

"FOR A SONG."

"It was sold for a song," for a trifle you mean,
And maybe the saying's not wrong;
Yet the brightest and dearest of things upon earth
Can sometimes be bought by a song.

I know that its value in gold isn't much,
Few riches to poets belong,
And scarcely enough to keep strength in his voice
The singer can get by his song.

Though wealth may be useful, as all men allow,
It cannot make happiness strong,

Nor give the contentment and joy to the heart
It finds in just singing a song.

The nightingales sing all the summer night through,
And thrushes sing all the day long;
If poets and birds were to fly from our land,
What would we not give for a song.

Oh, songs have a value far greater than gold,
I'm sure you'll not say I am wrong,
For the treasure I prize above all things on earth,
Your heart, dear, was won by a song. M. W.



APRONS.



HERE is nothing so pretty as an apron for home wear. It seems to give an air of pleasant homeliness to the

wearer, and at once stamps her character

as careful, economical, and exquisitely tidy—qualities which she will surely carry into everything she undertakes in life. She is perhaps a little precise too, which will show itself in punctuality as to time, and as to business-like habits in keeping her engagements, and we feel nearly sure that the apron-wearer will neither disappoint, nor vex us with any unreliability.

The word itself is a strange blunder, being "a napperon" converted into "an apperon"—*napperon* being the French for a "napkin," from *nappe*, "cloth." In many counties in England it is said that the word "aperon" is still used.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the apron is its extreme antiquity. It appears to have been worn from the Fall until the present day. In our own country Strutt, who wrote on the "Dress and Habits of the People of England," gives an illustration of it as used in his time, the thirteenth century. His picture shows us a blacksmith at work, in an apron precisely similar to the leathern one still worn. It is tied round the waist, and thence rises to the breast, which it completely covers, and is secured round the neck by a tie. This shape had been in use long previously by women, and continued so long afterwards. It was also worn at that date by the upper classes as an ornamental addition to the dress. In the fourteenth century the apron was called a "barne cloth" in England, and in "The Miller's Tale" Chaucer gives a description of it as worn by the carpenter's wife. She wore—

"A barne cloth, eke as white as moe milk,
Upon her lendes, full of many a gore."

These many gores are thought to mean "plaits," or perhaps gathers, which were done in the way we now call "honey combing."

After this period the apron was confined to good housewives in the country, until the sixteenth century, when the ladies took them again into favour as articles of decoration; and used them of so fine a texture that a poet of the day says—

"These aprons white, of finest thread,
So choicilie tied, so dearly bought,
So finely fringed, so nicely spread,
So quaintly cut, so richly wrought;
Were they in work to save their coats,
They need not cost so many groats."

Stephen Gosson's "Pleasant Quippes for Upstart Gentlewomen," 1596.

These aprons were edged with lace, and one of them may be seen on the monumental effigy of Mistress Dorothy Strutt, in Whalley Church, Essex, who died in 1641.

In the days of King William III. they again became an indispensable part of a lady's dress, and were very small, edged round with the finest and most costly lace, and covered the top of the petticoat, the front of which was fully displayed by the open gown then in use. Good Queen Anne herself wore an apron later on, and in her reign they were richly decorated with needlework, gold lace, and spangles; and occasionally these ornaments formed a framework for a small picture, which was painted on satin and sewn on the apron. One of the aprons of this date, which has descended to me from an ancestress, is in my possession, and is a beautiful example of needlework. The ground is of white silk, the apron being about half a yard square. The border is of leaves in coloured silks, and vines and flourishes round them in silver thread and cord. The fineness of the work is a subject of wonder to all who see it. It was worn under the pointed bodice, and they sometimes had a stomacher to match in colour.

In George II.'s reign they were worn very long and quite plain, without lace or ornament, but occasionally fringed at the end. The material seems to have been white muslin or lawn. A curious anecdote is told of these aprons. It appears that Beau Nash, the Master of the Ceremonies and the celebrated "King of Bath," had the strongest aversion to them, and excluded all ladies who ventured to appear at the Bath assemblies dressed in that manner. In Goldsmith's "Life of Nash" it is said that "at one assembly he went so far as to strip the

Duchess of Queensberry's apron off, and, throwing it down on one of the back benches, declared that none but abigails appeared in white aprons." How strange a picture of the mixture of rudeness, and extreme ceremony in the manners of that day!

Short aprons of cambric were worn in full dress in 1788, and after that we do not hear of aprons being much in use till 1830 to 1850, when all ladies wore them, made generally of black silk, and though decorated and ornamented in various ways, they were not the entirely useless articles of dress of the preceding century, but were intended to combine the useful and the ornamental.

A great revival of aprons took place when art needlework commenced to be applied to them about the year 1874. Since then they have been in constant use for the household-work and lawn-tennis, and they will in all probability retain their hold on our fickle fashions for some time to come; but whether this be so or not all young girls should make a practice of wearing them, as they add much to their appearance both at work and at play.

