

THE HOUSEHOLD.

HOW TO LEAVE OFF CORSETS.

BY MARY A. ALLEN, M. D.

"What would you advise me to do in regard to leaving off my corset? I have worn one for 30 years, and when I take it off I feel 'all gone'; cannot work at all, in fact can scarcely sit up until I put on the corset again. Is there any special style of waist you would recommend to take the place of the corset?"

The above communication, just received, embodies the experience of multitudes of women, though the deduction drawn from their feelings is not that they would like to dispense with the corset as something hurtful, but rather that it ought to be retained as something beneficial. Their logical syllogism runs somewhat after this fashion: Anything we cannot live without is beneficial; I cannot live without my corset; therefore, the corset is beneficial. The drinking man follows the same logic in regard to his dram, and just as correctly. The very fact that the woman feels weak and unable to work when the corset is laid aside is proof that it has been hurtful. As Dr. Taylor says, "it has been a splint, a bandage," and beneficial as these may be in fractures they are injurious to healthy, sound bodies. The triple layer of muscles arranged for the perfect support and protection of the trunk of the body would have been entirely adequate for the purpose had they been allowed to do their work without let or hindrance; but having been compressed and restrained they have not been nourished by full circulation of blood through them; not having been called upon to perform their legitimate function of support they have not grown strong by exercise, but weak from lack of it. No man would expect to be able to use his arm if he had carried it in a sling for 30 years, nor would he wonder why it felt weak and uncomfortable if the sling were removed; and I fancy he would be able to form something of an idea of how to restore to his arm the vigor lost by its non-use. The same suggestions of common sense will aid us in the solution of the problem presented by our correspondent in regard to the corset.

First and most important is the necessity of supporting all underclothing from the shoulders. Not a single garment, even the smallest and lightest, should depend from the hips. This statement may seem rather *ultra*, but let any woman for months wear every garment supported from the shoulders, and then let her fasten even a pair of muslin drawers around her waist and she will soon begin to feel tired and dragged down, possibly without understanding why, until she recalls the unwonted weight about her hips, and the support of the garment from the shoulders will at once remove the sense of irritation and discomfort.

There is no way so effectual to relieve the hips of all weight of under-clothing as by adopting the combination garment, whereby the chemise is discarded, and the drawers and waist are united. Skirts which should be as few and light as possible, may now be fastened to an underwaist or supported by suspenders. The waist may be made after a good fitting basque pattern, or the Flynt waist, Bates waist, or some other form of hygienic waist may be selected. This waist, as well as the dress, should be so loose that the deepest possible breath may be drawn without feeling restriction from the clothing.

The clothing having thus been remodelled, what then? Will the patient at once feel comfortable, and as well able to work as in the corset? By no means. Simply to give the muscles freedom of action will not at once give them tone and vigor. They must have time and judicious care. The man who releases his arm from a long imprisonment does not expect at once to use it all day chopping wood. He begins the use of it gradually, being very careful not to over fatigue it. He, perhaps, has some one to exercise it for him, flexing it, straightening it, or rubbing it. The same plan of procedure is advisable in the case before us. The speediest and most comfortable way to dispense entirely with the corset would be to put the patient in bed for a week or so. During this time she should have massage treatment applied directly to the weakened muscles, that is, those muscles should be rubbed, pinched and thoroughly manipulated until the blood courses through

every part of them with force and rapidity. This passive exercise does not exhaust the nerve power of the patient, yet it builds up muscular tissue by increasing elimination of worn out material, and, consequently, creates a demand for new material to replace that which has been removed. Thus the muscles grow and regain strength. Electricity understandingly employed tends also to the same end. After a few days of this entirely passive exercise the patient should begin voluntary use of these muscles in light gymnastics. Then the remodelled style of dress could be worn a short time daily while she moved slowly about the room, being careful not to prolong her exercise to the point of fatigue.

It would be found necessary to remodel even the dresses, as, without doubt, they would be much too tight. Under the new regime the ribs would expand and the waist become larger. I have seen patients amazed at the change in figure made in six weeks of such treatment. They had "never laced," (of course not) and could not comprehend why the dresses they had worn with comfort should, after such a short liberation from corsets and snug dresses, have become uncomfortably tight. Increase of size of waist is inevitable under this treatment; but, so, also, is increase of health, strength and general comfort, beauty of figure, grace and elegance of carriage.—*Herald of Health.*

TOO NICE FOR COMFORT.

BY HELEN PEARSON BARNARD.

