

DUTIES OF THE LAUNDRY-MAID.

2372. The laundry-maid is charged with the duty of washing and getting-up the family linen,—a situation of great importance where the washing is all done at home; but in large towns, where there is little convenience for bleaching and drying, it is chiefly done by professional laundresses and companies, who apply mechanical and chemical processes to the purpose. These processes, however, are supposed to injure the fabric of the linen; and in many families the fine linen, cottons, and muslins, are washed and got-up at home, even where the bulk of the washing is given out. In country and suburban houses, where greater conveniences exist, washing at home is more common,—in country places universal.

2373. The laundry establishment consists of a washing-house, an ironing and drying-room, and sometimes a drying-closet heated by furnaces. The washing-house will probably be attached to the kitchen; but it is better that it should be completely detached from it, and of one story, with a funnel or shaft to carry off the steam. It will be of a size proportioned to the extent of the washing to be done. A range of tubs, either round or oblong, opposite to, and sloping towards, the light, narrower at the bottom than the top, for convenience in stooping over, and fixed at a height suited to the convenience of the women using them; each tub having a tap for hot and cold water, and another in the bottom, communicating with the drains, for drawing off foul water. A boiler and furnace, proportioned in size to the wants of the family, should also be fixed. The flooring should be York stone, laid on brick piers, with good drainage, or asphalte, sloping gently towards a gutter connected with the drain.

2374. Adjoining the bleaching-house, a second room, about the same size, is required for ironing, drying, and mangling. The contents of this room should comprise an ironing-board, opposite to the light; a strong white deal table, about twelve or fourteen feet long, and about three and a half feet broad, with drawers for ironing-blankets; a mangle in one corner, and clothes-horses for drying and airing; cupboards for holding the various irons, starch, and other articles used in ironing; a hot-plate built in the chimney, with furnace beneath it for heating the irons; sometimes arranged with a flue for carrying the hot air round the room for drying. Where this is the case, however, there should be a funnel in the ceiling for ventilation and carrying off steam; but a better arrangement is to have a hot-air closet adjoining, heated by hot-air pipes, and lined with iron, with proper arrangements for carrying off steam, and clothes-horses on castors running in grooves, to run into it for drying purposes. This leaves the laundry free from unwholesome vapour.

2375. The laundry-maid should commence her labours on Monday morning by a careful examination of the articles committed to her care, and enter them in the washing-book; separating the white linen and collars, sheets and body-linen, into one heap, fine muslins into another, coloured cotton and linen fabrics into a third, woollens into a fourth, and the coarser kitchen and other greasy cloths into a fifth. Every article should be examined for ink- or grease-spots, or for fruit- or wine-stains. Ink-spots are removed by dipping the part into hot water, and then spreading it smoothly on the hand or on the back of a spoon, pouring a few drops of oxalic acid or salts of sorer over the ink-spot, rubbing and rinsing it in cold water till removed; grease-spots, by rubbing over with yellow soap, and rinsing in hot water; fruit- and wine-spots, by dipping in a solution of sal ammonia or spirits of wine, and rinsing.

2376. Every article having been examined and assorted, the sheets and fine linen should be placed in one of the tubs and just covered with lukewarm water, in which a little soda has been dissolved and mixed, and left there to soak till the morning. The greasy cloths and dirtier things should be laid to soak in another tub, in a liquor composed of 1/2 lb. of unslaked lime to every 6 quarts of water which has been boiled for two hours, then left to settle, and strained off when clear.

Each article should be rinsed in this liquor to wet it thoroughly, and left to soak till the morning, just covered by it when the things are pressed together. Coppers and boilers should now be filled, and the fires laid ready to light.

2377. Early on the following morning the fires should be lighted, and as soon as hot water can be procured, washing commenced; the sheets and body-linen being wanted to whiten in the morning, should be taken first; each article being removed in succession from the lye in which it has been soaking, rinsed, rubbed, and wrung, and laid aside until the tub is empty, when the foul water is drawn off. The tub should be again filled with luke-warm water, about 80°, in which the articles should again be plunged, and each gone over carefully with soap, and rubbed. Novices in the art sometimes rub the linen against the skin; more experienced washerwomen rub one linen surface against the other, which saves their hands, and enables them to continue their labour much longer, besides economizing time, two parts being thus cleaned at once.