In our page of aprons we have tried to gather together all that is prettiest and most useful, too, of the modern styles, and in order to please every one of our girls we have taken all materials and aprons for all seasons and events. The first three may be called "dress," or afternoon aprons, and they are suitable for that time of day when we are all supposed to have done work, and put on our best frocks. The first apron is of white muslin or nainsook; it has a gored centre, and two gores at the sides, and is trimmed with tating and muslin puffings. The little girl's apron is of the well-known princess shape, and may be made of any white washing material, from muslin, to a figured brilliant or jacconet, trimmed with embroidery.

The third figure wears a charming apron, both in style and trimming. It is of mull muslin, or Victoria lawn, trimmed with frills of the same, and a fancy-coloured washing braid. The next two figures give the back and front of a housekeeping and cooking apron, which is made of a coloured printed cotton, or a sateen, those with a white ground being the most suitable. It is edged all round with a frill of the same, and has a large pocket which may be placed either at the side, or in front, as the wearer pleases. The next figure wears a useful house-apron, which completely



Afternoon Apron -
Muslin. Telling

Afternoon Apron
for girls
between
10 and 12

Afternoon Apron - Mull muslin or
Victoria lawn with frills
lacy braid

Front
House-keeping and Cooking Apron
Print or Satin

House Apron
appliance bands on
red and blue



Work Apron with
pocket and Blue lines
and outline embroidery
in colours

Afternoon Apron
for girls
between 10 and 12
*(front)

House Apron trimmed with
Turkey-red bands and braid
embroidery cotton

*(back)

Roman Apron
embroidered in
crewels

Roman Apron
cross-stitch

hides the dress, and so is equally valuable to protect a new or to hide an old one. The material may be unbleached Barnsley linen, brown holland, or any of the new fancy materials, such as oatmeal cloth. The bands are of blue linen, with an *appliqué* pattern in vine leaves of Turkey-red cotton or crétonne flowers. Plain bands may also be used. The work-apron with a pocket will prove an immense comfort to those who do much needlework or knitting, as not only does it hold the balls of yarn, the cotton, scissors and needles, but the work itself can be safely put away in it, to be found in order for an immediate start when taken up again. The material of our illustrated apron is blue linen, with outline or cross-stitch embroidery in coloured ingrain cottons.

The little girl's apron with a bib and *bretelles*, or shoulder straps, is a very pretty and stylish pattern, the back being especially effective. Any material, from muslin to silk, may be used, the pattern given being made of muslin, with a muslin and lace frilling, and three rows of narrow black ribbon velvet all round, which of course requires to be taken off when the apron is washed. The young lady's house-apron is perhaps the most useful and practical of all. It is made of workhouse or Bolton sheeting, and has bands of Turkey-red twill laid on, and sewn down with the sewing machine. The little design above is worked with red and blue ingrain cotton. The front resembles that of the little girl's, but the shoulder straps cross behind instead of coming down straight to the belt. The Roman apron is the newest of all that we have illustrated. It is made of fine unbleached linen, or it may be of pure white. It is cut lengthwise, and is about one yard and a half long, and folded over nearly half a yard from the top. The strings are sewn in under the fold three inches from the edge on each side. The decoration consists of two rows of embroidery, which may be done in drawn-work, cross-stitch, or even in crevels. The ends are fringed and then knotted evenly, and the sides are hemmed up. The width of the apron is three-quarters of a yard.

The next apron is also called a Roman apron, although not doubled over at the top. It is made of black silk, and is twenty-four inches long by twenty wide. The length is increased by the addition of the trimming and lace to over three-fourths of a yard. The trimming consists of strips of red, blue, or white linen, worked in a border design of cross-stitch with ingrain cotton (see design for a Neapolitan apron at page 332, vol. ii.). The lace is an ordinary inexpensive Spanish lace, sewn on with very little fulness.

The small design at fig. 1 is intended to give an idea of the new darned work, which has been revived from the seventeenth century styles of embroidery. The material used is huckaback; the price about 10d. per yard. The ends are fringed, and the unworked end is turned over, like the usual Roman apron, the lower part alone being worked. The design chosen is a conventional pomegranate,

from a series of designs lately published, which are copies of ancient needlework. The pattern is traced, and worked first in outline stitch in blue filoselle, which should be split to three strands only. The background is then put in by darning from every one of the double threads which appear on the surface of the huckaback. The square is, of course, traced first to keep it even in working. The colours chosen may be all blue, blue in two shades, yellow for the grounding, and red for the outlining, or even a mixture of tints, if great cleverness be exercised in doing it.

The only apron I have left unnoticed is that in the well-known handkerchief style, which has now become so common, and is so cheaply purchased, that it has passed beyond the ken of our more artistic workers.

HOW TO WASH AND DRESS THE BABY.

By RUTH LAMB.

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT LITTLE NURSES.

BEFORE I enter upon the main subject of these chapters I should like to devote a portion of them to a very large class of helpful-handed little people. I mean young nurses. This class includes both boys and girls. Had it not been for this fact, I might perhaps call these youngsters "Little Mothers." But I see, almost daily, such pleasant pictures of small boy-nurses in the exercise of their vocation, that the class must be understood to include them also, if fairly treated.

