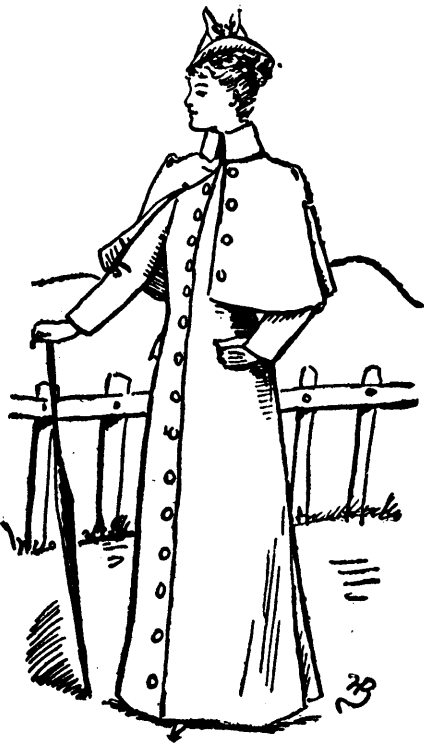




A Comfortable Waterproof—Straight Soles—How to Boil Potatoes.

I cannot say that I am much enamoured of mackintoshes. They have unpleasant habits, one of which is to run the water off their surfaces in a fringe of drops at their lower edge. Another is to stick together when creased, or sat upon, particularly if any warmth comes near them, and still another is to tear when fluttering in the wind, as well as—last but not least—to smell abominably. It is absurd that in order to be dry, one should have to submit to all these varieties of discomfort, and

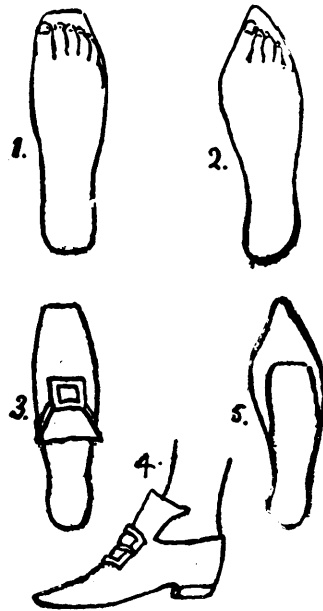


with so-called waterproof tweeds, I am not sure that one is much better off—for they can get wet through whilst certainly keeping off moisture from the inner woman for a long time. So at last I have tried the following of which I give you a sketch, and so far I can certainly recommend it from experience. The outside is in soft woolen material like that of a shepherd's plaid or any other checked pattern of different heather mixtures you prefer. The front is, as you see, not tight fitting, though the back should be carefully shaped to the figure, and tied in round the waist. The sleeves may be put in or taken out according to taste, as they are made to button to the armhole by little tabs. The cape may be made long or short as you like and fastens down in front by two buttons to prevent blowing up

when driving, or walking. The whole cloak is very complete, and not expensive.

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Straight soles, and why people should wear them to their boots and shoes is a thing to which I would much like to draw your kind attention. Of late years a certain delusion has seized the shoemakers that the true and natural shape of the foot is as shown in No. 2 of the accompanying sketches. So they have diligently set to work to make a sole, a shoe, and a boot on those lines, ending in an exceedingly sharp point, such as that of No. 5. Please notice the result of this unnatural curved shoe and its pointed toe on the form of the foot. The toes are all pressed together, and being thrown forward by the high heel generally made to this form of boot or shoe, the joint of the large toe is thrown out, whilst the toe itself is pressed back by the sloping side of the shoe's point. Look at the



