

## HOW TO WASH COLOURED DRESSES.

BY PHYLLIS BROWNE.



IT is a most trying experience when dresses which have been made of materials "warranted to wash" come back from the hands of the laundress with all their beauty gone, and their pretty colour faded. Such a mischance is almost enough to make economical folks say that they will never wear coloured prints and muslins again. Yet dresses of this sort are so fresh and so becoming, they are also (when the difficulty connected with "getting them up" has been satisfactorily disposed of) so lasting and inexpensive, that it is not likely that those who have a liking for simple and charming costumes will be able to withstand the temptation to procure them. Repeatedly these people will say to themselves that "printed dresses are very charming," and then add, with a sigh, "if only they were not so soon dirty, and if they did not spoil so easily, and cost so much to wash." Yet the probability is that again and again these cogitations will end with the purchase of the printed fabrics referred to, and a repetition of the disappointment connected with their renovation.

If people who have so great a liking for printed fabrics could but manage to wash their prints at home, how easy it would be to indulge in them, and how becoming and inexpensive would be their attire from this time forth! It is the professional laundress who ruins prints. She does not destroy them out of malice; she is a very well-meaning individual; and if she had plenty of time to bestow upon them, she could doubtless make them look much more satisfactory than the amateur laundress can possibly do. But she is a busy woman; she has piles of clothes to wash and send to their respective owners before the end of the week, and has neither time nor patience to spend upon what she calls "fiddle-faddling" over a print dress here and there. Consequently, she puts the dress into the first lather which is convenient for the purpose, never stopping to think whether or not the said lather contains soda or bleaching powder. When the dress is rinsed she hangs it out at once, if there is room on the lines; but if there is not, she leaves it lying in the basket until there is room. Yet every minute that it lies there the beauty and brightness are going from it, and that process of deterioration is being accomplished which will shortly bring a look of annoyance and vexation to the countenance of the owner of the garment.

The laundress was quite right in her conclusion, however; to wash coloured prints and muslins there must be "fiddle-faddling;" indeed, fiddle-faddling is required more than hard work in operations of this sort. For one thing, the operator ought not to commence proceedings unless she feels that she has leisure to complete her task. Nothing spoils coloured fabrics so much as to begin them and then to let them

remain, waiting for a convenient season to be finished. After being once wetted they should be rinsed and dried as quickly as possible, otherwise the colours will run. Everything that is hot should be avoided for them also; they should not be washed in hot water, they should never be boiled (of course), they should never be dipped into hot starch after they are dry, they should not be ironed with a hot iron, and they should be hung to dry, not in the sun, but in the shade. A shady day, when there is a light breeze, is the *beau idéal* of a day for drying coloured goods. Here it is that our friend the laundress so frequently fails. She cannot "pick and choose" her time, and picking and choosing is part of the fiddle-faddling which makes this work a success.

Heat, however, is not the only thing we have to be afraid of when washing prints. Soda is to be avoided with scrupulous care, and so also must be those chemical compounds which cleanse such goods so quickly that they carry away more than the dirt. Wash the prints therefore quickly and well in two soapy waters, and do not rub the soap upon them; then rinse them well in clear cold water. When the colours are very delicate, experienced individuals like to put something into the rinsing water to keep them from running. It is very usual to put several handfuls of salt into the rinsing water for this purpose, and it certainly achieves its end; the disadvantage is that when salt is used the dress soon becomes soft, especially in damp weather. Alum, vinegar, ammonia, black pepper, and ox-gall, are all used for brightening the colours of washing materials. The latter-named substance is, perhaps, as well known as any, and it undoubtedly proves effectual—at least for a time. Very often it has been found that the garment soon becomes dingy after it has been used. Yet when all is said and done, these various "aids" are, or should be, superfluous. If the print or cambric is of fairly good quality, if it has been washed quickly in cool water without a suspicion of soda and rinsed in clear cold water, it will come from the wash looking lovely, especially if it has been hung in the shade to dry, and ironed carefully.

