

Beds and Bedding.

That part of household furnishing, upon which so much of the comfort or discomfort of a family depends, demands extreme care from the housewife, in all the details.

In this day of cheap materials, housekeepers of limited means, can, with tact and care, have bed supplies sufficient for the comfort and health of their families. The bedstead, whatever the style or pattern, should have a level and firm surface. If I had now in use the old-fashioned cord bedstead, I should have grooves cut in the side frame, in which to insert slats to replace the cords, which could never be kept a flat unyielding surface.

Good springs are a desirable addition to the bed and are of many patterns and cheap.

A good hair or wool mattress makes the best foundation, but a tick made of strong material, filled with clean straw which is always kept evenly and smoothly distributed in the tick, as it wears down by use, is a good substitute for a mattress; and some even prefer a straw bed, because they can replenish it with fresh straw frequently, and they consider it more conducive to cleanliness. The feather bed, once considered indispensable, is now, from choice, discarded by many. I consider it, however, a most essential attribute to the comfort of old people in cold weather, and many will continue to use it from habit. Its place is well supplied, and always should be in the summer, by a cotton comforter or mattress. One made of ticking just the size of the bed surface and containing ten or twelve pounds of cotton, tied with cotton yarn, or sewed with a few stitches of coarse thread, in squares six inches each way, looks well and is serviceable. Pillows, thirty inches in length, and twenty-two inches in width, containing five pounds of feathers to the pair, are good shaped and comfortable. Pillow-cases, made of forty-five inch cotton, finished with either a plain hem or trimmed, can be always kept in a presentable condition. Three pairs should be allowed to a bed.

Five yards of heavy, unbleached muslin or two and one half yards of the seamless sheeting, is enough for one sheet, and should be made with a wide hem at one end and a narrow one at the other, with some mark to designate the bed to which it belongs. Four sheets for a bed make a convenient quantity for change and cleanliness. When sheets are partly worn, they should be ripped through the middle and the outer edges sewed together, thus securing double wear, and for that reason I think the yard-wide sheeting preferable. [Better use the double width and not sew that long seam; get eight yards of it for three sheets. — Ed.]

To those who can get woolen blankets for cold weather, I would say, have them by all means. Get them in white, or light colors, and wash and use them carefully. Keep them from moths in the summer, and they will last years. To wash woolen blankets, soak them in cold soap suds for a few hours or over night, wring them and rub or pound them through lukewarm, soft water, which takes the suds and dirt out; then rinse in lukewarm water and, if white, add a little bluing. Washed in that manner, they will neither shrink nor discolor. For summer use, I always kept a light, woolen blanket on my beds for cool nights, in preference to cotton quilts or comforters, for the reason that they do not confine the perspiration, as quilts do, and are more easily aired and washed.

Comforters and quilts can be made of any material to suit the taste or convenience. White and light colors are preferable for all bedding, as they can never deceive you into thinking them clean when they are not. Seven yards of calico, cut in three equal lengths, will make one side of a comforter. Three or four pounds of cotton will be needed for a light one; put on frames and tie in any form desired, after which sew the edges together. Over one end baste a "wash-guard" and your comforter will be satisfactory and inexpensive. Some people use six or eight pounds of cotton for a comforter. I much prefer two or three lighter ones, as they are easier to handle and easier to stow away when not in use. The best grade of cotton batting is the most economical, as the cheaper grades pull apart in handling the quilts, mat into bunches and soon render the comforter unserviceable.

Fanciful patch-work quilts, lined with light colored print, wadded with one thickness of sheet wadding, and quilted closely, make a pretty outside cover, and seems to be regaining much of their old-time favor; but the most tasteful and desirable outside cover for a bed is a white counterpane, of which there are many inexpensive varieties. Home-made ones are very pretty and cost little.

A "foot-puff" for cold weather is a most grateful covering for cold feet, and is lighter and warmer than a folded quilt. To make one, sew into a tick, three yards of unbleached sheeting and put into it one and a half or two pounds of goose down, or fine goose or duck feathers; sew it up and make a case or cover of bright colored print, with a ruffle one and a half inches in width of plain turkey-red print entirely around the edges; sew in a seam and turn. Insert the puff, placing each corner in the corner of the cover and fasten with a small safety pin. Make a bag of the same material as the cover, with a shirring at the top, in which to put the puff when not in use. Draw the strings and hang out of the way.

