THE ART OF WASHING.

By DORA DE BLAQUIÈRE.

PART I.

WHAT is called by a friend the "family water party," is not often looked forward to as a period of enjoyment in the house; and whether from carelessness and want of thought, or general mismanagement, it is usually the most miserable period of family life. The weekly washing is a terror in most houses, and it never seems ended. On the Continent — especially in Switzerland—the *lessive*, as it is called, may occur once in three months, or once in six. In the latter case it lasts a fortnight, the first week being given to washing and drying, the second week to mangling, ironing, and finishing-up. Of course this demands plenty of space, and any amount of cupboards in which to store the clothes; and also any amount of clothes, both for the house and for the personal use of the inmates. One lady of my acquaintance has four dozen night-gowns to provide for her wants during the six months when no washing is done in the house.

In England we do not quite compass this method of accomplishing our laundry-work, nor should we think it advisable; but where family washing is concerned, my own opinion is, that it may be very well done every fortnight or three weeks, with a great increase in the comfort, as well as in the economy of the household. The general objection is, that so many more clothes are needed, and that when there are children, it is quite impossible to avoid some washing. But I honestly think that much of this seeming difficulty would vanish with the exercise of a little forethought, and a small expenditure in a few more articles of clothing, which would be amply repaid in the increased length in the wear of those in use. For instance, if you arrange to wash every third week, you will need about four nightgowns for each person, or in house-linen you will need the same number, or one extra, to allow for the many accidents of household life. In bedroom towels and pocket-handkerchiefs you would find an increased number was needed, and also in pillow-cases and sheets; but no very large sum would be required—not over £2 I am sure—to make up the full amount of linen requisite for the change.

In a small establishment, with only one servant, if the washing be done at home, the services of a charwoman would be needed for a very large amount of clothes. In this case the help of the servant is only given in certain things, viz., she lights the fire under the copper, if there be one, and has hot water ready when the washerwoman comes; the tubs should be prepared, and everything waiting in readiness. She helps to wring out the clothes or to turn the wringer, to hang them out, and to do any other little thing for which she may have spare time.

One day should be allowed between the visits of the washerwoman, should you have one; and on this day the folding and damping of the linen may take place; so that on the second day the washerwoman comes she may have nothing to do but the mangling, the ironing, and starching; but if there be time on the intermediate day, the mangling had better be done also. This, as well as the folding, is work in which the members of the household can not only help, but do everything, if they wish to do so; for there is no hardship or difficulty involved when once they have been shown how to fold and damp down the clean clothes.

Where the extra assistance cannot be afforded, the usual plan is to lend all the aid possible in the house, so as to leave the maid free to do the washing undisturbed. Thus, if she rose early enough, she might get two hours before breakfast, and the preparation of that meal might be made much easier if her mistress were an early riser on that day; for the eggs might be boiled and the tea made in the dining-room, and the breakfast things cleared away and washed up, even by herself. Nor is this any hardship, nor any new idea; for if we looked back to the daily lives of our great-grandmothers, we should find them washing up their beautiful Sévres, Worcester, or Derby china, in the dining-room directly breakfast was over, the boiling water being in the urn, and a fine damask towel close at hand in readiness. The china was then kept in the dining-room; and this fact explains the use of the beautiful glass-faced cupboards which we find were made by those famous makers, Sheraton and Chippendale, for the safe keeping of the china placed in them, and always kept there. If our great-grandmothers had not been the careful souls they were, but little of the beautiful china we see to-day would have been left. There is very little trouble in washing up the breakfast things, armed with a clean towel, a china bowl, and a short mop—generally to be found in brush shops—the mop part to be made of candle-wick. The large greasy plates and dishes must be packed together and taken downstairs as well as the knives; but cups and saucers, small plates, and silver, can all be washed without your rising from the table. The use of the short-handled tiny mop will prevent the hot water from touching the hands, and will save you from the chaps and chilblains which might be produced by its use.