2378. After this first washing, the linen should be put into a second water as hot as the hand can bear, and again rubbed over in every part, examining every part for spots not yet moved, which require to be again soaped over and rubbed till thoroughly clean; then rinsed and wrung, the larger and stronger articles by two of the women; the smaller and more delicate articles requiring gentler treatment.

2379. In order to remove every particle of soap, and produce a good colour, they should now be placed, and boiled for about an hour and a half in the copper, in which soda, in the proportion of a teaspoonful to every two gallons of water, has been dissolved. Some very careful laundresses put the linen into a canvas bag to protect it from the scum and the sides of the copper. When taken out, it should again be rinsed, first in clean hot water, and then in abundance of cold water slightly tinged with fig-blue, and again wrung dry. It should now be removed from the washing-house and hung up to dry or spread out to bleach, if there are conveniences for it; and the earlier in the day this is done, the clearer and whiter will be the linen.

2380. Coloured muslins, cottons, and linens, require a milder treatment; any application of soda will discharge the colour, and soaking all night, even in pure water, deteriorates the more delicate tints. When ready for washing, if not too dirty, they should be put into cold water and washed very speedily, using the common yellow soap, which should be rinsed off immediately. One article should be washed at a time, and rinsed out immediately before any others are wetted. When washed thoroughly, they should be rinsed in succession in soft water, in which common salt has been dissolved, in the proportion of a handful to three or four gallons, and afterwards wrung gently, as soon as rinsed, with as little twisting as possible, and then hung out to dry. Delicate-coloured articles should not be exposed to the sun, but dried in the shade, using clean lines and wooden pegs.

2381. Woollen articles are liable to shrink, unless the flannel has been well shrunk before making up. This liability is increased where very hot water is used: cold water would thus be the best to wash woollens in; but, as this would not remove the dirt, lukewarm water, about 85°, and yellow soap, are recommended. When thoroughly washed in this, they require a good deal of rinsing in cold water, to remove the soap.

2382. Greasy cloths, which have soaked all night in the liquid described, should be now washed out with soap-and-water as hot as the hands can bear, first in one water, and rinsed out in a second; and afterwards boiled for two hours in water in which a little soda is dissolved. When taken out, they should be rinsed in cold water, and laid out or hung up to dry.

2383. Silk handkerchiefs require to be washed alone. When they contain snuff, they should be soaked by themselves in lukewarm water two or three hours; they should be rinsed out and put to soak with the others in cold water for an hour or two; then washed in

lukewarm water, being soaped as they are washed. If this does not remove all stains, they should be washed a second time in similar water, and, when finished, rinsed in soft water in which a handful of common salt has been dissolved. In washing stuff or woollen dresses, the band at the waist and the lining at the bottom should be removed, and wherever it is gathered into folds; and, in furniture, the hems and gatherings. A black silk dress, if very dirty, must be washed; but, if only soiled, soaking for four-and-twenty hours will do; if old and rusty, a pint of common spirits should be mixed with each gallon of water, which is an improvement under any circumstances. Whether soaked or washed, it should be hung up to drain, and dried without wringing.

2384. Satin and silk ribbons, both white and coloured, may be cleaned in the same manner.

2385. Silks, when washed, should be dried in the shade, on a linen-horse, taking care that they are kept smooth and unwrinkled. If black or blue, they will be improved if laid again on the table, when dry, and sponged with gin, or whiskey, or other white spirit.

2386. The operations should be concluded by rinsing the tubs, cleaning the coppers, scrubbing the floors of the washing-house, and restoring everything to order and cleanliness.

2387. Thursday and Friday, in a laundry in full employ, are usually devoted to mangling, starching, and ironing.

2388. Linen, cotton, and other fabrics, after being washed and dried, are made smooth and glossy by mangling and by ironing. The mangling process, which is simply passing them between rollers subjected to a very considerable pressure, produced by weight, is confined to sheets, towels, table-linen, and similar articles, which are without folds or plaits. Ironing is necessary to smooth body-linen, and made-up articles of delicate texture or gathered into folds. The mangle is too well known to need description.

