WOMAN and HER WORK.

Some misguided creature of the male persuasion had the audacity to wonder publicly how women managed to kill time, received in answer a detailed statement which, if it did not utterly annihilate him for all time, shou'd have done so. The statement was from a woman who, with her husband, two children and two servants lived in a house with nine rooms. Having kept the statistical account of her doings for one year, she was thus able to give an itemized account of her time, and this was the result:—

Number of lunches put up, 1,157; meals ordered 963; desserts made, 172; lamps filled 328; rooms dusted, 2,250; times dressed children, 786; visits received, 896; visits paid, 167; books read, 88; papers read, 553; stories read aloud, 234; games played, 329; fancy articles made, 56; letters written, 426; church services attended, 125; articles mended, 1,236; articles of clothing made, 120; hours in music, 20½; hours in Sunday school work, 208; hours in gardening, 49; sick days, 44; amusements attended, 10.

"Besides the above," adds this wonderful nineteenth century Martha, "I nursed two children through measles, twice cleaned every nook and corner of my house, put up 75 jars of pickles and preserves, made seven trips to the dentist, dyed Easter eggs, polished silver and spent seven days in helping to nurse a rich friend, besides the thousand and one duties too small to be mentioned yet taking time to perform."

Ye gods and little fishes, what a record! and yet rash man sometimes wonders how we spend our time; I wish he would try "killing time on the same principle himself and see how he likes it.

By the way though, the heroine of that awful amount of work seems to have forgotten to note the time taken up in keeping an account of her performances, which must have been very considerable; and what lunch eaters her husband and children must have been they seem to have consumed two or three a day each, leaving out Sundays. But the man who asked the question is properly settled and that is the main point.

Some wretched man, I am sure he is a man, though he signs a woman's name, has been hunting up evidence to prove that what he calls "The Broom Cure" is far better than massage for the development of the female form divine, and the general preservation of feminine health and beauty. In support of this theory he quotes an article by the late Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe written more than thirty years ago, on 'The Lady Who Does Her Own Work' in which that well known writer dilates on the advantages of housework as the very healthiest form of exercise, and proves entirely to her own satisfaction that for the average woman it is far preferable to the work of the masseur.

Mrs Stowe is quite facetious on the subject of woman who lie for hours to have their arms flexed, their feet twigged, and all the different muscles worked for them because they are so placid and torpid that the power of life does not go on. She suggests that it would be a better, and less expensive progress, if young girls from early life developed their muscles by sweeping ironing dusting rubbing furniture, and all the multiplied domestic processes which their grandmothers knew how to perform so well, "and I will venture to say" she adds enthusiastically "that our grandmothers in a week went over every movement that a gymnast has ever invented, and went over them to some purpose too."

Now with all due respect to the gifted author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" I think she rather injured her own argument, in referring to our respected grandmothers, and the amount of work they did, because everyone knows that those overworked dames were old women at thirty, so hard and constant exercise of the muscles in housework, while some people may think it healthy, is far from helping to preserve either youth or good looks, and if housework of every kind and description is so healthful, what is the reason that farmer's wives who have enough of every variety of such work, are given to fading, and breaking down so early, and the statistics prove that more farmer's wives are filling places in lunatic asylums, then any other class of women?

Take a woman of leisure aged 40 who in the habit of visiting a masseur say once a week, and place her beside some "Lady who does her own work" of the same age, and then say which is the most favorable to the presentation of good looks, an easy life, or a healthful conflict with the broom, the iron, the washboard, and the bread pan! I am not by any means an idle person myself, and I am quite fond of housework—in moderation—but at the same time I am quite certain that nothing breaks a woman sooner, or wears her out more thoroughly than the everlasting round of housework, and I think the advocate of the Broom Cure made a rather unfortunate selection when he choose an article over thirty years old, to advance in support of his theory. Housework is a necessary evil with many of us, but it is scarcely the sort of exercise one would deliberately choose as a beautifier. Sweeping for example, broadens and hardens the hands make's the knuckles unpleasantly prominent, and rounds the shoulders, ironing and baking also round the shoulders, and ruin the complexion, while washing, scrubbing, churning and butter making, all of which "exercises" our grandmothers were in the habit of indulging in to excess, all tended to ruin hands, figure and complexion. Therefore I consider that the weight of evidence is on the side of a life of refined ease, combined with intelligently taken exercise in the open air, and a rational diet.

With the re-opening of the schools for the autumn term every well regulated mother begins to take thought for the raiment of her little flock, be it small or large. The convenient shirt waist and trim serge skirt must soon give place to the comfortable little gown of some soft wool goods, with a coat of light weight cloth; and the white sailor hat which has been so pretty and suitable for the summer months, must be replaced by a sailor, or Tam o' shanter of felt. Then the thick boots, the warmer stockings and underclothes have all to be thought about, and the mother has her hands pretty full. The old dress of last year often has to be made over, and smartened up with a velvet yoke or a lace collar, and very often the elder sister's gown has to be cut down for the little one, and changed as much as possible so as to avoid that look of wearing cast off garments, which so many children object to.