When colours are very delicate, fabrics are often washed in bran and water instead of soap and water. The South Kensington people strongly recommend bran because, they say, it is safer than soap. The way to use it is to pour half a gallon of boiling water upon half a pound of bran, let it stand for some hours, then strain it, and use it lukewarm without soap, remembering to turn the dress inside out before washing, and to dab it up and down and squeeze it to get out the dirt, and to avoid rubbing. Coloured dresses should always be hung to dry with the inside outwards. If they are to be kept in good condition, they should not be allowed to get very dirty before being washed.

It has already been said that coloured dresses

should be ironed with a cool iron. It may be added that it is much easier to iron the skirts of dresses if a narrow board is provided, made narrower at one end, over which the skirts can be hung, so that they can be laid single, and turned round and round as they are ironed. This board may rest on trestles, or even on the top of the backs of two kitchen chairs which have weights on the seats to keep them steady. The board must be covered with thick flannel, over which a clean coarse sheet should be pinned, as an ordinary ironing-board would be. Ironing coloured dresses is a very much easier business when a board of this sort is available. The thickest part of dresses—such as the gathers, sleeves, and waistbands—should be ironed first. The dresses should also be ironed on the wrong side first, and finished on the right side. Muslins look better when they are ironed twice in different directions. Skill in work of this sort, however, can only be gained by practice. The way to learn to iron is to iron.

It may be added that washing materials are much more likely to stand the wash if they are wisely chosen when new. Of late years there have been so many improvements made in the arts of mixing colours and printing calico, that it is now safe to buy colours which used to fade very speedily. Yet still we have to say that lilac wears and washes best, and that blue, mauve, green, and black need to be bought with

caution. Some pinks wash very well. Authorities tell us that printed material is likely to wear well if the impression is marked well on the wrong side of the fabric. The safest way, however, of ascertaining whether or not print will wash well is to experiment upon it; and really prudent people would never be content to buy a dress until they had tried what it was worth by passing a small piece through the wash-tub.

There are other fabrics besides prints and muslins which can be very satisfactorily washed if a little pains be bestowed upon them, although they do not strictly come under the name of washing fabrics. Amongst these may be mentioned merino, llama and serge, alpaca, mohair, linsey, &c. Goods of this description should invariably be picked to pieces before they are washed. The way to cleanse them is to put the breadths one at a time into a strong lather (lukewarm) and press it against the sides of the vessel or pass it through the hands till it is free from dirt, but refrain from rubbing it unless this is absolutely necessary. When clean it should be rinsed in another thin lather, squeezed, not wrung, as dry as may be, and ironed on the wrong side before it is quite dry. If the fabric thus washed be black, a little ammonia should be put into the rinsing water with it, and this will greatly improve it. But ammonia should not be used for anything but black.

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## THE STRUGGLES OF ABEL STRONG.

A LIVING CHESS STORY. BY HENRY FRITH.

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Our life is like a game of chess,  
The board our little sphere :  
Alternate bright and darkened spots,  
As is existence here !

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### CHAPTER THE FIRST. THE BOARD AND ITS OCCUPANTS.



SHOULD you ever be in Devonshire, and, quitting the railway, strike across the country to the more northern and eastern district, you may chance to light, as I did one afternoon, on a pretty coast village called Esthamlet. If you travel thither along the high road from Taunton way, you will surely pass through Westonbridge, a town of some importance, possessing several thousands of inhabitants, mostly work-people in the great machine shops of which Mr. Aggington was master.

You will be charmed with Esthamlet, as I was; and so, being independent and seeking rest, I sent for my luggage, and one fine day found myself located in the roomy and pleasant cottage owned by Mr. Strong, an honest, upright man, who was a

widower, and had an only son Abel, who was daily employed in "the Works."

Esthamlet is, as I have said, a pretty village, the houses of which are tumbled about rather irregularly, not of set purpose or design of line and rules. It was, like many another Devon village, approached by narrow lanes only, until the coach road sent a side path to it, and vehicles could then pass in and out without shouting and heated arguments. There is a charming old church, lichen-grown and ivy-clad, with tombstones to match, and a glimpse of the channel through the north windows, between which you will read the epitaphs on marble slabs to various memorial Claxtones—an old family, you may be certain.

My first appearance in the village was signalled by a little adventure. I was making my way along the narrow fern-bordered lane, when suddenly upon me, round the turning of the road, cantered a beautiful girl on a high-mettled steed. In a moment I should