always be worn by growing girls, as they prevent the feet from spreading.

Shoes, however, of the slipper type must be avoided, as they encourage a slouching style of walk, and are sure to be "trodden over." Now-a-days girls take so much more exercise than formerly, and are treading so closely on their brothers' heels in their games and gymnastics, that tight shoes, or tight clothes of any kind, would be simply an impossibility. We no longer see little girls decked out in exact imitation of their mothers and grown-up sisters; and even French people now follow our sensible fashion, and dress their children *à l'Anglaise*.