foot of a little baby, or any child that wears no shoes, and see how straight is the natural foot, as in No. 1, up the inner side, where no wrongly made outside covering has distorted the toes and joints. It is no wonder that people have suffered from bunions and corns when the "fingers of the foot" are pressed up into such a mash as those in No. 2, which is in reality not half so tight as they really are. It is just a little disgraceful that we of the nineteenth century can torture our feet in a way that in even a distant fashion emulates those of a Chinese lady of rank. People may admire pointed toes, but the foot looks a great deal smaller, narrower, and finer in a square-toed, straight-soled shoe such as No. 3, than in a sharp-pointed thing like No. 5, which perforce throws out the joint at the side. I do not say that the ridiculous shape of square toe that hails from America is to be recommended, for that looks as though the shoe had been cut off at its widest part right across. The round of the toes should be slightly followed without doubt as in the now fashionable shoes worn in France, and christened after Molière, the great dramatic author in whose time such shoes were fashionable, as Nos. 3 and 4. There are few shapes so comfortable, as I can tell from experience, nor I think that make a pretty foot look so well as these. Shoe-makers will always make you a straight sole to your boots and shoes if you ask them, and insist upon it, and I am sure once you have tried them you will never care to return to the other most hideous deformity. You may like to know what French ladies are wearing just now, and consider suitable. Three different styles may be worn for walking out in the morning; either the laced-up boot, tan leather shoes or what is the most elegant, though they quickly get soiled, the white kid shoes. When paying visits in a carriage the Molière shoes or those of patent leather with flat English heels are the most useful. For evening, black patent leather, or *glacé* kid shoes with a loose bow of ribbon, or little solitaire of old silver instead of the bow, are worn.

How to boil potatoes is a thing that, if you ask them, of course everyone knows—at least they think so. But the "proof," alas! for them, "of the pudding" and the potato, is in the eating, and what a failure that often discloses. There should be no mystery about it, and yet how few cooks understand it. Indeed, it is a curious fact that the grander (in her profession) the cook, the less trouble she takes to do common things well—for example, boiling potatoes. That is quite beneath the immense scope of her talent, so it is left to the kitchen or vegetable maid, who crams them on to the fire in hot water, to boil away as hard as ever they can; and when they are served, you will find though they may be floury outside, you will find what is called "a bone" in the middle. Where people do not depend chiefly on potatoes as their food, you will nearly always see them carelessly cooked, which is truly a sin and a shame. Ireland is the place, and next to it Wales, where potatoes are well treated in the cooking, and those who know how to eat them in perfection will have them boiled or steamed in their skins. Still better are they baked; and then with butter, pepper, and salt mixed up inside them, eaten with an egg-spoon, like a boiled egg. People talk of boiling potatoes, and I have so headed this paragraph, but as a matter of fact potatoes should never be allowed to boil. Irishwomen never boil potatoes, for they put them into the saucepan in cold water, and directly they come to a boil in goes a small dash of cold water, which throws back the boiling process, and cooks them the more thoroughly. I was very glad to see a leading article on the much ill-treated tuber the other day in one of our largest circulating papers, but whilst it strongly advocated potatoes done in their jackets, it offered no suggestion as to how that was accomplished. In England we are very stupid, and do not half make use of potatoes, which are indeed capable of cooking in endless varieties. But of course if we will tolerate the wateriness, and greasiness of our average English cooking, which are its two chief faults, we cannot expect to do justice to, nor to enjoy potatoes as they should be enjoyed.

A Plea for Sad Songs.

It is the fashion nowadays amongst a large class of people to decry all that is mournful, pathetic, or sad in literature, poetry especially. Now, this is a great mistake. It is not a sin to be sad. What are the natures that cannot suffer and be sad? Are they worth anything? Are they capable of heroism? Can they even know true happiness? And who really cares for them? In our best moments we are sad, not glad. And why? Because life is sad, and it is only when we selfishly hide ourselves, as it were, from trouble and care that we can think otherwise. I am no Pessimist. I believe in the gospel of cheerfulness, but there are times for sadness as well as for gladness, and if there are times for sadness then, also, there must be songs of sadness. When we are happy and joyous, we like to hear laughter and glad songs. When we are in a melancholy mood, the same merriment pains us, and to try and join in with it often means madness. At such times let that fortunate poet who has the gift and the faculty divine sing sad songs for us poor dumb poets. These songs will give expression to thoughts which we ourselves have been denied the power of making vocal, and we will be relieved and soothed. This is the poet's vocation. To find proper clothing for the naked thoughts, which struggle and fight like unruly children to leave their home, the mind, but which we dare not let depart unattired. Some of these children trouble us greatly and we would fain put them away. They are the sad thoughts. But the poet takes them, and because they are not so pleasing in themselves as our other children, the happy thoughts, he clothes them in his most eloquent music, and the world, when it hears aright, says: "The sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thought."

"Oh, give her then her tribute just,  
For sighs and tears and musings lowly  
There is no music in the life  
That sounds with idiot laughter solely;  
There's not a string attuned to mirth,  
But has its chord in melancholy."

And these are the words of one of our kings of laughter,  
Tom Hood.

EDITH EATON.