

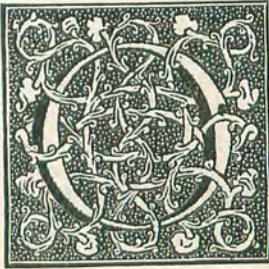
but on the other hand he may possibly use his voice injudiciously, and spoil it with shouting. It is well to have a boy go through some preparatory training at some well-known school for choir-boys, such as the London Training School for Choristers, for instance, where a boy can become perfectly familiar with all the intricacies of the

church service and its responses, as these are naturally bewildering to a child until he is quite used to them.

For the rest, endeavour to rid him of all nervousness. Let him sing to visitors and relations as often as possible. Many a child fails at a competitive examination through sheer nervousness.

SOME HINTS ON STARCHING.

BY MARY HARTIER.



NE of the distinguishing marks of an English girl is the dainty freshness of her appearance. There are perhaps a few unhappy exceptions, and an early morning visit to some household might reveal dishevelled heads and slovenly details of dress which would be a shock to a visitor accustomed to see the inmates only when on view later in the day. A girl who thinks it is not worth while to be

neat for breakfast with her own family too often has her temper also in *déshabillé*, and so the day begins with clouds instead of sunshine. But such cases are not the rule. Many girls, indeed, feel a crumpled blouse or a soiled collar a positive discomfort, not only from a fear of being seen when not looking their best, but because it offends against their innate sense of the fitness of things. It is not necessary that they should put on smart, new frocks for morning wear; nothing tends more than such a habit to the degeneration of their whole wardrobe into a uniform shabbiness. But an old blouse may be clean, and freshened with spotless collars and cuffs; a skirt can be made to look respectable to its latest days with ordinary care of brushing and mending, while a pretty frilled apron is as becoming as it is useful.

Some girl may say, "Ah, that advice is very good as far as it goes, but we are not well off, and mother is always complaining of the amount of our laundress's bill, and saying we really must not send so many shirts and collars and cuffs to the wash. And with tennis, hockey, golf and cycling, we want such a number of clean things. We are obliged to economise by wearing them not too fresh while we are about our domestic duties in the morning."

The desire to save mother some pennies is most praiseworthy. I am going to suggest a plan which would save many more pennies and also enable girls with a little energy—and what girls are without this quality nowadays?—always to look their freshest and daintiest.

It is that they should themselves undertake the ironing. Perhaps some have tried and have found the toil not justified by the very imperfect results. They may have been fairly successful with cotton shirts, and holland or piqué skirts. It is practice alone which will make them adepts, but the ironing of these things which have only required boiled starch is comparatively simple. It is the getting up of collars and cuffs which seems to bristle with difficulties to the uninitiated. This, more than any other domestic art, except perhaps dairy-work, demands the greatest care and cleanliness in every detail, but if the following rules are observed, a little practice will be all that is needed to make any girl a very fair laundress.

Girls who live in the country have of course a better opportunity than their town sisters for carrying on this work. The fresh breezes of outdoor drying-grounds make the linen a purer colour than is possible for that which is dried indoors. However, a town house generally has a room, either in the attic or basement, which could be used for this purpose, and the linen will not be a worse colour than a town laundry would make it.

The first process after the washing is the making of boiled

starch. Put the starch in a large basin and mix smoothly into a paste with cold water. Then add boiling water, gradually stirring all the time, until it turns into a thin blue jelly. The collars and cuffs must be rinsed in this and then hung out to dry. It is well before sending them to the wash to string about half-a-dozen together on a tape. The clothes-pin can then secure them to the line by means of the tape, without running the risk of marking or soiling them. When dry it may not be convenient to starch and iron them the same day. They should be wrapped carefully in a clean towel and put out of reach of the smuts, dust, and finger-marks which seem to lie in wait to destroy the successful result of our handiwork.

The next morning we shall be ready for serious business. First, we must mix the starch in proportions of a heaped tablespoonful to half a pint of cold water, with about half a teaspoonful of borax gloss to each pint. Put the starch and borax in a basin and mix very carefully with only enough water at first to moisten and mould into a perfectly smooth paste; then add gradually the remainder of the water and pour the whole into a jug, leaving it to stand for about twenty minutes. In very cold weather it will mix more easily if the water is blood-warm.

While the starch is settling, see that your irons are thoroughly clean. It is well to examine them for yourself, for even competent servants do not always realise the importance of keeping them without the slightest speck. Each time after use they should be rubbed to shining brightness and then smeared with vaseline, which must of course be removed before they are again required. A box-iron with two heaters and a glazing-iron will be necessary. A clear, glowing fire should be prepared before the actual ironing begins. It is annoying to find the fire is dying down and a relay of heaters not to be obtained when the work is in full swing. The heaters must be put in the fire; the glazing-iron placed on the top of the stove, on a spot free from scattered coal or dust. It is an excess of precaution in these small details which prevents failure.

When satisfied that the irons have no speck of rust or of dried starch to work ruin on the collars, pour the starch again into the basin in which it was mixed, leaving in the jug any sediment that may have settled there. This will prevent the tiresome sticking of the iron which sometimes happens if the starch is too thick. The collars and cuffs must now be put in the basin and rinsed thoroughly in the starch, then squeezed out—not too hard—and arranged smoothly on a towel or piece of linen with a fine surface, rolled up tightly and left for at least an hour.

