

"THE KING'S DAUGHTERS": THEIR CULTURE AND CARE.

By LINA ORMAN COOPER, Author of "We Wives," etc.

PART I.

THEIR CLOTHING.

SOME months ago I was privileged to write a short series of articles for the "G. O. P." on "Queen Baby and her Needs." In this fresh course I want to give advice to mothers and guardians upon the culture and care of the girl when she has passed a few more years of her life. To be called upon to rear daughters of the King, for the King, is our high vocation, there is nothing common or mean about the task. What we "grown-ups" need is not an electrolyte mind, thinking that every girl must do just what every other girl ever did. But an open intelligence, ready to see good in new things if the good be there.

It is wonderful how the movement for rational dress has spread over England. Our daughters no longer go about with the cavity of their lungs exposed, or the delicate forearm uncovered. We no longer case tiny feet in openwork stockings and kid shoes. We have learned that strong boots need not be clumsy. Woollen dresses need not necessarily be ugly, or warm stockings coarse. Still, as it was nearly 3000 years ago, so we even now love pretty garments. Bells and pomegranates add so much to the glory and beauty of our robes. Ribands on the borders of our garments are still admired. "Raiment of

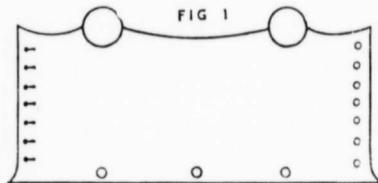


FIG 1

needlework," or "embroidery," is still the thing we like to give our girls. Daintiness in all "within" is what we appreciate.

Now I consider "daintiness" consists really in absolute purity and fitness. If we would preserve health, we must not only think of the prettiness of our children's clothing, but of the adaptability of that clothing to the laws of hygiene. It is one thing to be dressed, it is quite another thing to be clothed. Here is necessary the "wrought gold" of wisdom, and experience, and common-sense.

In perfect health the little bodies we tend maintain a certain degree of heat. Therefore the purpose in clothing them is to keep up that naturally equable temperature. In our very changeable climate, great discrimination is needed in changing the garments to meet the varied weather. It is well understood now that heat as well as cold gives a chill—that overclothing is almost as unwise as underclothing.

To my mind it is no more unwise to lighten the dress on a warm day, than it is to wear a waterproof on a wet one.

"Button to chin,
Till May be in,
Ne'er cast a clout,
Till May be out."

is one of those half truths that lead many astray. We should avoid bathing our little ones in perspiration, even if we are only in the fifth month of the year.

Now, our object being to keep an equable temperature round our little girl's body, how

can we best succeed? I answer decidedly—as science has so often answered before—"by dressing the child in wool."

The clothing of our children should be as light as possible; as warm as possible; as cool as possible. Wool alone will work the miracle. So the first garment our six-year old

FIG 2



girl should don must be a woollen one. There are a great many most hideous combination garments sold that in no wise carry out the idea of "fine needlework." I would not disgrace the most beautiful thing in nature, viz.: a girl-child's white form, by putting any such thing about her. But delicately-woven white Shetland woollies can be bought nowadays that are daintiness personified, and yet obey all rules of health. Some white woollen lace, filled round the neck, and half sleeves, add a touch of refinement. This combination garment should button on the shoulder, not down the chest, and should cover the thighs.

Over this porous envelope, a corselet should be buttoned. No bones must be allowed in it. On this matter I feel very strongly. We are dreadfully shocked at the cruelty of Chinese mothers in binding up their children's feet to prevent growth. Yet—can it be believed? I have seen little soft-growing bodies—belonging to girls of seven—encased in buckram and whalebone! one foolish mother actually pinching the waist, to make her child "grow up a good figure." We are right in condemning the Chinese mother. But how humiliating to find Englishwomen of the present day actually stopping the growth of heart, lungs, liver, and other vital organs, in this fashion.

The bodices I recommend should be made at home of strong white corded cotton, or knitted to shape in wool by clever fingers. I give a diagram (Fig. 1). The buttons at the waist-line, or over the hips, are for supporting the drawers and petticoats which follow.

One petticoat of flannel and one of cambric is sufficient. Both take considerably less stuff



FIG 3

than similar garments for a younger child. The under one should be trimmed with woollen lace, or mitred in this fashion (Fig. 2). The edges buttoned with flourishing flax, and the small sprays satin-stitched with the same. As flannel shrinks in the wash, a large tuck must be put in at first, the sewing thereof

masked by herring-bone in the flax thread mentioned above.

A mother's love for fine needlework and many tucks may be displayed in the white petticoat. It should be made very full, neatly gauged and gathered into a bodice of the same, trimmed with insertion and edged with frills of torchon (Fig. 3).

This bodice should button at the back.

The drawers worn by our little daughter should be equally beautified. Valenciennes makes a pretty frilling above the knee, or Cashe's cambric frilling looks well. Let the leg-hole be cut amply large and plenty of room for kicking about and running.

The frock or overall will be, of course, always a matter of taste. But as long as possible, let it be white. No other colour is as suitable for the King's daughters. The King has recognised this Himself, we say it with all reverence (Eccles. ix. 8.) His Son wore a white and seamless robe here (Luke ix. 29), as a type of the "righteousness" which girt Him about (Rev. xix. 8). A beautiful legend concerning Him tells of the glistening

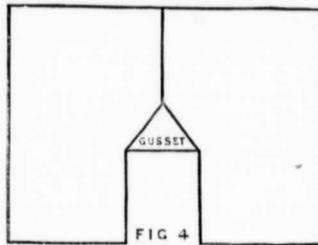


FIG 4

atmosphere which moved with Jesus of Nazareth wherever he went. Some such atmosphere we should try and create round our girls, and, as white is the symbol of purity, we can begin with the white dress, though we must not stop there. Snowy raiment will one day be given them by their Heavenly Father (Rev. vii. 13). Let us imitate His example even here. I have given diagrams for some of the under-clothing, but will not venture to sketch frocks for the King's daughters. Something loose and light and warm and white is all I counsel.

There are seasons, however, that are unsuitable for petticoats proper. Romp hours and play hours; hours at the seaside and hours on the bicycle have to be provided for. The other day I was watching gymnastic exercises in a large high school for girls. I could not but be struck by the utility, fitness, and—yes—beauty of the costumes worn. In these garments, tall girls and short girls, fat girls and thin girls, all looked equally well. In them, too, they were able to vault, and leap, and climb, and swing, as freely and agilely as young monkeys.

This costume consisted of two garments only. Full trousers reaching to the knee of blue serge, and a tunic reaching just beyond. I then and there resolved that when I next have children of from six years old to twelve to dress, I would adopt some such plan, at least, when at the seaside or during scrambling holidays. The trousers I should make from two straight pieces of, say, white serge. Before being put into the band this would be their shapelessness, I cannot call it shape (Fig. 4).