

## Minnie May's Department.

## The Fashions.

A few hints as to the knick-knacks of dress will doubtless be very acceptable to many of our nieces, as the merry month of May with all its welcome birds, buds and blossoms, and all verdant beauties, is again with us. About which poets write all brightness, sunshine and warmth, which exists only in their imaginations, in this nineteenth century of ours; and the probability is that we wrap our jackets as closely around us in the early part of May as we have done in the past month. Still, by this time, we either have, or are about to invest in season dresses, and, perhaps, in no month in the year does dress occupy our minds more. The latest New York novelties are as follows:—

Parisian authorities have at length ventured to give some hints with regard to the material and trimmings for the coming season.

Spring suits are being made for young ladies of woolen poplin bordered with bands of Scotch plaid. Suits are also made of navy-blue and bottle-green, trimmed with cream-colored mohair. Velvet skirts are as much worn as ever in the city, but for country wear they are not likely to be in as great demand. Faconne, which has been so much used, is rather heavy for this season, and is to be replaced by mohair in all shades, and crepe d'ete, which bids fair to become generally worn; this being also manufactured in various shades, three different designs being used for the same costume—plain, striped and checked. These combinations come in most of the light summer woolen goods. The eternal beiges are as prominent as ever; the name is changed, but the material and colors remain the same, the general aspect being altered by combining stripes and checks.

The corset basque extends smoothly over the hips, and is gracefully curved on the lower edge. The back has the long side forms that extend from the shoulder seam, and give the long-waisted appearance now considered stylish. Just at the waist line of the two middle forms of the back is a fan cluster of side pleats of silk. These pleats may be set on or let in, as the wearer pleases. If the lower part of the basque is cut out and the pleats are inserted, there should be two or three bands of elastic ribbon placed across underneath to keep the pleating from flaring open too widely. The front has two short darts, and the edge is finished with piping. The neck has a Byron collar and a bow. The trimming of the basque is lengthwise bands of silk in bretelle shape, which also contributes to the appearance of slenderness and length of waist. The sleeves are of silk, with a square cuff of the woolen goods.

The burnous over-skirt has a long wrinkled apron, trimmed with bows down the middle and two bias bands of silk. There is usually a seam down the middle of this apron—a thing that would not have been permitted in the costumes of a few years ago. If the fabric used is very wide, such as Cashmere or shepherd's check, it is possible to make the entire apron of one wide breadth by joining small pieces on the sides; but for goods of ordinary width the better plan is that adopted in the pattern, of having a separate front gore, with a wide gore on each side. The pleating that gathers up the fullness must extend very far back on the sides, and begin quite low down. The wide back drapery forms a long, soft puff that is finished off at the top by a hanging point that reminds one of the graceful hoods worn on Arab mantles, and gives the title of burnous to the over-skirt. This back breadth is a single straight width of wide goods, or two of narrower material; it is gathered in down each side to the apron, and the long hanging top is trimmed all around with a bias silk band. The bottom of the over-skirt is trimmed with a box-pleated frill of the woolen goods, out straight and raveled on each edge to form fringe. This fringing, however, will not look well except on heavy twilled fabrics, as thin fabrics are too light, and need either an added fringe, or should be merely hemmed. The parasol pocket is suspended by ribbons from underneath the basque, as the wrinkled skirt will not allow it to be sewed on smoothly. It is quite broad at the top, showing the silk lining, and is sloped away to a point where a bow finishes it. Its name is given from its resemblance to a parasol when closed. It is sometimes very prettily made of

small fine side pleats to match the cluster in the back of the basque. The lower skirt is of silk, with trimming of silk and of the checked wool.

The reader is advised that this dress need not be made of two materials, as it looks exceedingly well made up of a single fabric; at least the skirt and sleeves may very well be of the material of the dress, though the costume will be more effective if trimmed with a darker shade of bows and bands. Thus, plaid summer silks look best with solid-colored trimmings; light brown de beges and other wool stuffs may have the same material of darker shade for the accessories. Solid-colored silks are preferred when only one kind is used. Black Mexican grenadines are being made by this pattern, as the fullness of the over-skirt is desirable for thin goods. These have a silk lower skirt, with grenadine flounces that cover it in all the parts not concealed by the upper skirt. The trimming for grenadine upper skirts is Spanish lace in two or three full rows. The corset basque is the grenadine over a silk lining, trimmed with lace. Ecu Mexicaine over dark brown silk is handsomely made up in this fashion.

## Flowers in the Country.

What is the reason there are so few flowers cultivated in the country, where there is plenty of space which should be so well ornamented that our young people would find attractions at home strong enough to keep them from the allurements of the city?

Almost every lady says she loves flowers, and would consider it an insult for any one to intimate that she did not. Many ladies complain that they cannot get the ground prepared, or they have no luck with flowers, or they have so much to do, though they can find time to watch their neighbors for an hour at a time, or run off half a mile to gossip with some of their dear friends.

Now, my nieces, let me say a word. Try spending half of this waste time in cultivating a few sweet flowers, which will add to the beauty of your homes. The question naturally arises: What varieties shall we select; and how must we prepare the soil for the plants? Flowers of all sorts like a rich mellow soil. If the ground is heavy and adhesive fine chip manure, old sawdust, half-decayed bark, fine mould from the forest, or fine scrapings from the barnyard, will be found excellent in preparing flower beds.