Our drawing-rooms, once so stiff and sombre, are now changed as by magic, with graceful hangings, scarfs, banners, screens, panels and decorated china. The rich riot of color seems truly Oriental; the caller seats himself in an ample Turkish chair, and, leaning his head upon an exquisite tidi, feels that here is that dangerous spot where man is

"Carried to the skies,
On flowery beds of ease!"

But the hostess enters, the thrifty matron. Not an ounce of superfluous flesh dares rest upon her busy bones. She looks as if she never spent a second dreaming in one of her luxurious chairs! Despite her good breeding, it is plain that something annoys her; she glances anxiously beyond your head, and hastily invites you to another seat, "near the fire." You observe carelessly, "A most comfortable chair, and what a pretty tidi!"

Falling into your trap, the matron expatiates upon the tidi. "It cost dear Belinda three weeks' work." Then as you admire the robin's nest on velvet garnished with lace, your suspicions are fully justified when she says, "I think the world of this. Indeed, we only keep it to look at," returning it carefully to the plush chair. You flush to the very back of the head that dared rest upon a thing so sacred. Then, looking about, you observe that as was the tidi, so are most of the decorations in the room. That ottoman, covered with real lace and satin ribbon, who would dare rest a weary foot upon it? That sofa-pillow, shaped most alluringly for repose, who would venture a tired head upon such elegant fabric bound together by countless stitches of embroidery silk?

So it is all through the house. Out in the library is a table-desk, just the thing for a family to gather about on a winter's evening, with its drop-light, but even that has been made a household idol with a scarf that cost the ladies of the house infinite trouble and money; and although unique pen-holders, paper-cutters and fancy weights are arranged upon it, as if for convenience, it is all to look at—the elegant ink-stand is empty for fear of accident, and all writing must be done elsewhere.

The same obstacle to comfort is in every part of the house. The dining-room crumb cloth is so elegant that the mistress is constantly distressed lest a morsel fall upon it. Even the nursery is invaded by this law; the children's best toys are used for decoration, to give the room the semblance of luxurious playing!

A lady was admiring a French doll in one of these show-nurseries. "What wouldn't I have given for this when a child!" she said. "And a whole trunk full of clothes! What hours of fun these must bring!"

The small owner of so much, gazing mournfully at the Parisian belle, replied, "she isn't made to play with—she's my look-at dolly!"

My friend found that the doll was a type

of the restrictions placed upon all the simple pleasures of childhood. Everything was too nice for every-day use. Her clothes were not to romp in; she wore silk and velvet to school, and fine shoes that she was daily admonished not to get scratched. Even the lawn about her father's house was too nice to step upon; a man was kept at work all summer trimming and raking it, until, instead of being something spontaneous and useful for children to sport upon, it was as nearly as possible like a vivid green carpet from the manufactory.

Sometimes the master of the house, coming home weary of business, longed for less luxury and more comfortable arrangements. If he ventured to rest in an easy-chair, he was gently but firmly dislodged by wife or daughters with—"O father, you'll spoil that," or "Father, that's for company!"

"I'd give more for mother's kitchen with its chintz-cushioned rocker, than for all the fancy fixings in this whole house!" he often said. "There isn't one spot of solid comfort in it!"

This only provoked that pitying, superior smile that women accord the masculine who cannot rise to their ideal. They could not see the pathos under his half-playful protest. Why shouldn't the gods they worshipped satisfy him? Well for them that the man loved home and instinctively turned to that when pressed with care, or else he might have drifted far away. Oh, blind wives and mothers who allow the love of beautifying, possibly the desire for display, to clash with the true object of home! Where are your boys to-night, mother, while you anxiously match the shades for that silken banner? Under whose banner are they enlisting?—*Watchman.*

SOME HOUSEHOLD ECONOMICS.

BY KATHERINE ARMSTRONG.

It is a very good use for the unworn borders of stair carpets to convert them into borders for rugs; but suppose one is not able, quite yet, to buy new stair carpets? A friend of ours, a thrifty New England housekeeper, has just solved this problem, and most successfully metamorphosed her stair carpet, the entire middle of which was badly worn, by buying half the length required for the whole flight, of the best ingrain, cutting it lengthwise through the middle, sewing two ends together, and hemming the raw edge. This just fitted, on between the borders, over the old carpet. The pattern of the ingrain was fine, "crinkly," not decided in color, and harmonized with the border. It was marvellous how well it looked, and the expense was trifling; for the very best quality of ingrain carpeting can now be bought for less than a dollar a yard, and is found in almost perfect imitation of Brussels patterns.

Stair carpet pads can be made of shrunken half-worn bed blankets, past using on beds. They should be covered with drilling, and will last a lifetime. They are a great saving on the wear of the carpets, as well as making them soft and agreeable to use.

