



## A Santa Cruz Laundry [1896]

I have been poking my nose into all sorts of business places for a good many years now, and recently I wandered into one that was new to me. I went into a steam laundry and watched the process of making soiled clothes clean. Perhaps you think there is nothing interesting about that. But there is where you are mistaken. It was one of the most pleasant experiences I had enjoyed for many a day.

Mr. Stumer, of the Cascade, is the gentleman to whom I owe this pleasure. He showed me the whole process.

When the soiled clothes arrive they are taken to the marking room and a list of the articles made. This list is copied into an account book and the clothes go to the washing machine. I had a vague idea that this was something that rolled and hammered and scrubbed the dirt out. But it isn't. It is just a cylinder revolved by a belt. The clothes and the hot water and the soap go into this together, and there they rock back and forth as gently as a bird swinging on a branch. The clothes might rock there forever without wearing out a little bit. The soap is made right in the laundry of sweet, clean tallow, the very best potash and a little ammonia.

When the clothes come out of the hydraulic washer they go to the extractor. Here they sit in a basket which whirls round and round. The centrifugal force squeezes the water out of the clothes.

Now the clothes part company. The sheets, pillow-slips, napkins, etc., go to the mangle. They take a trip or two through the hot rollers, and come out ironed, smooth and shining. That finishes my lady's napkins and things. And beautifully finished they are, too. The shirts, cuffs, collars, and goods of that kind go to the starching-room. In this room hand work comes into play. There are machines to starch clothes, of course. But Mr. Stumer tells me that they are all more or less destructive to clothes. So the Cascade goes to the extra expense and does the work by hand.

From the starch-room the clothes are taken to a 12-rack steam dryhouse. This is kept at a high temperature by hot pipes. A starched shirt, which is the slowest thing to dry, dries in one of the racks in about an hour.

The shirts and other starched articles are taken out of the dry-house, dampened by hand, and put into a press. Here they lie awhile, and then the ironer takes a turn at them. The Cascade uses a Sinclair Ironer. This is evenly heated by gas, and it puts a beautiful finish upon the shirt-bosoms, cuffs, etc.

The shirt isn't all ironed when the Sinclair Ironer turns it loose, however. There is the neckband yet. This an ingenious contrivance, called the Kreutor & Nelson neckband ironer, takes care of. The bodies of the shirts are then ironed by hand, and the garment is ready to go home.

There are a half-dozen young ladies at as many ironing boards who do up pillow-shams, and all kinds of finer work. Each one has a cute little gas stove at her right hand, and each works with the rapid precision of the skilled operator.

These young ladies—as are all the folks employed about the laundry—ten in all, are resident people. There is a great deal of hand work done in the Cascade. Flannels are never allowed to go near a machine. From start to finish they are washed exactly as a careful housewife would do the work in her own house. So careful is the Cascade with this class of

work that it will not even allow flannels put into the dry-house. They are hung out in the open air, and the sunshine and breezes dry them in nature's own way.

## Sources

- *This is an excerpt from "Santa Cruz County; a faithful reproduction in print and photography of its climate, capabilities, and beauties." 1896. pp. 176-177. RAP-ed.*

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