Perhaps there is no place in which the genus "little nurse" can be studied in all its varieties and to greater advantage than in our public parks. On every fine morning especially, it is to be met with at almost every turn, and of nearly all ages above that of the actual baby in charge.

In the houses of well-to-do people, where there are experienced nurses to assist mothers in the care of their children, or sometimes—alas that it should be so!—to take the entire charge of them during infancy, the elder little people of the family generally have to beg to be allowed to "take baby."

The little lassie of eight or nine who is, perhaps, a baby worshipper, and whose ambition it is to be called a good nurse, is sometimes quite indignant at the amount of supervision to which she is subjected all the while baby is on her knee. She chafes at the continual charges, "Mind you don't hurt him, Miss Annie!" "He'll be off your knee if you're not more careful!" "Put your arm behind his back!" and so on, *ad libitum*.

At the same time the vigilant eyes of nurse are so perpetually turned in the direction of her amateur assistant, that any sense of responsibility in that quarter is utterly destroyed, and Miss Annie herself waxes indignant under this persistent and irritating espionage.

True, the elder child's young arms lack the strength and dexterity of nurse's practised ones; but baby, if well, does not object to Annie's rather awkward mode of handling him. He likes to see her young, fresh laughing face close to his, and sister Annie's hair is delightful to pull and to bury his small fists in. He seizes it and tugs with all his might, and so retaliates on his little nurse for having poked and tickled him into a fit of laughter, in which she joins as heartily. His real nurse's head-gear is much less attractive, her prim cap being carefully and necessarily kept out of baby's clutches, and her hair, tidily tucked beneath it, offers no such temptation to baby's roving fingers as do Miss Annie's soft flowing curls.

But nurse has perhaps just tidied Miss Annie for dinner, and the ruffled hair is an additional grievance. "You should not let baby pull your hair so," she says, in a tone of reproof. "I shall have it all to curl up again before you go downstairs."

It seems a pity to disturb such a delightful game, when baby brother and little sister are so innocently happy. But Annie is tired of such constant looking after, tired of the continual nagging and cautioning, and she would not hurt the chubby darling for all the world. So she sighs in a weary fashion, gives baby a hearty kiss on his dear little distended mouth, evading another grab at her curls as she does so, and resigns herself anew into the hands of nurse, who grumbles a good deal at having to put her to rights a second time.

Annie's mind is considerably exercised on the subject of nursing and of her assumed helplessness in comparison with the scores of little nurses whom she sees in sole charge of babies. None of the tiny creatures appear to come to any harm in consequence of the trust reposed in mere children by poor mothers who have no choice but to do this, if their household work is to be completed in anything like a reasonable time. She wonders why poor people's children may be trusted to do all sorts of things for and with babies; whereas she is looked after, watched and cautioned at every turn, just as if her little brother were made of egg-shell china, and she had made up her mind to break him with a touch.

Miss Annie looks at her round strong arms, very different from those of some little nurses she sees out of doors; she knows that her limbs are stronger, because she has good health, and is better fed and looked after than they are; she has the will to be useful, and she loves, with all the warmth of her young heart, the helpless darling in the nursery at home.

She feels half-angry, half-humiliated, and says to herself, "I wish I lived in a cottage where there are no nurses to bother and fidget, then mamma would be glad to let me have baby and take him out whenever I liked."

There are plenty of children like our "Miss Annie," who grow up comparatively helpless, but who are only so because they are neither taught how to make themselves useful nor trusted. As a hint both to mothers and children, let me point out a few of the valuable qualities which I have seen developed in little nurses. These have come under my notice as I have watched them in the streets and parks, far beyond the overseeing eye of the mother who was often toiling for their bread at the wash-tub or in the mill.

Carefulness, patience, unselfishness, endurance, good temper, tender love for the little one, and trustworthiness. Perhaps I should notice the last mentioned quality before all the rest. The mother must believe in its existence when she trusts her infant to the care of a nine year old girl or boy. How seldom does the child fail her! How carefully is the baby held, just as a mother holds it! How watchful are those young eyes over

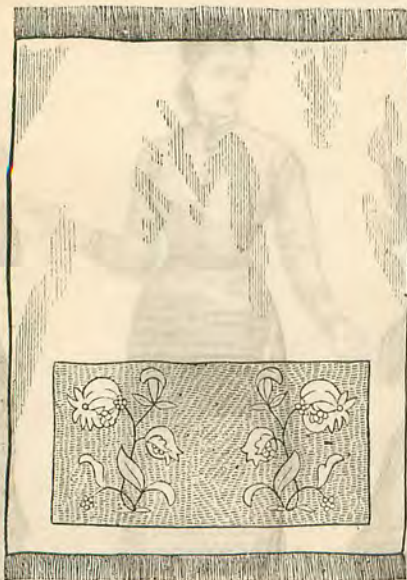


FIG. 1.