Sifted coal ashes and soap suds will render the soil light and will improve the fertility. If you raise good flowers this year, you will not go without them next. Amongst the many varieties, I find Zinnias, Portulacacs, Phlox, Balsams, Asters, Cypress Vine, Verbenas, Coreopsis, Gladioluses, Pansies, Geraniums, Coleus, Petunias, Carnations, Chinese Primrose, Mignonette, Roses, Fuchsias, etc. Now, dear nieces, try and persuade your brothers or fathers to prepare a little garden for you, and you take charge of it and let us know how you succeed.

DEAR MINNIE MAY,—As the season for wearing starched clothing will soon be with us, I take the present opportunity of presenting to you the following laundry secret, which may be of service to some of your many readers. M. J., Ingersoll.

## TO MAKE STARCH.

Take two ounces of fine white gum arabic powder, put it into a pitcher and pour on it a pint or more of boiling water, cover it and let stand all night; in the morning pour it carefully from the dregs into a clean bottle and cork it and keep for use. A tablespoonful of gum-water stirred in a pint of starch made in the usual way, will give the lawns, either white or printed, a look of newness.

## COCONUT PUDDING.

To the grated meat of a coconut take six eggs, six large spoonfuls of sugar, half a teacup of butter and a little soda. Line a dish with puff paste and fill with the mixture. Bake in a quick oven.

## BRIDE'S CAKE

The whites of 12 eggs, beat to a stiff froth; 2 teacups of white sugar; 1 teacup of butter; 2 teaspoons cream tartar; 1 teaspoon soda; 1 cup sweet milk; 5 cups flour. Put the cream tartar in the flour, dissolve the soda in the milk, put in the milk last of all.

## GROOM'S CAKE.

Make the same way as Bride's Cake, except using the yolks instead of the whites of eggs.

## TO KEEP HAMS.

There is no better way to keep hams through the summer free from taint or insects than by hanging them up in the smoke-house, which is of course to be kept perfectly dark. When there is no smoke-house or dark room, sew each ham up in a canvas bag and thoroughly whitewash it. They have also been kept perfectly by rubbing into them wood ashes, packing them in barrels, and covering them with ashes.

## TO REMOVE RUST FROM STEEL.

Dinner knives sometimes get very rusty, and may be brightened by covering with sweet oil; let it stand for forty-eight hours and rub with unslaked lime, or powdered brick. A fine grain red brick, finely powdered, is good for polishing knives. Whiting is an excellent article for cleaning and polishing silver, britannia, tin, etc., when properly used, making it look almost like new. They should first be rubbed with it wet, then polished with dry.

DEAR MINNIE MAY,—I thought, as I liked your column so much, I would write to you. I have read a number of letters from your nieces and have found some very useful hints in them. We are all anxious to see the puzzle department, my brothers amuse themselves very much in making out the puzzles. I enclose a recipe for making potato cheese-cakes, which I can recommend.

Your respectful niece, JENNIE.

## POTATO CHEESE-CAKES.

One pound of mashed potatoes, quarter of a pound of currants, quarter of a pound of sugar and butter, and four eggs; to be well mixed together. Bake them in patty-pans, having first lined them with puff paste.

## Our Scrap Book.

"Learn to save yourself work," is the best maxim to be observed in housekeeping.

To render flat-irons smooth, rub them well with salt, and then over a piece of beeswax after eating.

Stove-blackening mixed with vinegar instead of water, is more permanent and gives a higher polish.

To remove smoke and dust from wall paper, rub it with a soft cloth and plenty of dry bran or Indian meal.

Gilt frames should have a coat of demar varnish, which will keep them from becoming soiled with dust or fly specks, and permit their being cleaned with a damp cloth.

Zinc that is used under stoves should never be dampened. If it becomes soiled or dim, rub with soft flannel and a little fresh lard. Cleaned in this way, a zinc may always be kept as bright as when first purchased.

To sprinkle damp bran upon a carpet before sweeping is a good way of laying the dust without injury to the carpet. Oil-cloths should be cleaned in warm, not hot water, and rubbed dry with a cloth wrung out of milk and water.

A bottle of aqua ammonia is invaluable to the housekeeper. A spoonful put in the iron pans and kettles, in which meat and vegetables have been cooked, will remove all grease, and make the cleaning of these vessels a very easy operation. One of the best washing fluids is made by mixing equal parts of turpentine and ammonia. This fluid makes rubbing almost unnecessary, while it whitens the clothes without rotting them. House plants are very much stimulated by giving them water which contains a small quantity of ammonia. Two spoonfuls to a quart of water are sufficient.

## Good Humor.

Keep in good humor. It is not great calamities that embitter existence; it is the petty vexations, the small jealousies, the little disappointments, the minor miseries that make the heart heavy and the temper sour. Don't let them. Anger is a pure waste of vitality; it is always foolish, and always disgraceful, except in some very rare cases, when it is kindled by seeing wrong done to another; and even that noble rage seldom mends the matter. Keep in good humor.

No man does his best except when he is cheerful. A light heart makes nimble hands, and keeps the mind free and alert. No misfortune is so great as one that sours the temper.—Until cheerfulness is lost, nothing is lost. Keep in good humor.