

MY LAUNDRY, AND HOW IT IS FURNISHED.

By LINA ORMAN COOPER.

I HAD never thought to see a laundry established in mine house. I had always a great objection to the smell of soapsuds and steam, an accompaniment to a home laundry I thought to be indispensable. Those friends of mine who inhabit adjacent villas in A Cardboard Row conduct operations in the old-fashioned way. A copper, therefore, is to be found in every back kitchen, and makes its presence very disagreeably evident every Monday morning. For a while I resisted economical convictions and regularly sent out all soiled things to a "decent" body living just outside B—.

Alas! With a certain basket of well-starched linen came, one day, to No. 32 particularly terrible microbes and spores and germs. Mrs. Fowler, "the decent body," had scarlet fever in her country cottage, and introduced it to my guarded little family. It was hard enough to blame her. Her little Cyril and Alexandrina and Thomas John needed food and physic and extra comforts. How could she give up the big "wash" I so regularly sent and paid for?

However, when doctor and nurses had departed, when wall papers had been stripped and wainscoting repainted, when new mattresses and blankets and quilts had taken the place of those confiscated by the sanitary authorities of B—, I started our home laundry. It has been such a success that I venture to advise every house-mother to try something on the same plan. There is no doubt that influenza is carried from house to house in the clothes-baskets, even if more deadly infection is kept outside of them. For this reason a laundry in mine house is an inestimable comfort. We have never had to fight the foul Russian fiend since we started it. People will not take the trouble to soak handkerchiefs in Sanitas water before sending to the laundress; and we feel much happier washing our own soiled linen at home.

First and foremost, in the little back kitchen in mine house is a pump of soft water. Without a plentiful supply of the same, laundry work must be a failure. All the ammonia in the world will not do for a tub of clothes what a barrellful of rain water will effect. And ammonia is decidedly expensive! Neither will soda mollify the effects of hard, aqueous fluid. It will take all the skin from our digits and colour from our cottons, but will leave much dirt on the articles in need of cleansing. So soft water we must have, in order to set up a home laundry. In mine house, as I have said before (I would never rent one that lacked such), is a pump of soft water. If this be *non est*, disused paraffin barrels may supply its place, connected with the eaves of a house by pipes. But let me remind my readers that all rain water is not fit for laundry work. Surface fluid is apt to be foul and impregnated with blacks, and insects, and deposits of all sorts. Therefore the well, or tank, or barrel, must frequently be inspected to ensure purity for our work, and the handle of the pump worked vigorously for some time before filling basins and tubs.

There are many kinds of washing-machines. The difficulty in selecting one for mine house was great—so many patent inventions were beautifully calculated to wrench off buttons and wear out linen. At last I found a cigar-shaped affair called the "Torpedo," which possessed neither teeth, nor spokes, nor spikes, nor ridges. Made of corrugated iron, it stands in mine house, a much-valued servant. Like two wineglasses hermetically sealed together,

the inside of my washer is as smooth as glass, and does its work by steam. No need of soaking clothes before putting them in this machine, for a system of hot-air pressure effectually drives the dirt from its contents. It washes one hundred articles more easily than fifty, for it is a question of balance with the "Torpedo," a balance so perfect when well packed with clothes, that a slight tap of the laundry-maid's hand is sufficient to keep it in motion.

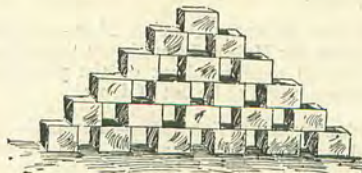
However, many of my servants do not approve of "them new-fangled notions," so the laundry is furnished plentifully with other ways of washing.

Standing against the wall are three large oaken tubs. One of these is used for soaking all white articles; the next for washing; and the third for rinsing and blueing. In this way no time is lost, a most important thing in the laundry. A zinc bath also takes its place under our folding-board. This is used when a scientific preparation of boiled soap, warm water, and liquid ammonia is prepared for our Jaeger underclothing and flannels. It is necessary to keep in the volatile spirit, so a tray to fit on top reposes under the shelf, and acts as a lid. On the floor, also, lie two or three small platforms made of two short



boards nailed together, and raised from the ground on slaters' laths. Without some such contrivance to raise a girl's feet off the necessarily wet floor of a washhouse, it is cruel to expect them to undertake the work of a laundry. Our own daughters we rigidly guard from damp feet; other people's daughters call for the same consideration.

On an upper shelf, out of reach of children's hands, I keep a store of chemicals for use in my laundry. In olden days a "cast-iron back with a hinge in it" was about the only thing really necessary for the work therein. Now science has taken the place of brute force, and certain chemists' stuffs take the place of scrubbing-boards and elbow grease. First of all there stands a quart bottle of liquid ammonia, purchased at the Stores. It cost 1s. 9d. Beside it a pound of lump borax reposes—price 3d. A few ounces of best gum arabic are in the next box. A twist of oxalic acid, marked with an orange "Poison" label, for taking out stains, and some salts of lemon for the same purpose. Here also stands a small can of paraffin oil, for use in cleansing kitchen rubbers; powdered chalk for absorbing mildew; some pinches of chloride of lime; a bottle of turpentine for removing paint; a jar of bran for "fixing" colour in prints and woollens; vinegar for stockings; some pound boxes of best starch; and a goodly store of blue globes, one of which is always ready for use tied up in a flannel bag. Of course there are several stone of best crown tallow soap,



SOAP IN PYRAMID.

