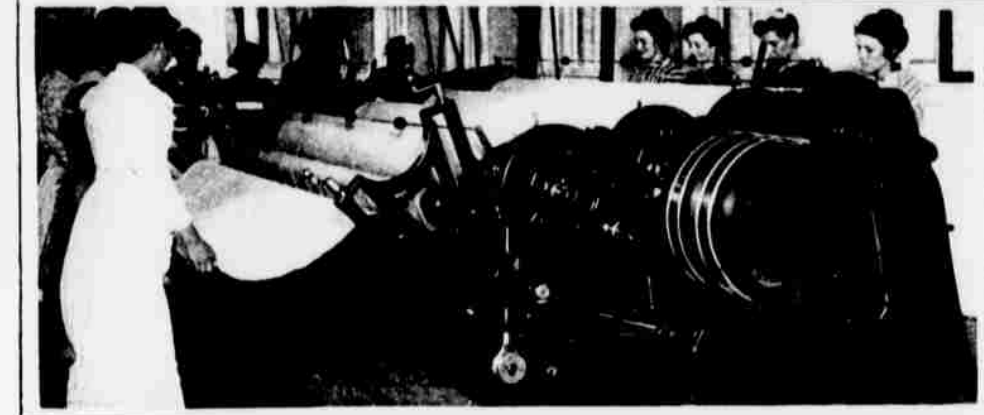




Scenes in a Laundry
During the Hot Weather Rush
Photographed for the Bee
by Bostwick



Laundry Workers and the Summer Season

FROM the old-fashioned black kettle the driftwood fire down by the creek and the rub-a-dub washboard, to a three or four-story building filled with queer machinery is a long jump, yet it fairly represents the evolution of the laundry business.

It wasn't always called "laundry." There was a time when "washin'" was good enough. That was when our mothers did their own "washing." Then washday was a sort of a holiday for the youngsters, for they might roast potatoes or eggs in the coals underneath the kettle or indulge in many other privileges not granted on common days.

In that good old era the kettle was anchored on four bricks somewhere near the swimming hole in the creek, for such location assured plenty of water. It was easy enough to build a fire, for there is always "down-timber" along the creek. Under this process the soiled garments were first boiled in the kettle, then lifted into a tub, where they were rubbed—yes, every inch of them, by hand—and then for a finishing touch came a rinsing in clean water with just a dash of indigo blue streaked here and there.

Wringers were unknown in those days, so that laborious part of the work had to be done by hand also. Gooseberry bushes and other shrubbery took the place of a clothes line.

Modern Way of Cleaning Linen.

The modern laundry of today is a mammoth institution. It represents a vast outlay of capital and the man who operates it—that is, the head of the firm—must know his business from the ground up—and this is somewhat literal, too, for the basement is one of the most important parts of a laundry.

A myriad of gas jets, ablaze and sputtering, take the place of the wood fire and the old black kettle is supplanted by yawning vats of great dimension. Nowadays clothing must go through a dozen or more different processes before it is turned into the delivery room. Machines are everywhere through the building—a mangle for this and a something else for that. The mangle is one of the most important of laundry equipment, and it looks the part. After the soil has been eliminated the clothing goes to the drying room, where the temperature is much hotter than well-known health requires. The ironing, which is no small part of the work, comes after the drying process, of course. There is one machine to iron collars, another for cuffs, still another for wristbands and neckbands, and so on through.

But it remains for the up-to-date woman to get ahead of the inventive laundry machinist. There are some fluffy, airy-fairy garments of summer wear that cannot be

ironed by machinery—leastwise no man has ever yet made a machine that would do this particular class of work satisfactorily, and if he ever does accomplish the invention the chances are that woman will go still further and invent more complicated lace and frills.

The ironing process over, the clothing is sorted with reference to identification marks and is then bundled for delivery. A smart young man in a wagon drives about town making deliveries and collecting 12 cents for a 39-cent shirt—unless the customer has a "stand-off," and then the manager makes the collection on the first pay day immediately after the first day of the month.

Involves Much Arduous Toil.

Men, women and children employed in laundries have nothing to do but work. The old-fashioned method down by the spring house or the creek may have had its disadvantages, but the latter-day washerwoman must work even harder, despite the advent of machinery which is branded "labor saving."

It is in the hot weather that the laundry worker comes more nearly earning her money than at any other time. The natural heat on the outside may be so excessive as to send strong men staggering to the gutter, yet the toiler in a laundry must endure in addition to this a powerful pressure of artificial heat. Almost every bit of the machinery has a fire concealed about it somewhere—either the steam from some big boiler or the rays of a persistent gas jet. The ironing department is always hot enough to "sizzle."

How these women endure it—most of the employes are women—is a question for the doctors to answer. The managers of laundries frankly admit that they do not know.

The temperature at times reaches 120 to 130 degrees—worse than fever heat. Yet these girls—for be it known that even the silvery-haired grandmother is in shop language a girl, if she works in a laundry—tell on from day to day, jaded, fagged and feverish. Occasionally a prostration is noted, but they are comparatively few considering the conditions. Laundriesmen have done all within their power to equip their establishments with artificial means for cooling, but this innovation has resulted in but slight relief, since by the very nature of the business there must be fire.

Hot weather means increased work for the laundry people, for the summer sun is a great despoiler of linen. A man who changes his raiment but once a week in winter will most likely change three times as often in summer. And the fastidious fellow thinks he must have a clean shirt, collar and cuffs every day. Sometimes he needs it.