2389. Ironing.--The irons consist of the common flat-iron, which is of different sizes, varying from 4 to 10 inches in length, triangular in form, and from 2-1/2 to 4-1/2 inches in width at the broad end; the oval iron, which is used for more delicate articles; and the box-iron, which is hollow, and heated by a red-hot iron inserted into the box. The Italian iron is a hollow tube, smooth on the outside, and raised on a slender pedestal with a footstalk. Into the hollow cylinder a red-hot iron is pushed, which heats it; and the smooth outside of the latter is used, on which articles such as frills, and plaited articles, are drawn. Crimping- and gauffering-machines are used for a kind of plaiting where much regularity is required, the articles being passed through two iron rollers fluted so as to represent the kind of plait or fold required.

2390. Starching is a process by which stiffness is communicated to certain parts of linen, as the collar and front of shirts, by dipping them in a paste made of starch boiled in water, mixed with a little gum Arabic, where extra stiffness is required.

TO MAKE STARCH.

2391. INGREDIENTS.--Allow 1/2 pint of cold water and 1 quart of boiling water to every 2 tablespoonfuls of starch.

Mode.--Put the starch into a tolerably large basin; pour over it the cold water, and stir the mixture well with a wooden spoon until it is perfectly free from lumps, and quite smooth. Then take the basin to the fire, and whilst the water is actually boiling in the kettle or boiler, pour it over the starch, stirring it the whole time. If made properly in this manner, the starch will require no further boiling; but should the water not be boiling when added to the starch, it will not thicken, and must be put into a clean saucepan, and stirred over the fire until it boils. Take it off the fire, strain it into a clean basin, cover it up to prevent a skin forming on the top, and, when sufficiently cool that the hand may be borne in it, starch the things. Many persons, to give a shiny and smooth appearance to the linen when ironed, stir round two or three times in the starch a piece of wax candle, which also prevents the iron from sticking.

2392. When the "things to be starched" are washed, dried, and taken off the lines, they should be dipped into the hot starch made as directed, squeezed out of it, and then just dipped into cold water, and immediately squeezed dry. If fine things be wrung, or roughly used, they are very liable to tear; so too much care cannot be exercised in this respect. If the article is lace, clap it between the hands a few times, which will assist to clear it; then have ready laid out on the table a large clean towel or cloth; shake out the starched things, lay them on the cloth, and roll it up tightly, and let it remain for three or fours, when the things will be ready to iron.

2393. To be able to iron properly requires much practice and experience. Strict cleanliness with all the ironing utensils must be observed, as, if this is not the case, not the most expert ironer will be able to make her things look clear and free from smears, &c. After wiping down her ironing table, the laundry-maid should place a coarse cloth on it, and over that the ironing-blanket, with her stand and iron-rubber; and having ascertained that her irons are quite clean and of the right heat, she proceeds with her work.

2394. It is a good plan to try the heat of the iron on a coarse cloth or apron before ironing anything fine: there is then no danger of scorching. For ironing fine things, such as collars, cuffs, muslins, and laces, there is nothing so clean and nice to use as the box-iron; the bottom being bright, and never placed near the fire, it is always perfectly clean; it should, however, be kept in a dry place, for fear of its rusting. Gauffering-tongs or irons must be placed in a clear fire for a minute, then withdrawn, wiped with a coarse rubber, and the heat of them tried on a piece of paper, as, unless great care is taken, these will very soon scorch.

2395. The skirts of muslin dresses should be ironed on a skirt-board covered with flannel, and the fronts of shirts on a smaller board, also covered with flannel; this board being placed between the back and front.

2396. After things are mangled, they should also be ironed in the folds and gathers; dinner-napkins smoothed over, as also table-cloths, pillow-cases, and sometimes sheets. The bands of flannel petticoats, and shoulder-straps to flannel waistcoats, must also undergo the same process.