Now for the real business! Have on your ironing-board or kitchen-table some coarse flannel and over that a piece of linen, spotlessly clean. You will want also a plate or flat dish, an old handkerchief, a large-sized handkerchief, a duster, some pins (preferably the steel, round-headed sort), and a small end of wax candle. The box-iron will be used first. Rub it with the duster, then smear the hot surface with the candle and polish it again with the duster. This is to prevent sticking. The wrong side of the collar must be ironed first. Flick the surface with the handkerchief to remove any specks of dust that may have settled. Then move the iron over it quickly backwards and forwards and press heavily. Never allow it to be stationary while the collar is damp or it will stick. A certain bold action and

swing of the arm is necessary, as in bowing for the violin. It is the timidity of the beginner which often causes disaster in the form of sticking and creasing, but practice only will give confidence. When the surface is smooth and the collar seems half dry, turn it, and after again flicking with the handkerchief, iron steadily until the collar is quite dry and stiff. Never iron it on the wrong side after the right side has been begun. That will destroy all gloss and give it a muddled, rough appearance. When finished lay it on the plate, cover with the large handkerchief and put it on the plate-rack above the stove. As each article is finished, put it in the same place, lifting the covering warily lest a wandering smut find its way in. Use the candle on the iron occasionally to avoid any danger of sticking, and have a fresh heater put in the box before the first has cooled. It is fatal to be delayed for this when a collar is half-ironed. The turn-over collars will be found the most difficult for a beginner to manage. Give extra pressure and time to the corners and leave them flat for drying off, not turning them over until after the glazing process.

If the collars and cuffs have a satisfactory appearance the glazing-iron may now be used. It will give them the smooth, satin finish so seldom accomplished by the amateur. Should, however, the first ironing not have been too successful, any blemish left by a smut or a finger-mark will show still more after the glazing. It is better therefore to leave a collar that has been overtaken by disaster unglazed and to hope for better luck another time.

The ironing-cloth and flannel must be removed and the collar placed upon the bare board. If you have not an ironing-board, any smooth piece of wood will do, such as is found in rolls of cloth, which a tailor could supply. Place the collar on the board (the right side only need be glazed), rub it over with a wet handkerchief and press heavily and quickly backwards and forwards with the glazing-iron. When finished, stick a pin through the stud-holes, to keep it in a rounded position, and put it again to dry. A turn-over collar must be folded in shape with the hand.

If attention is given to these few homely hints, any girl may soon become an adept in the useful work of starching. She may not have entire success the first or even the second time, but her collars and cuffs will be quite satisfactory enough to make her keen on attaining perfection in her art. The care and skill needed give fascination to the work, and it will always be pleasant to feel she has added one more item to her store of technical knowledge.

She never knows how valuable such knowledge may prove. A friend of mine married a naval officer and her first year of married life was spent in a lonely, out-of-the-world station where domestic service of any kind was not easily procured. So it happened that unless she herself starched and ironed her husband's shirts and collars, he would lack the smart appearance of his brother officers, and we can imagine a young wife would not put up with such a reflection on her resources. She had been the beauty of the family, adored and waited on by all her sisters, and a knowledge of starching certainly had not entered into her scheme of life. But she was a plucky little soul and toiled dauntlessly until she had solved all the mysteries by which stiff and shining linen could be evolved from the crumpled mass which came from the wash. It was a bitter experience. Imagine tropical heat, sticky starch, an iron that seemed to plough furrows instead of leaving a smooth track, and smudges hovering with malignant intent! No wonder the first shirt-fronts bore a speckled pattern from the tears which had sprinkled them. The little bride was not twenty and had not learned stoicism. But her final triumph over her difficulties rewarded her for all the trouble. And her husband never knew the small-pox marks on his linen were caused by tears. She said it was the silly starch which had got mouldy like everything else on that forsaken island. She has made up her mind, however, that her little daughter, who already shows signs of being a beauty like her mother, shall learn how to starch and iron, as well as a good many other housewifely arts, before she is married.

VARIETIES.

THE SHAMROCK OF OLD IRELAND.

Says Valour, "See,
They spring for me,
Those leafy gems of morning!"
Says Love, "No, no,
For me they grow,
My fragrant path adorning."
But Wit perceives
The triple leaves,
And cries, "Oh, do not sever
A type that blends
Three godlike friends
Love, Valour, Wit, for ever!"

Thomas Moore.

THINGS YOU WILL NEVER BE SORRY FOR.

You will never be sorry—
For your faith in humanity.
For hearing before judging.
For being candid and frank.
For thinking before speaking.
For discounting the tale-bearer.
For standing by your principles.
For stopping your ears to gossip.
For asking pardon when in error.
For the influence of high motives.
For bridling a slanderous tongue.
For being generous to an enemy.
For being honest in business dealings.
For sympathising with the oppressed.

A CALL TO DILIGENCE.—Cultivate all your faculties; you must either use them or lose them.

IN A NEVER-ENDING HURRY.

The never-ending hurry of American mercantile life is described by Mr. Watson ("Ian Maclaren") in a recent article on our friends on the other side of the Atlantic.

"No man in New York," he says, "goes slow if he has the chance of going fast; no man stops to talk if he can talk walking; no man walks if he can ride in a trolley-car, no one goes in a trolley-car if he can get a convenient steam-car, and by-and-by no one will go in a steam-car if he can be shot through a pneumatic tube.

"No one writes with his own hand if he can dictate to a stenographer, no one dictates if he can telegraph, no one telegraphs if he can telephone, and by-and-by, when the spirit of American invention has brought wireless telegraphy into thorough condition, a man will simply sit with his mouth at one hole and his ear at another, and do business with the ends of the earth in a few seconds, which the same machine will copy and preserve in letter-books and ledgers.

"It is the American's regret that at present he can do nothing with his feet while he is listening at the telephone, but doubtless some employment will be found for them in the coming age."

THE READER.—The first time I read an excellent book it is to me just as if I had gained a new friend: when I read over a book I have perused before, it resembles the meeting with an old one.—*Goldsmith.*

BE DISCREET.—Discretion is the perfection of reason, and a guide in all the duties of life. It is found only in people of sound sense and good understanding.