There is nothing that freshens up a room carpet like sweeping it with coarse, wet cornmeal. No dust will arise to settle upon furniture and bric-a-brac; but it will be absorbed by the meal.

There is a great difference of opinion as to the comfort and luxury of bed linen. A wealthy lady of our acquaintance, a housekeeper, who had no limit to her spending said: "Linen for my beds I have never thought of; cotton is good enough for me"; but we could forego many other comforts for the sake of linen for our beds in summer. Good linen sheets will last for many years, and, when the middle becomes worn, the best part of each sheet will make a pair of pillow slips that will last for several summers. The parts much worn are rolled up and laid away in the "sick bag" to be readily found in emergencies, and utilized for compresses, bandages, poultices, and the various needs of sickness or accidents.

In buying table linen the finer, smaller the pattern, the longer it will last. When tablecloths are half worn, or past use as such, the best parts may be cut into table napkins, and, if neatly hemmed, few will notice that they are not of a regular pattern, or these pieces may be used to lay under boiled fish for serving; or they will be found very convenient for wrapping cake before putting away in a tin box.

Table-cloths wear much longer if a double-faced, thick canton flannel is first spread on the table. It smooths the edges,

and is much softer and more agreeable than without it. Many consider it indispensable. *N. Y. Independent.*

HOW TO DRESS.

BY MARIANA M. BISBEE.

When you make your toilette, girls, whether for the breakfast table, the street, or the party, do it whole-heartedly and well as you would do any other duty, and then think no more about it. When you choose a new gown, choose carefully the colors most becoming to your complexion, and the patterns most suitable to your figure. We all like to see you looking pretty, and it would be as foolish for you not to make the most of your faces and figures as to neglect your studies, or your household duties, or your fine voice, which is being so carefully cultivated.

But what a mistake our girls are falling into, in thinking that their attractiveness is governed by the amount of money represented in their garments! It is not texture and fabric, half as much as harmony of color and careful fitting and draping that make you seem well-dressed. Where is the use in wearing silk and velvet nowadays when the kitchen-maid dresses as well as her mistress? Where is the use at any time unless they are more comfortable than cheaper fabrics? Are there not other uses to which you could put your money more advantageously than in trying to look just as everybody else does? Have you no simply dressed friends whom you love just as well as if their garments were far finer?

Fashion is so capricious now that it is difficult to wear out a really nice dress, and keep it in style. Four expensive dresses in a year are just three too many for actual service. For young girls, whether they will believe it or not, the simple costumes are the most pleasing, and jewellery, beyond some simple ring or pin, looks entirely out of place, as an excess of it looks anywhere. Do not follow any fashion to extremes, and have good sense and independence enough to reject any style which is unbecoming. At the same time, it is no mark of good sense to dress oddly to show contempt of style. Act on the good old couplet:

"Be not the first by whom the new is tried,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."

That costume is nearest correct which, while not conspicuous, shows that its wearer possesses neatness, good taste and an artistic eye; and then bids you look to other sources to determine whether she is a person of poverty or wealth.—*Morning Star.*

USEFUL HINTS.

When white merino underclothes are past wearing, they may be cut into pieces of suitable size, and used for window-cleaning; first wet in warm water, in which a little washing soda is dissolved, and thereafter rubbing the glass with a soft, crushed newspaper; it will have the effect of silicium.

Excellent iron-holders are made of soft, old merino, as well as cast-off hosiery, but they should be covered with new drilling, to make them serviceable. Housekeepers need to provide all these homely necessities; by being careless and inconsiderate they often find themselves quite unable to furnish suitable materials to work with.

A bag of silk pieces, old and new, has been accumulating for several months; bits of ribbon, silk linings, odds and end left from the "crazy quilt," even the silk of a brown umbrella, every conceivable color and shade. These all may be cut into strips, half an inch wide, and sewed together at random, so as to color in one long piece, and wound, forming a large ball. This sewing can be done, either by hand or machine; in the latter case, cut the strips after sewing. Now cast from the silk forty stitches upon medium size tidy needles and knit, in loose, plain stitch, back and forth. The blending of colors will be found very pleasing, the work rapid and fascinating, and the result most satisfactory. The pieces can be knitted of any desired size, and be applied to numberless uses and ways of ornamenting. A friend has used long strips of this knitted material by alternating them with the same width of satin for window curtains, and they were beautiful. It also made a very handsome piano scarf, the ends finished with a heavy, mixed, silk fringe.—*N. Y. Independent.*