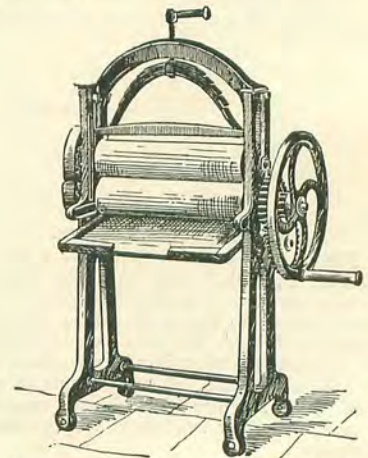
cut up into good-sized squares, and piled up pyramidically in order that air may dry them for use.

One wrinkle about cutting up those sticky yellow bars; any respectable grocer or chandler will do the job for you. If obliged to manipulate it yourself, do not weary wrists and fingers by trying to form wedges with a knife. Have in your laundry a piece of coarse

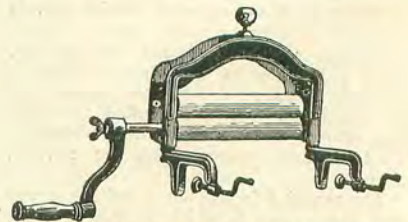


wire attached to two wooden handles. Hold each slip in either hand, and you will cut the soap as if it were soft cheese, without any jagged edges or waste. If wire is not at hand, string is a substitute, though a bad one!

On this top shelf, also, stands a tin of knife powder, for polishing smoothers; a toy watering-can, for sprinkling clothes; a common candle, for blending with boiling starch; a big bottle of Sanitas, price 1s., for steeping handkerchiefs; a few yards of rope; some dozen "pegs"; a drum of salt; and a hundredweight of soda in a bag (price 4s.). These complete the chemical equipment of the laundry in mine house.



MANGLE WITH BOX-WOOD ROLLERS.



INDIA-RUBBER WRINGER TO FIX ON WASHING-TUB.

We need a number of other things though. Here, in a "fair open space," stands a patent adjustable mangle, with box-wood rollers. Hard by, unscrewed, and at rest, a rubber wringer. The former is for *dry* clothes, the latter for wet ones. Rolled up in a corner is a thick old blanket and a clean sheet for

ironing on, a skirt-board and a sleeve-board, two flat irons and one box one, standing on edge always (*verbum sap.*!), goffering-tongs, and a bright steel-polisher which cost 10d. Hanging on a nail are a couple of ironholders; under it a board sprinkled with knife-powder to test our heaters on, and beside it a large folding clothes-horse.

Gas is plentiful in B—, therefore in summer time all my irons are heated on a stove lit by the same. But in some houses a small oil-stove answers all purposes. A common "Sunrise" will do, or a regular ironing-stove can be bought. By its aid, six flat irons can be ready together, and yet our maid's face need never be scorched.

I feel that though I have told of the furnishing of the laundry in this paper, I cannot conclude without giving a few directions as to the *modus operandi* therein. First of all, I should advise that all clothes washed at home be as carefully counted as if they were sent to Mrs. Fowler and her ilk. This ensures that small articles are not left to rot behind scullery and boiler. Next, I should never allow *Monday* to be our washing day. Count the clothes, by all means, as usual that morning, and see that they are steeped in their tubs of pure, soft rain-water. That night have boiler and kettles filled, copper wiped out and the fire under it

laid in readiness. But let Tuesday see the wash proper begun, and on Friday afternoon insist on the clothes being brought upstairs and left to be checked properly.

Thirdly, exactness should be required in the laundry as rigidly as elsewhere. It is easy to learn how much soap per week has to be used, and how many tablespoonfuls of starch. The usual run of housemaids will waste more of the first, and make more of the last than ought to be or can be made use of in a fortnight. A mistress who practically understands laundry-work herself will be at an immense advantage in this matter. One tablespoonful of raw starch will make enough to stiffen many tablecloths, so a pound of the same cannot be used every week in a small home laundry. One teaspoonful of ammonia will be sufficient for every gallon of water in which our woollies repose. It is easy to calculate approximately how long a quart bottle should hold out. There is no stinginess in insisting on accuracy. Liberality shows itself in providing all necessaries, and even an occasional so-called "luxury" in our laundry, not in allowing "rule of thumb" to waste and therefore sometimes to want.

Punctuality is another necessity if home washing is to be a success. Things must not be allowed to accumulate from week to week.

Perhaps a fortnightly wash may be sufficient in some homes, but let it be fortnightly, not stretching on towards three weeks. Steeping on Monday; washing on Tuesday; folding and starching on Wednesday; ironing on Thursday; airing on Friday. On that last-named day, the basket of clean linen should be placed in the mistress's room, counted over, and the whole put away in a hot press except those articles which need a stitch. Where a tape or button is wanting, where a thin spot in webbing or stocking suggests a neat darn, the things should be set aside and mended with skilful fingers on *Saturday*.