One very important thing which many people are too apt to neglect in children's dresses, is the pocket, which every little frock should contain; you can scarcely expect a little girl to be always provided with a handerchief if she has nowhere to carry it.

For girls who are old enough to go to boarding school a supply of warm underclothing, woollen stockings, comfortable shaker flannel night gowns, and a pair of warm bedroom slippers are even more essential than warm dresses or coats for it is in the bedroom, and during the chilly nights and mornings, of autumn and winter that colds are taken and protection is most needed. Another requisite is the school or study apron, a garment which is very like a large cooking apron or pinafore, with a high bib, and loose sleeves, to protect the dress where it gets most wear, and so keeps them fresh. This apron may be made either of black silk, or alpaca, and can be quite a smart garment if desired, bows of colored ripbon on pockets and shoulders, and ruffles of its own material, giving it quite a festive appearance.

A pretty school dress for a girl of fourteen is made of brown novelty cloth ringed with cardinal. For the sake of lightness the skirt is unlined cut with a circular front and godet side, and is finished at the foot with a rather small hem, numerated by five rows of narrow cardinal braid. The blouse waist has a box plaited guimpe, and fastens at the back, the skirt being bottoned on to the waistband. At the neck there is a beading of cardinal braid through which runs a drawing string of brown ribbon tying on each shoulder in a small bows. The collar is a plain band, and the sleeves rather small gigot made close at the wrists and with turned back cuffs. A belt of either cardinal or brown leather, and a brown felt hat with novelties of cardinal in the t imming complete the costume.

A very pretty little dress for a maiden of ten is made of novelty cheviot, and plain scarlet cloth. Black, scarlet, and green, are the colors, which blend together in the cheviot, which is in a rough wooly weave, and a braiding in art green braid finishing the plain cloth trimming, gives it a very dashing effect. This trimming consists of a peasant bodice with square bretelles over the shoulders a cuff band for the sleeves and a band at the foot of the skirt.

A pretty addition for any little dress that needs freshening a bit, is a sleeveless Figaro jacket, made of some plain cloth and trimmed either with wool braid, or gilt braid if preferred. A plain red Figaro with a plaid frock of subdued colors, or a black one with a very bright plaid, is a good combination.

Up to the age of sixteen a girl's dress is supposed to botton at the back, unless in the case of a separate silk bodice, or a Norfolk jacket. For girls under ten the dress is in one piece, that is to say, the blouse and skirt are sewed together, but after the age of ten they are separate.

ASTRA

In Kansas.

"This is a good town to rise in," observed the editor as the cyclone lifted him to the top of a tall pine; "but when men start on the downward road," he added, as he lost his hold, "their descent is rapid."—Buffalo Express.

THE NEW TEXTILE MATERIAL.

A Process Discovered that Makes the Ordinary Nettle Useful.

The remarkable development of the Rhea fibre throws for the moment all tariff differences between Bombay and Manchester into the shade. The Indian Government has long been aware that in this widely spread variety of the nettle family its provinces possess a source of unused wealth. In 1869 it offered a reward of £5,000 for the invention of a machine or process which should separate the delicate fibre from the bark at a cost consistent with the requirements of commerce. An offer of 50,000 rupees was renewed in 1877. Various machines were submitted under these inducements, but they failed in regard to the essential element of cheapness, and after many trials the offer was withdrawn. They effectually attracted, however, the attention of experts in Great Britain, Europe, and America Rhea became recognized as one of the most valuable fibres known to the ancient or modern world. Its use in Egypt, India, and China dates from before the dawn of history. Rhea-cloth is unrolled from the mummies of the Nile and unearthed in the burial mounds of Assam. The nets and lines spun from it had, for strength, and durability, no rivals among the fishermen of Bengal and the Malay Archipelago. As "China grass" it won its way at the beginning of this century into European commerce.

The difficulty is to separate the strong silky fibres of the bark from the outer cuticle and the tenacious gums in which they lie embedded. In the past, when labor was of little account the wives or daughters of the husbandmen and fishing communities scraped and washed small quantities of the bark till, by the persistent toil of many days, each family produced a few handfuls of the much-prized fibre. But the cost of this manual process proved an insuperable difficulty in the adoption of Rhea for modern textile manufactures. Dr. Royle, an industrial adviser to the Indian Office, showed that the Rhea fibres "are exceeded by none in fineness, excel all others in strength, and may be fitly compared to the trunk of an elephant, which can pick up a needle or root up a tree." He declared that, if 'the difficulty of separating the fibre can be overcome, 'the benefits to India and the world will be incalculable.' It is this problem that the chemist and machinists of Europe and America have during the past thirty years been endeavoring to solve. France and Germany at once entered the field with factories for the extraction of the fibre. They worked it up into many forms, from ropes and sail canvas to plushes and dress pieces resembling silk goods in appearance. They failed, however, to produce a filasse, or clean fibre, which should be at once cheap and serviceable. No machine or merely mechanical operation eliminated the resins with a perfection which yielded fine yarns, except at a cost prohibitive of their general use.