The day before the washing it is also advisable to make some arrangements about the dinner on that day. Have a small roast of beef, which can be eaten cold, with pickles; and if you have mashed potatoes, they can be put into a greased bowl and baked until they are of a nice light-brown colour all over. The sweet course can also be arranged for by having some stewed fruit—apples or pears in winter, rhubarb in the spring and summer, and any summer dainty that is in season. This, with a mould of rice or cornflour, can be prepared the previous day. By the time of late dinner your maid will have finished her washing, and will be dressed and tidy, and ready to lay the table, if you have not already partly laid it yourself. In many houses, at present, the tablecloth and the pretty decorations remain on the table the whole week, the mistress touching them up occasionally. The use of the carpet sweeper guarantees from all dust in the room, and thus much work can be saved in the house if another room can be found for the family sitting-room, and the dining-room devoted only to meals. In a very small house, I should always recommend that the second sitting-room should be a kind of library—not a drawing-room, which latter, for a family of small means, I consider a very useless place, besides being uncomfortable, dreary, and cold, and half the time shut up. A pleasant library might be furnished for the same money, and be the family sitting-room in habitual use.

It seems a long time before we arrive at our washing; but these articles are intended to serve two purposes, and especially to offer suggestions and assistance in "how to help in the house." It is exactly here where our young matrons are so often at fault, and are "like one that beateth the air" in their helpless ignorance.

The articles to be washed should be gathered together on the day before the washing, and this is the reason why Tuesday is a better washing-day than Monday; for we need the latter day for our preparations, our mending, and sorting-out. Monday morning should be a busy one always, if the house that can only boast of one or two servants is to be successfully "run;" and if you wash once in three weeks or once a fortnight, you will have to make Mondays your stay-at-home periods.

Monday afternoon will be the time to put into soak the things to be washed; and they should be carefully sorted into three classes, and placed in separate vessels, *i.e.*, first the personal linen, then the table linen, and then that of the household. Another division is the table linen and fine chamber towels; the body linen, and the sheets, pillow-cases, and bath sheets; and the servants' linen, with the ordinary towels, etc., of the house. The coloured clothing and flannels, as well as the stockings and socks, must be sorted out and laid aside, to be washed separately on Tuesday. The object of soaking the white things is to loosen the dirt in them, and make them the easier to cleanse. There are three operations in washing—soaking, scrubbing, and boiling; and the order of these should never be changed, nor must the house-mistress ever permit the boiling to precede the scrubbing, for the clothes should be clean before being put into the copper. If the soaking has been properly done, a gentle rubbing should be sufficient, and then the clothes should be rinsed once in clean warm water, and wrung out, then thrown into a copper of water in which some pieces of soap have been shred, and well boiled for about a quarter of an hour. Just at present there is much discussion on the question of boiling linen, and I find many practical people are not at all in favour of it, but think that it is a useless operation, likely to give the linen a bad colour, unless carried out by a skilful and experienced hand. The object of boiling is, of course, to make the linen a good colour; but now we have found out that in boiling certain chemical actions are set up, and that although it will dissolve fatty acids in the linen, and take out the dirt, it *may* also, if the water be hard, unite the lime of the water and the alkali in the soap, and thus we have an insoluble substance formed in the water, which clings to the fibre of the cotton and linen, and can only be discharged with difficulty. This effect may be studied in the London washing, alas! with great frequency, for our clothes are always yellow or black by reason of this soapy action.

After this final boiling the linen ought to be quite clean. And now follows what I always believe to be the chief operation in washing, *i.e.*, the rinsing of the boiled clothes. We must always remember that it is by prolonged and careful rinsing alone that we get rid of the soap which we have put in, the dirty water, and the greasy compounds. In Dr. Jaeger's recipe for washing his flannels and woven articles, he directs that they shall be rinsed in three waters, each water to be of

the same uniform temperature as the water in which they were washed, and the last water should be quite clear and clean *after* the woollens have been wrung out of it. This is the secret of all good colour in washed linen. In ordinary clothes, not being woollens, the first rinsing after the boiling should be in clear clean hot water, the second in cooler, and the last in cold water, plenty of water being needed.

