Cleaning lace

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"FARM AND HOME" readers who have read Mrs. Glaskell's novel "Cranford" will recall the delightful account of the lace washing episode.

While it is not the general practice today to wash lace in milk this method has much to commend it. It is still used for restoring those treasured pieces of hand-made lace which are handed down from generation to generation and become yellowed with age.

Lace is the name given to ornamental needlework made from threads of linen, cotton, silk, synthetics, gold and silver. These threads may be looped, plaited or twisted together in one of three ways:

1. With a needle—called "Needlepoint" lace.
2. With a bobbin—called "Bobbin" lace. In this method the threads are attached to the bobbins which are supported on a pillow.
3. By machinery—copies of real lace which can often be as valuable as hand-made lace.

We often hear of real lace which is named after the district or place where it was made. Some examples are, Limerick lace, Brussels lace and Touchon lace.

CLEANING REAL LACE

1. Dry Cleaning.

Use this method if the lace is very fragile and needs careful handling. Wrap the lace in dark blue tissue paper after sprinkling thickly with powdered magnesia. After some days, rub the lace gently with a soft cloth. Protect lace with a muslin and press with a warm iron, using a lifting and pressing movement.

2. Washing.

Place the lace in a wide-necked bottle or a 2 lb. jam jar which is three-quarters full of warm soapy water, screw on the lid and shake well; pour away dirty water and rinse the lace by shaking first in warm water and then in cold water. Stiffen with gum water using one tablespoon to half a pint. For silk lace, add half a teaspoon of methylated spirits to give a gloss. Squeeze in a dry towel. Roll up for a few minutes and then press on the wrong side, or pin out.

Pinning out is the better method for small pieces.
To pin out place with wrong side uppermost on a board covered with felt and pin with rustless pins. If the lace has a straight edge, first pin out the edge and then the points, insert pins almost flat along the line of the edge so as not to make points.

A handkerchief should have the centre stretched and pinned to shape first, then each outside corner; the sides between the corners are pinned last.

If the article is a collar, get the correct shape of the neckline first, place pins almost flat along the line of the edge, then pin the outside of the collar to shape placing the pins at the points, if any. Cover with muslin, leave to dry. When dry remove pins, press with warm iron.

**Maltese Lace**

Wash in cold soapy water, rinse well in cold water and pin out to dry.

If not very soiled, lace looks better if dry cleaned. Do not blue real lace as this will spoil the original ivory shade.

**WASHING MACHINE-MADE LACE**

1. **White lace**
   (a) Soak in cold water with a little dissolved borax. Wash in warm soapy water by kneading and squeezing, avoiding hard rubbing.
   (b) If lace is coarse, boil, enclosed in a linen bag for preference. If very fine, scald only.
   (c) Rinse in warm water and blue. Stiffen with rice water, thin boiling water starch or gum water. Fold in cloth, leave half an hour, then iron. With cheap lace, allow to dry then damp before ironing.

2. **Coloured lace**

   Wash quickly in warm soapy water; rinse. Use salt in last rinsing water if colours are loose. Stiffen in gum water. Roll up and then iron.

3. **Black lace**

   If it is not dirty but merely requires freshening, the lace may be dipped in strong tea or deep-blue water to which has been added the necessary amount of gum water. If the article is too large to be pinned out to dry it should be ironed between sheets of thin paper in order to avoid the production of shiny marks.

**BLEACHING DISCOLOURED LACE**

If the lace is discoloured and has become stained by age it can be whitened by stewing in a jar containing either a mixture of two parts milk and one part water or a solution of borax (two teaspoons per half-pint) with a little soap. The liquid should not be placed over a direct heat but put in an earthenware jam-jar standing in water in a saucepan which is then slowly heated. Because of its slight acidity, milk not only dissolves but also decolourises the yellowing colouring matter and therefore gives a better result than borax, which dissolves but does not decolourise it. If the liquid becomes very discoloured and the stains are not all removed repeat the stewing in a fresh solution.

**RE-TINTING**

Cream, ecru or coffee-coloured lace may be re-tinted, after it has been washed and rinsed, by the use of tea, coffee, a mixture of the two, a cream dye, or a dilute solution of potassium permanganate, but care must be taken in the use of the last two as over-tinting may easily result. Squeeze in a towel, shape with the fingers and iron on the wrong side over a pad, pressing well to the width.

**CROCHET**

Crochet should be ironed when practically dry, and should not be starched.

A good plan to preserve the finished appearance after the above processes, is to wrap the lace round a pad of blue tissue paper, which will prevent creasing and to help retain the freshness of colour.

**WHITE LACE AND NET CURTAINS**

If curtains are very large they are easier to handle if folded and tacked into a square.

Steep in two or three waters with the addition of half an ounce of soda per gallon. Leave in the third water overnight.
Wash by squeezing and kneading, and handle carefully while washing. If washing machine is being used the delicate curtains should be placed in a pillow-case.

Rinse well.

Curtains should not be put into the copper loose, but tied in a sheet. The knot provides a convenient hold for the copperstick when lifting them out. A pillow case is just as good.

Boil as for white clothes.

Rinse thoroughly, pass flat through the wringer and do not twist.

If the curtains are to be tinted add the colouring to the necessary quantity of prepared starch.

**Starching Curtains**

Starch the curtains in pairs, to ensure even stiffness.

The strength of the starch is varied according to the type of curtain, its position and the fashion.

Nottingham lace, full or 1 to 1 (one part standard starch to one part water).

Madras Muslin, 1 to 3 or 4. If frills are to be goffered they may require a stronger starch.

Swiss Net, 1 to 8 or 10.

**Drying**

Pass the curtains through the wringer and if they have been folded and tacked before washing remove the tacking threads.

Shake and hang to dry either on special curtain stretchers or over the lines very evenly.

Stretching the curtains flat on the grass is often a convenient method of drying.

Curtains which are fixed on a rod top and bottom may be put up to the window and dried in position (first make sure the rods are clean).

Small screens are pinned out, using large pins.

The hanging of the curtains to dry must be done accurately or they will dry out of shape and it will be impossible to make them hang evenly on the window.

When almost dry iron on the wrong side, press heavily. If too dry iron over a piece of damp muslin. Press out the edges. In the case of small screens set the hems and iron diagonally. Take great care to keep the shape.

Fold by the weft, that is across the length; these folds will shake out when the curtains are hung up.

Air thoroughly.

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**Pamper Your Feet**

Overseas surveys tell us that the average housewife walks 70,000 miles in her lifetime, at the rate of 18,000 steps a day.

A regular pedicure, done professionally or at home, wise selection of footwear and attention to the demands made on the feet by heel heights and shoe styles will help to take good care of feet.

It is important for women to realise that the same shoes should not be worn day in and day out.

There are six common types of foot, each with its own special problem. The **High-instep foot** cannot always wear high-cut shoes with comfort. The **Low-instep foot** usually cannot wear anything low-cut, as shoes tend to slip and bulge around the heel. A **narrow foot** can only wear an accurately fitted, close-hugging style. A **long large foot** can rarely get the necessary heel height for its size. The **plump foot** needs width, toe room, and often a sturdier heel for better balance. A **short-toe foot** requires arch support to ease the strain on the balls of the feet. It is often hard to fit, especially with modern elongated toe line styles.

Comfort should always be the main basis for selection of footwear. The shoes you buy should conform—irrespective of fashion fads—to the shape of your feet. Vary heel heights for better posture and protection of calf muscles.

—N.S.W. Department of Agriculture.