The chemists seemed for a time to be more successful. They produced by means of various re-agents a filasse which was at once cheap and apparently sound. Beautiful fabrics were woven on the Continent, and the inventors laid out a large capital, in the belief that they had solved the problem. But by the time the fabrics came into the hands of the consumers, indeed often before they passed from the shops of the retail dealers, it was found that the chemicals had injured the fibre, and the goods were often returned to the makers. Process after process and machine after machine failed to extract a Rhea fibre which should be both durable and cheap.

The honor of solving the problem has fallen to an English chemist born, we believe, in India. Mr. Gomes after many experiments elaborated a process which the Indian Government is at length able to pronounce a complete success. 'The difficulties which previously existed,' says the official memorandum lately issued by its Inspector-General of Forests, 'in regard to the extraction of the valuable textile fibre from the bark of the Rhea plants have been entirely overcome by what is known as the Gomess process, and a large demand has sprung up for ribbons of dried bark, with every probability of its increasing to enormous proportions.'

After referring to the operations of the Rhea Fibre Treatment Company in London and its dependent associations now being established throughout India, Europe and America, the official memorandum proceeds to indicate how the production of the fibre may be increased in practically unlimited quantities to meet the demand. 'These facts seem to point to the conclusion that we are on the dawn of an industry which even promises to rival jute cultivation.' The Inspector-General then draws out a scheme for aiding the cultivators by official information as to the areas most suitable for the growth of the plant and the varieties best adapted to each locality, and by Government experiments as to the best modes of stripping, drying, and baling the bark. The subject, he insists, 'becomes all the more important and urgent as reports reach us from the French colonies of considerable activity in the Rhea fibre trade, and as it would not be convenient to be outstripped by them.'

The Gomess process adopts zincate of soda for the elimination of the resins, and effects it without the slightest injury to the fibre. After the "ribbons" or strips of bark have been freed from dirt they are placed in weak acid baths for a night. Next morning they are placed through a mild alkaline bath, and then boiled in weak solutions of caustic soda to which zinc has been added. When washed and dried by the usual mechanical means the fibres emerge as a long, silky filasse, entirely free from the cuticle and resinous gums in which they were embedded; clean, white, and ready for the comb of the spinner. They take the most beautiful dyes and can be worked into every variety of fabric, from gorgeous velvets to cheap drills and delicate laces. The combined lightness and toughness of the fibre render it peculiarly suitable for tents and ship canvas. Three-fifths more cloth of equal strength can be made from Rhea than from the same weight of linen—that is to say, 1,000 yards of the Rhea canvas weight only as much as 600 yards of linen. Its durability and resisting power to strain are also much greater. The Government of India is taking effectual steps for the rapid extension of its cultivation.

The Origin of Billiards.

A letter has been discovered in the British Museum which gives the origin of this game. It was invented by a London pawnbroker, whose name was William Kew. Kew not only lent money, but he sold cloth, and for the latter purpose had a yard measure with which he used to compute the amounts. One day, to distract himself, he took the three round balls which are the emblems of his trade—they may still be seen in front of certain shops—and placing them on his counter, began to hit them about with his yard measure. He got a kind of skill in making one ball glance off the other, and his friends who saw him thus employed called the game 'Bill's yard'. It was soon shortened to billiard. But the yard was the instrument with which the balls were knocked about, and the difficulty arose what to call it. They called it after the name of the pawnbroker—a Kew.

Thin Bread and Butter.

Many physicians, according to a lecturer on dietetics, are ordering thin bread and butter for delicate patients, especially those suffering from dyspepsia, consumption and anaemia, or any who need to take on flesh. This thin bread and butter insensibly induces persons to eat more butter than they have any idea of. It is extraordinary, says the lecturer, how short a way a pat of fresh butter will go if spread on a number of thin slices of bread. This is one advantage, and a great one, in the feeding of invalids, for they are thereby provided with an excellent form of the fat which is so essential for their nutrition in a way that lures them to take it without rebellion. But the thin bread and butter has another advantage equally as great—it is very digestible and easily assimilated. Fresh butter made from cream is very much more digestible when spread upon thin slices of bread than the same amount of cream eaten as cream, perse, would be.

Different Plans.

The Professional Revolutionist—It's no use! I've seen a dozen of them, and not one will join me in my conspiracy.

His Wife—How is that? I thought they were all bitterly opposed to the Government.

The Revolutionist—They are; but every one of them has a conspiracy of his own.