If not fortunate enough to have a wringing machine, you must be sure to see that the wringing is done in such a manner as not to injure the linen, for some washers twist it with the greatest force, and strain it in every thread. Blueing is generally performed with the last rinsing water used in the home laundry. The blue is tied up in a piece of stout linen, and the water is coloured by drawing the bag thus made in and out and through the water, till it is well mixed and of a suitable colour. Some people put the blue-bag into a basin of hot water, and thus prepare a small quantity of strongly-tinted fluid, which they then add to the tepid or cold rinsing water. All blueing water should be very well mixed, for if not it may cause streaks on the linen. This is especially likely to be the case if the rinsing has been badly done, and the soap left in. In this case the streaks will inevitably appear just where the soap has been left in the linen.

The washing proper being now completed, we come to the important question of drying —only important, however, in London and large towns, where it is impossible to hang out the linen for that purpose. In the country, or where a small garden or roof is available, there need be no trouble on this score; the only forethought then required is in taking every advantage of fine weather when it comes, or of the snatches of sunshine in the midst of showers of rain and the fogs of winter. Drying in the open air is superior to every kind of expedient; and the sun and wind are the best bleachers. But our home washer, who has to dry in the house, need not be discouraged; for if she washes thoroughly well, and rinses carefully, she may even defy the disadvantages of drying in the kitchen. Indeed, most, if not all, of the drying in large cities is done in hot closets, and with the aid of the hydro-extractor. This is a round basin-like kind of machine, having an inner open-work cage, in which the linen is placed. The machine is then set in motion, and the cage flies round and round, whereby the air is forced through the wet linen, while the water is forced out; with the result, that the drying is more than half accomplished when the clothes go into the hot closet. This is not, however, very generally available in private houses, and amongst people with small incomes; and it is not to be expected that they will have more than a wringing machine, or perhaps a washer and wringer combined.

A word must here be given to the question of the machinery used in washing clothes, and the benefit of it in the case of families. There is no doubt about the wringer. I should unhesitatingly recommend the purchase of one in any house even where the means were the most limited. The saving of labour and fatigue is enormous; and also the wear and tear of the clothes is greatly lessened. Most large wringers can also be used as mangles, and this too is a saving of labour. In the latter case, however, the wringer cannot be fastened upon the tub in which the clothes are being washed, as it is affixed to a table; the mangling table being put on when the machine is used for that purpose. Wringers are also attached to washing machines; but on this extensive subject I do not propose to enter, as it is so much a question of individual preference; and there are so many excellent makers and kinds of machine from which to make a selection. If any of my readers visited our recent exhibitions at South Kensington, and were at all interested in the subject of machinery applied to the uses of the house, I should think they will have formed ideas on the subject. If not, a small wringing machine from a maker of good repute is quite a safe purchase, and a very valuable one; and they can then delay the purchase of another machine until they have made enquiries, examined, and made up their minds as to what will suit them best.

As a rule the clothes are passed three times through the wringer, once after soaking, once after washing, and the last and most important time, after the blueing and the rinsing have been gone through. The management of a wringing machine should be thoroughly mastered when the machine is bought, because in most machines the rollers have to be adjusted, and should not be screwed too tightly at any time. The purchaser should also learn how to oil it; and the rollers should be loosened after use, and carefully covered from dust. Before using, they should be dusted, and if needed, they should be washed with a clean sponge and some soap, and wiped dry before leaving them.

We left our washing at the conclusion of the first part, and we must now proceed to have a little chat on the drying question. The best time for drying the clothes, if they must be done in the house, is at night, in the warm kitchen; where they may be hung up without harm to anyone, just before the maid retires to bed, and taken down in the morning before the kitchen fire is lighted. This is particularly the time to dry the larger things, like sheets and tablecloths. In some kitchens the clothes can be hung up on cords, which are attached to strong hooks, the hooks remaining always in their places, and the cords being removed when the need for them is ended. But if the kitchen be sufficiently lofty, the wisest plan is to have long wooden laths across it, which are raised and lowered at each side by pulleys and cords. These appliances might remain there always, so as to be used with ease. They should, if possible, be placed high enough up to allow of the ordinary clothes being hung up above the heads of the occupants of the kitchen; and if the tops of the windows be opened the steam will escape, and there will be no danger to them of colds or coughs. The hooks can be used in any kitchen, however low, and the lines when taken down should be put away in a drawer with the other articles pertaining to the family laundry, viz., the ironing-blanket, blue-bag, and the bags for boiling the clothes in, which are sometimes used to prevent the scum settling on them when in the copper.