And now we have the necessary furnishings for a comfortable and sweet resting place, after the fatigues of the day. The expense has been small, the labor of planning, executing and coming into possession of it all, has been a delightful task; but the painstaking and care has just begun.

I once knew a very particular housewife, who always gave this charge to anyone making up her beds, whether her help or her guests: "Please take two chairs to lay the bed clothes on, and don't let the quilts touch the floor," and I have often since been reminded of her carefulness, when I have seen quilts dragged on the floor, trodden upon, and otherwise carelessly handled.

Comforters and quilts, when not in use, should never be left hanging over the banisters, on a trunk or chair or anywhere just as it happens. Instead, take out and air and dust them; and, if the "wash-guards" are soiled, rip them off, wash and replace them; then fold smooth and stow away in some dark place, where they will be free from dust and mice. If no better place is at hand, pack them in a dry goods box and nail securely. If necessary to have a quilt around for an invalid, choose one that is pretty to look at and can be easily washed. Keep for each bed its own set of furnishings.

Beds that are in constant use should be frequently aired on sunny days, even to the mattress, and replenished with at least one clean sheet and clean pillow-cases every week. They should always be made up every morning, not

once a week or longer. Take every article off singly, shake it free from dust, smooth and draw the mattress into place, and replace the sheets with the wide hems at the head, and the right sides facing each other. Blankets, quilts and counterpanes, lay on evenly and tuck in neatly; turn the upper sheet over the quilts a few inches, at the head, and lay the pillows in good shape against the headboard, not as if they had been dumped on from across the room; smooth out all uneven places—in short, make your bed look just as nice and inviting as you can every day.

Never let a bed become a "catch-all" for wraps, clothing and odds and ends. It soils the counterpane, gets the bed out of shape, and is often the means of helping bed bugs to emigrate. The outside decorations, such as pillow spreads, the sheet sham and fancy foot spread, we will leave to the taste of the housewife. C. R. A.

Nervous Sleeplessness.

This subject has been hinted at several times in the "Talks" in answer to many inquiries from subscribers, but only hints have been given. Those who enquire of the doctor generally fail to give him any history of their condition or any clue to the causes of the complaint. The trouble most often arises in both women and men from worry. "Worry kills many more than hard work." Worry on account of household cares, business, family relations, and a thousand things drive away sleep from both fathers and mothers. It is a fact that the great majority of the Insane in American hospitals come from those who live outside of the cities. The ceaseless routine of farm life, without any recreation or social pleasure whatsoever, leads many of both sexes to that sad condition. And the most common precursor of many forms of insanity is continued sleeplessness. Everyone thus afflicted need not infer that he is on the road to the insane asylum, but such should draw this moral. The social pleasures, the holidays, the picnics and sociables, are by no means to be despised as affording variety in life and an antidote to one continued mental routine. Even though you are worried about this debt or that mortgage, or the many details of the household, the work that is "never done," do not let such care take you entirely from your family, or lead you to be less of a kind father or mother. This is for your own sake and not on moral grounds alone. You will sleep better for a game of croquet or a romp with the children, or a walk in the woods.

Then, too, bathing, i. e. keeping the skin clean, is by no means a small factor in inducing sleep. A cool sponge bath will make the night's rest sweeter, in more sense than one. If you find yourself awake and restless in the night, rise and bathe your face and hands in cold water briskly, wipe them thoroughly and expect to be far more successful in courting "tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep." If, after an evening's hard mental work you do not feel like sleep, take a short walk in the cool night air, endeavoring to think of nature or something out of the usual line. Late and hearty suppers are not conducive to good sleep. Omit the bit of cheese or pie before retiring. Think over your habits and reform them, remembering that a good conscience also aids proper sleep.

Asters are desirable because they come into bloom after the greater portion of garden flowers have passed their prime.