It may be objected, by some readers of this paper, that the minutiae of laundry-work therein described is unworthy the attention of our cultivated, educated women. John Ruskin, that apostle of the beautiful, that disciple of the useful, thinks otherwise. I cannot do better than close this article with an extract from one of his writings. It might well be written in letters of gold over every laundry in every house.

"A true lady should be a Princess. A washerwoman. Yes, a washerwoman . . . to see that all is fair and clean. To wash with water. To cleanse and purify wherever she goes. To set disorderly things in orderly array. This is a woman's mission."

MARA.

By CHRISTIAN BURKE.

CHAPTER II.

"And to be wroth with one we love,
Doth work like madness on the brain."
Coleridge.



IN this August evening the two women were unusually silent as they pursued their homeward

way. Elisabeth was tired, and one of her strange, sullen moods had been upon Mara all

day. As they stumbled down the dingy entry, dark even at sunset, to the square-paved court, which rejoiced in the name of Providence Yard, a child came running towards them with eager cries for "Lizabeth." It was Mara's dress which she clutched hold of in her haste, and the girl pushed her aside so roughly that the little creature shrank back with a frightened cry.

"Nay, Mara, what ails you? 'Tis only Mrs. Jones's Alice. I can't bear to see you so short with the poor mites," said her companion, and tired as she was she lifted the child in her arms as she spoke.

"I can't abide children bothering round," muttered the girl rebelliously, as she moved on across the rough stones towards their own house.

Although it was such hot weather a fire in the living room was a necessity if they were to have a comfortable evening meal. Their next-door neighbour usually lighted it for them before their return; she had just done so now, and through the open door the flickering flames gleamed cheerfully. The woman stood in the middle of the court with a baby in her

arms. She cast a curious excited glance at the two as they passed, and said to Mara in a loud whisper, "Your man's come home!"

The girl, absorbed in her own thoughts, scarcely heard and did not understand, but Elizabeth started violently and hurried on, pausing on the threshold in dire dismay. For there in the waning light, holding a pair of thin shrunken hands towards the fire, sat a man, who at their entrance sprang to his feet and confronted Mara, standing in the centre of the room as if petrified, her face pale as death, her lips set in a rigid line, and only the ominous flash of her eyes giving any indication of her state of feeling.

Elizabeth looked from one to the other in blank despair. Was this indeed Dennis Hamilton, this worn and haggard man with the marks of recent sickness legible in his face? Was this the reckless, impatient lad who had gone away so unworthily a few years ago? There was a scar on his forehead, half hidden by the hair, and the empty sleeve pinned across his breast told its own tale of suffering.

While she lingered irresolute, fearing either to go or stay, Mara moved across the room towards the steep stairway which led to the attic above. As she stirred, the man, who had stood like one in a dream, sprang towards her with a great and bitter cry, stretching out his uninjured hand to stop her.

"Mara," he said, with whitening lips, for her expression was one of intense defiance, "I have come back to you; for Heaven's sake don't turn from me till you have heard me out. Haven't you a word for me, cruelly as I have wronged you? Oh, wife, let me speak, and if, when you know all, you can't find any spark of the old love left in your heart for me, I will go my way and never trouble you any more."

Mara had stayed her progress, but when Elizabeth would have left them alone, she turned and grasped her arm with a vice-like grip, which compelled her presence; but her face never changed or softened as she stood

there and listened with an air of the most unmoved indifference.

Hamilton had confronted death and disaster many times since the day when he had rushed in his boyish rage out of the little house. He had heard all round him the horrible roar of battle, and had lain for hours wounded and tortured with thirst among the dead and the dying. He had gone down to the very entrance of the dim Valley of Shadow, and struggled painfully back, maimed and helpless. But never had he passed through such an ordeal as now, when he stood before this unrelenting judge and faltered out the story of his shame and his repentance.

It was simple enough when it came to be told. He had enlisted before he had given himself time for a moment's reflection, and the transport ship was ploughing through the deep waters before he had begun to realise how he had cut himself adrift not only from all he loved, but from every chance of putting things straight. With cooler reflection there came, not sorrow, but a despairing remorse and subsequent hardening of all that was best in him. His wife must hate him in good earnest now. No woman would endure such conduct as his; they were well quit of each other, and if she could forget him, so much the better for both; and he would see the world and enjoy life. But hard as he tried, he could not wholly stifle the gnawing pangs of an unquiet conscience which kept crying loudly that although he wore the Queen's uniform, he was no true soldier, rather a traitor among men, who had left the woman he had sworn to love and cherish and his yet unborn child to their cruel fate, and gone far to break a mother's heart. Often and often he thought of writing home and begging for forgiveness, but pride and shame and a selfish shrinking from the attempt to untangle the miserable web kept him silent. Later on, he said to himself, when his term of service was over, he would go back, and perhaps, if he came to her covered with glory and medals, Mara's wild anger would melt and be appeased, and she would turn to