I have not said very much on the question of soap, soda, borax, or paraffin as helpers and cleaners in the process of washing. Soap should be purchased by the bar at all times, each bar cut up into about four pieces, and put up to dry on the top of a cupboard, or anywhere else where it will dry slowly. Even the good soap contains about one-third of its weight of water; and I do not advise you to get the cheaper kinds, as, in addition to the disagreeable smell, it will not do you such good service. Cold water soap is often used to rub on the soiled parts of clothes when they are put into soak in the lukewarm water, the clothes receiving the most benefit when lightly put in and not packed too closely. The same may be said of the boiling process. The household linen and underlinen will not, as a rule, need anything put into the soaking waters, but for the kitchen towels and the servants' washing about two ounces of soda may be added to the water, and well dissolved in it before the clothes are put in. If, however, the clothes require it, about half a pound of soda dissolved in a gallon of boiling water may be used, this quantity being divided between the three soaking pans. Soda, it must be remembered, unless well rinsed out, gives the clothes a yellow colour, which cannot be extracted from them.

Borax is a far more valuable cleansing agent than soda, and at the present moment is to be obtained pure and good. Borax softens water, and with no evil effects, and in soaking clothes it loosens dirt in a marvellous manner. A tablespoonful of borax to each gallon of water is the usual mixture for soaking clothes.

Paraffin was discovered to be a powerful and useful aid in the laundry by Miss Gordon Cumming, some years ago, and since then it has had both admirers and detractors. There seems no reason to doubt that with care it is very helpful in saving time, trouble, and expense in the laundry. Where it has failed the failures were owing, I believe, to the employment of cheap soaps and the neglect of skimming the boiling water frequently, as the soap-suds and the paraffin form a greasy compound, which rises as scum to the surface, and clings to the sides of the copper. Miss Cumming's recipe was—Half a pound of good household soap to two tablespoonfuls of paraffin (the ordinary lamp oil). This is enough for an ordinary copper when half full. The linen is not first soaked, but is put into the boiling water, and remains in it from twenty minutes to half an hour, according to the state of the linen. It should be frequently turned over, and the water carefully skimmed. The clothes are taken out, well rinsed in hot water, blued, and dried, no rubbing being needful. There are now many paraffin soaps and other mixtures in the market, and there is no doubt that a new cleansing agent has thus been discovered.

We have left the flannels and the stockings to the last. The first have now become so important, and are so expensive and much worn as combinations, or vests and drawers, that it is needful to know how to wash them well, so that we may not be disappointed in their wear. I have used for years the following recipe—Make three gallons of strong soapy lather, pour it into a tub, when boiling, upon two ounces of lump ammonia. Stir well till dissolved, then add cold water till the heat be reduced to 94° Fahrenheit, testing with a thermometer. Then put in your woven articles and flannels, and draw them up and down, working them about without rubbing or using more soap. When clean, wring out lightly, and throw into clean water at the same temperature—94°. Then rinse again in another water of the same heat, when the flannel should feel soft to the touch. Take care to have all rinses of the same heat, and never put flannel, or any woollen articles, into either very hot or very cold water, for it will make them shrink up at once. Wring carefully and slowly for the last time, hang on the horse, and dry slowly. When partly dried, iron them on the wrong side, pulling them out the long way, and pressing hard on the iron. Then hang them up again. If the iron be hot, cover the woollens with a damp cloth when ironing them.

Coloured and black stockings may be washed in a tepid lather, and rinsed in the same temperature, wrung dry in a coarse towel, and hung up to dry with the toes downwards. I prefer not to iron stockings at all, as I consider that it puts them out of shape, and stretches them, especially thread ones. Dyes have so much improved lately that we rarely are troubled with stockings turning brown instead of black. Do not on any account begin washing flannels unless you are certain to finish them, as they cannot remain in soak, and the least stoppage in the process of washing them will spoil them completely.

darkened room, reduced by a new complaint, from which she has from time to time continued to suffer ever since.

