

Letter to MADAME DEMOREST

Mary Barton, Ames, Iowa, sent us this delightful letter which she discovered in the DEMOREST MAGAZINE of February 1874.

I lately read, in a book entitled LADIES MANUAL OF FANCY WORK (a book which has been published a number of years, and, in many respects, is very useful as a reference in regard to making fancy articles), remarks under the head of "Patchwork". I will quote them:

"This is a favorite amusement with many ladies, as by it they convert useless bits of silk, velvet or satin into really handsome articles of decoration; of patchwork of calico, I have nothing to say. Valueless, indeed, must be the time of that person who can find no better use for it than to make ugly counterpanes and quilts of pieces of cotton. Emphatically is the proverb true of cotton patchwork, it is not worth either candle or gas light."

Now, in the first place, calico patchwork is not, necessarily, ugly; it can be made into "really very handsome articles," and, in the next place, I don't think the proverb applies to it at all, as sewing on silk and velvet, and doing it neatly, by candle or gas-light, is exceedingly trying to the eyes, and the number of persons who have scraps sufficient left from articles of their wardrobe of that description, for making a quilt, usually spend their evenings anywhere but at home, and generally occupy themselves with anything but the needle, and more often study the intricacies of the mazy dance, or the plot of the last novel, than with any kind of patchwork; and for persons who have not the "scraps" to go and purchase such costly material, just to cut up and sew together, even if they make handsome articles, is an extravagance to be condemned.

But who has not calico scraps? Even Mrs. Grant, I presume has calico dresses, and if not now, she did have, and so had her maternal ancestors; and if she had the

bump of veneration at all developed, anything belonging to them, ought to be prized, no matter how plain and simple, and what could be nicer than a neatly made, pretty calico patchwork quilt, although she need not use it at the "White House" unless she wishes. What shows the taste of a lady more than samples of the home toilet; and what form of personal memento of those gone from us (excepting jewels, old lace, or silver-ware, and our parents were not all blessed with those articles, though equally dear to us) can there be than the familiar pattern of a dress or apron that we have seen them wear so often, be it silk or cotton? And then, for the mother, with her large family of children growing around her, and perhaps her sixth or eighth baby on her knee, a piece of the little bird's-eye calico slip, she so proudly made for her first born, now almost a man, is worth more to her than all the goods she ever saw since.

And laying aside all sentiment, the saving and the comfort amount to a great deal more than the rag-man brings.

Now, Madame Demorest, the reason for my imposing on your valuable time, and I believe, the greater imposition of begging a space in your valuable columns, is that I perceive the rapidly dying out of our grandmothers' industrious, economical, housewifely habits of knitting, quilting, etc., and I want to encourage those who still like to walk in the footsteps of their ancestors. Machinery and modern improvements form the great reason of the decrease, but I think we can still derive much pleasure and comfort by a continuance of this particular industry.

I hope you will agree with me, and not throw this into the waste-basket, although I know it has the demerit of being rather long and prosy - as you say in your January number, "When you are tired of sewing, take up your pen, and write what you think and feel, for the benefit of other women. We will publish it, if it is not too long, and to the point."

-- Magnolia