A prominent laundry manager who quit

washing soiled linen in the newspapers—he was a reporter—and went at it in the literal way by taking an interest in one of the biggest laundries in town, is authority for the statement that the hot weather increased his volume of business at least 25 per cent all the way through and on some articles of apparel much more than that figure.

"If any evidence of our busy rush were required," said the laundry manager, "I might cite the fact that the owner of our establishment—a man who could live the balance of his life on the competence he has already acquired—has been making a full 'hand' ever since the hot weather started. From 7 o'clock in the morning until 9 at evening that man has worked at the practical side of our business without even taking time for luncheon at the noon hour. He has starched shirt fronts, managed the movements of a mangle and done a little of everything else that is required of the help.

"Do we have trouble in securing employees? No, not so much as one would naturally suppose. Laundry workers do not seem to mind the excessive heat so very much, although there is no denying that it is a very exhausting work. These people know that they have to toil somewhere in order to live and having become accustomed to the laundry business they feel very much at home, I suppose.

"We find that colored women stand the heat much better than their paleface sisters. We have negro women who work all day with a song on their lips, and a happier lot would be hard to find, if appearances may be taken as an index."

Source of Their Trouble.

It is the "special" that makes the laundry man's hair turn gray. "Special" means that the man has got to have his shirt and collar at once—the very same day they are sent to the laundry. An advanced price is charged for specials, and all first-class laundries advertise their splendid equipment for taking care of such work, yet after all they probably cause more trouble than the premium on their price warrants.

The laundry that has the skill to make collars and cuffs feel like velvet, although they are not, has indeed struck a keynote to success, for if there is any one thing above another that will make a man swear it is to have the lower slope of his jawbone jabbed by a saw-edge collar.

The Chinaman once cut a big figure in the laundry work of this country, particularly in the west. But he is on the wane and now his patronage is peripatetic. The Chinaman rubs the dirt out—no mistake about that, but it is asserted that his process has a destroying effect upon the texture of the cloth.

And then the Mongolian ticket system is

not always a thing of joy, for the loss of the slip of hieroglyphic-marked paper means that Ling Lee will hold on to the bundle.

In this age of invention many wonderful improvements have come to pass but a careful review of the entire industrial field shows that in no other line has there been a greater departure from original methods than in the washing of soiled linen—a prosaic occupation at best, but one which yields a harvest of recompense.

Passing of Famous Hotel

The \$300,000 loan made from the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance company by the trustees of the Northwestern university, says the Chicago Tribune, is the first step toward the transformation of the old Tremont house into an educational institution. Two months from now the present lessee will retire and the university trustees will take possession and law, dentistry, pharmacy and laboratory work will take the place of the generous entertainment for the traveler which the famous old hotel has furnished so many years.

The Tremont house is one of the landmarks of Chicago. It cannot boast such antiquity as the old Sauganash, where Benbun Biddle and Kintzo and Hubbard and Fernando Jones gave primitive dinner parties, but it shares with the City hotel, long since disappeared, the reputation of being the swell hotel of early days. Many notable events have occurred in it. It was from this house that Thalberg, the great pianist, then on a concert tour with Viennese and others, suddenly disappeared with his inamorata because of the equally sudden appearance of Mme. Thalberg upon the scene. It was at the Tremont (that Adelina Patti made her Chicago debut. The diva, then a child in pantallettes, was at the house, accompanied by her parents and her uncle, Maurice Strakonch, who were passing through the city. The guests, desiring to hear the "infant phenomenon," she was lifted to the center of the dining table, where she sang like a lark and was rewarded with sweetmeats. It was at the Tremont hotel that General Winfield Scott in the '50s had a public reception. He was passing through the city to the Pacific coast as a commissioner to settle the difficulty arising from the disputed boundary line of the United States and British America through the Straits of Fuca. Chicago had never before and has never since and may never again see such a combination of gold lace and feathers or such a martial figure as that of the pompous old Mexican hero.

The Tremont house, indeed, was the synonym of hospitality and good cheer and once a year rose to extraordinary epicurean heights in John Drake's game dinner.

It was the republican hotel of the period and George Gage as its landlord, with John Drake for steward, kept up a friendly rivalry with the Sherman house, where David Gage entertained democrats. But there was one great democrat who died within its walls, Stephen A. Douglas, "the little giant," whose last testimony was an earnest plea for the union. For many years it was the heart of the city and at a time when Chicago was small. In two months more it will have disappeared, leaving only pleasant memories of the old days, when everyone knew every other and the city was young and handsome and clean and good.

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Pointed Paragraphs

A dearth of news is no news to the editor.

Women with a past never refuse a present.

One wash necktie doesn't make a summer suit.

Even a Har respects veracity in the other fellow.

After a girl gets married she eats fewer pickles and more onions.

Women dislike a womanly man as much as men hate a manly woman.

If you have social aspirations, now is your chance to get in the swim.

The children of a wealthy widower at ways object to his second marriage.

Consistency may be a jewel, but it will not stand the pawnbroker's acid test.

Any man can make himself conspicuous by carrying a string of fish up the street.

When people begin to whistle a popular air all the sentiment is blown out of it.

The pen starves more poets to death in a year than the sword exterminates in twenty centuries.

If the engagement is a success a girl is willing to take chances on her marriage being a failure.

The actor who is out of a job always claims he is resting. Probably he is—from the effects of a long walk.

The average man thinks it is a special dispensation of Providence when he gets something good that rightfully belongs to somebody else.

His Advantage

Boston Transcript: "I have played a desperate game and I have lost," remarked the stage villain just before his final disappearance.

"But you are a darn sight better off than we are," murmured a tired-looking man in the front row; "we paid money to get in."