Through God's mercy the lungs had recovered. Pisa was the means employed and blessed by Him. There was a visit to Switzerland *en route* homewards the next summer, and a return to the Continent a few years subsequently. And although the experiences of the "amateur nurse" and the *ci-devant* patient were many of them singularly varied, and oftentimes very trying, the latter bears up bravely. Twelve little grandchildren share her loving interest, with two of the three beloved daughters who made these journeys with her. But one has "fallen asleep!" and truly "the memory of the just is blessed."

S. F. A. CAULFEILD.

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By DORA DE BLAQUIÈRE.

PART II.

We have now arrived at the conclusion of our Tuesday's washing operations, and on Wednesday morning the mistress of the house must be prepared to help with the folding, and also with the mangling, if she be fortunate enough to possess a mangle. We will suppose you have only one servant, and therefore that you find yourself in the kitchen, with a clean table, early in the morning after breakfast. Here you should find the clean clothes in their appropriate baskets, or more probably heaped up on the swing-table in the kitchen, and covered up carefully from the dust. You will want a clear space on the table and a basin of clean water; and if the clothes to be starched have not been sorted out already, you should proceed to take them out and lay them successively aside as you come to them. In folding, the great rule to be observed is, to make the hems and selvedges meet exactly. For instance, in folding a sheet see that the selvedges are even at the sides and the hems at the top, and that it be well pulled out before folding. If these rules be not attended to, you will find the linen will never look well; the material will be strained from its natural lines, and will be uneven in every direction. In folding body-linen, the side seams of nightgowns and chemises must meet, and the shoulders be perfectly even. Put the tapes inside, and cover all buttons in the folds, or you will find them torn and broken. In many houses everything is put through the mangle, even though it be ironed afterwards. In damping or sprinkling the clothes, be careful to do it evenly, not making one part wetter than another, and fold every article without a crease. Handkerchiefs should be folded once, and then all rolled together for ironing. These and the table napkins can be ironed by the mistress herself. Most people starch the tablecloths slightly—a plan which makes them look better, and keep clean longer; and a recent authority says it will preserve the linen from stains, as the starch forms a film round each thread of the material, and this prevents the stain from sinking in too deeply. Table linen, *i.e.*, tablecloths, napkins, and sideboard cloths, are put into diluted starch, called starch water, and well rinsed in it. If starched, the table linen need not be mangled. Should the mistress of the house fail to understand the processes of washing, it would be a good thing if she tried to find out a good washerwoman who goes out by the day, and from her she would learn much if she only had a young and inexperienced servant. I have occasionally found very excellent laundresses, and I have learnt much all my life from them; and some years ago I had a course of instruction from a French laundress in clear starching and ironing.

In the old method of starching, various things were used to give the fine glaze to linen, viz., wax, tallow, borax, turpentine, sugar, etc., and many people still "swear by" the idea of boiling starch. The first has been rendered nearly obsolete by the introduction of starch glazes, which are made to be used with either hot or cold starch. They are generally efficatious, as well as quite harmless. The general ingredient is, I believe, stearine, and full directions are given by each manufacturer as to how his own starch glaze is to be used. So you must follow these faithfully, and you may depend on a good result being attained. I should recommend that a good rice starch be used, as although the most expensive, it is the most reliable. There are also some starch substitutes, which I have heard highly commended and for inexperienced people they are an advantage, as they cannot well make a mistake with them. But there is no teacher so good as experience; and I do not believe anyone could teach herself to iron a gentleman's shirt to perfection unless she had first seen someone do it. Everything, including shirts, should be starched on the wrong side, and after starching should be well rubbed between the hands, both to smooth the surface and to be sure that the starch has penetrated into them. Fold the shirts with the fronts together, to keep them from getting dry, and roll all the starched things and lay them together in a clean cloth, and put them aside, as they should lie so for at least twenty-four hours.

In ironing a shirt, you first turn it to the right side, then you begin at the back, and iron that to the collar and the back of cuffs. Then you iron the sleeves, first one side and then the other. After that, the back and front of the collar, and then open the fronts and lay the back in folds, and iron; then raise and fold back the front, and iron the back down to the bottom; lastly, you iron the bosom of the shirt, and finish. So you see it is rather a difficult matter, and you follow a fixed rule. An ironer must be provided with a holder, a piece of wet linen, and another of flannel, as well as a rough clean cloth to polish up her irons. The piece of wet linen is used to pass over the surface of the article, and with which to rub it well before you iron it. Then you iron lightly over on the wrong side first till stiff and dry. Your iron must be very hot or else it will stick to the material.

My French laundress told me that on the Continent much of the polish which we so much admire is produced by rubbing the iron itself with some kind of fat—a piece of good paraffin candle or of paraffin wax being used by the superior laundresses, and a bit of soap, or an end of any kind of candle, by the poorer ones. The wax is tied up and covered with several thicknesses of muslin, and rubbed upon the hot iron till it is well coated. It is then wiped with a clean rag, and the laundress proceeds to iron the damp shirt-front, collar, or cuff. This gives a real "French polish," and I see it is used in many of the laundries in London.

There are three kinds of irons, viz., the box-iron, which is heated by a heater placed inside it: although heavy, it is always clean and nice; the flat iron, which is heated directly on a stove, and requires constant care in its use to keep it clean and polished, and just at the right heat for its purpose. The irons should not be too heavy, and three at least are required to ensure your always having a hot one ready, and no drawback of waiting during the work. Polishing-irons are used for the last process in ironing shirts, and must be very hot, and also employed with all the strength possible, so as to give the needful polish.

An ironing-table must be of solid make, and very firm; and an old blanket is used to cover it; and, lastly, a sheet or cloth of linen is required to iron upon. We must also have a stand for the irons, and a bowl of water and linen rag to take out marks of dirt, creases, and rucks in the starched things under treatment.

For ironing shirt-fronts, my teacher preferred a yard of coarse flannel to lay under the fronts when ironing; but as a general thing in England the laundresses use a board of the same length as a shirt-front, and about fifteen inches wide. It may be from an inch to three inches thick, and should be covered with flannel sewn smoothly on it, with a covering of linen over it to iron upon.

The following is the cold method of making starch for what is called "clear starching" for fine linen, shirts, and underclothes. The recipe is given by a French laundress. Take half a pound of pure starch and place in a glazed vessel of earthenware, and pour over it enough cold water to mix it into a paste-like cream free from lumps. Then take enough cold water and add it gently till you have it of the required thickness—about two pints will be required. Take two ounces of borax and put into a small saucepan, and add enough water to cover it. Stand it over the fire, and stir it till melted. Then allow it to become quite cool; and when your starch is mixed, pour it in and stir it well together, adding, finally, a teaspoonful of turpentine.

The hot, or boiled starch, is made as follows—Take half a pound of starch, place in a clean tin; pour on enough boiling water to make it into a thick paste, and then add enough cold water to make it like a thin cream. Put it on the fire, and boil for a quarter of an hour. Stir it several times with a paraffin candle, or add two ounces of borax melted in a little boiling water. Use this starch hot. If a starch glaze be used, neither the borax, paraffin, nor the turpentine will be needed.

I must not forget to give you the recipe for soap jelly, which is added, when a washing-machine is used, to the boiling water—enough to make a good lather. The first is an American recipe, and makes a very excellent soft soap, which is a valuable thing to keep in the house at all times, and can be used for all purposes—scrubbing and cleaning as well as washing. Take ten quarts of soft water, three and a half pounds of soap sliced up finely, and one pound of washing soda. When the soap and water boil add the soda, and keep the mixture stirred to prevent boiling over. Boil for about a quarter of an hour, and then pour out of the saucepan or pot into a wooden tub or large jar, and add two and a half or three gallons of cold water, stirring all the time.

The ordinary recipe in use in the present day is—A pound of soap cut into fine slices to a gallon of water, and boiled up till the soap is melted. This is a clear jelly, and is used in sufficient quantity to make a good lather to the water in the machine.