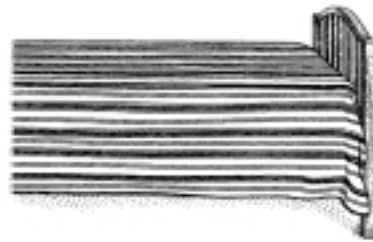
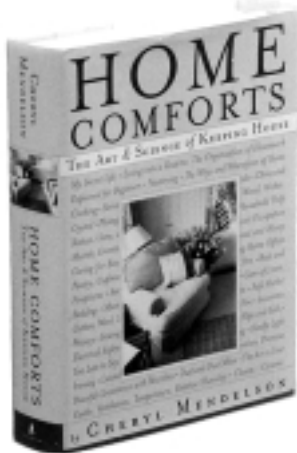


Home Comforts

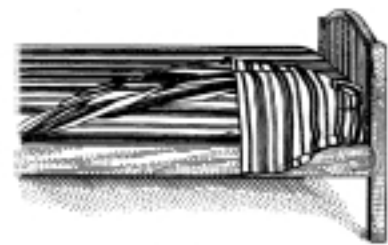
The Art & Science of Keeping House

This appears to be a book of tips for housekeeping, but it is as much about housekeeping as Moby Dick is about fishing. It's about doing mindless chores mindfully. If you cook, clean, and dress, why not do it with full knowledge of what the most scientific method is? There is something attractively nerdy about Mendelson's obsession with getting to a deep technical understanding of whatever needs to be done. So much good-spirited lore swims in this book, that you can pick it up anywhere and find yourself reading hours later about the absolute best way to iron. Ordinary chores are given a new life. I haven't seen such behavior-changing information in ages. I'm thinking I'll give each of my kids a copy when they depart for their own places.

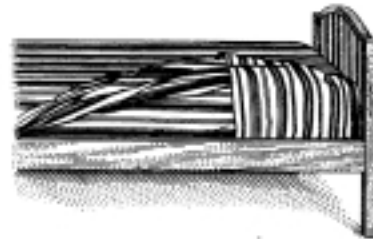
—KK



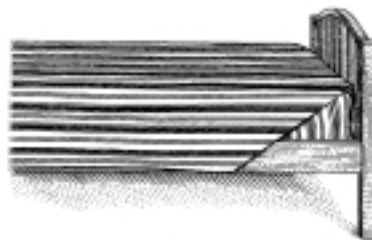
Bottom tucked in



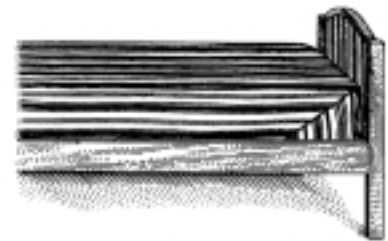
Side pulled up



Hanging-down portion of side tucked in



Side hanging down



Tuck-in of entire side of sheet (optional on top sheet)

How to make "mitered" or "hospital" corners

Home Comforts

The Art & Science of Keeping House

Cheryl Mendelson

1999, 884 pages

\$35

Scribner

The terms "ironing" and "pressing" are often used interchangeably, but they are in fact different things. In ironing, you slide the iron back and forth over the cloth; in pressing, you simply press the iron in one spot and then lift it. Pressing is used on tailored and lined suits, especially on men's, on wool, on silk and some rayon, on net, and on pile fabrics. Pressing is used to avoid crushing the cloth, giving it a shine, or stretching or scorching or otherwise harming it with the heat of the iron. This is done partly by not sliding the iron and partly (and usually) by using a "pressing cloth." This is simply a cloth that you lay over the fabric, pressing through it rather than touching the iron directly to the garment.

Washing the Dishes. Begin with perfectly clean, hot, sudsy water. Wash the dishes that are least soiled first and progress to those that are most soiled, as this entails the fewest changes of water. As noted above, you usually begin with glass and silver or flatware, which need very hot water so that they dry quickly without streaks or spots.

As an experiment, I once sorted my laundry according to the exact instructions on the care labels. Although in quantity I had enough to make up three or four good-sized loads, if I had obeyed the labels I would have had to wash at least three times that

many loads, as practically no two garments were labeled identically. No experienced home launderer actually washes twelve or more loads instead of four. Thus we all become care label skeptics, defying the labels without hesitation.

Inaccurate labeling and "low labeling" (labels that prescribe more conservative care than the garment really needs) are both quite common. Nonetheless, some of our skepticism about labels is in fact mistaken. We may fail to recognize that a label is accurate if (for example) a garment labeled "Dry-clean only" seems perfectly all right after being laundered. The effects of laundering may become apparent only after the third or fourth wash, and those effects may include shrinkage, fading, weakening, or the loss of beneficial treatments and finishes. By the time you discover that the label was right all along, it is too late to save the garment.



Hanging clothes and items for line drying

Smarthome.com

Here it comes, ready or not: the Smart House. A whole avalanche of products in mind-numbing diversity is available via this mail-order catalog and Web site. A lot of the equipment I find creepy (networks of concealed in-house mini-video cameras for "security" purposes), but some I covet right now (I want to be able to beep my front door open like I beep my car door open; \$69 uninstalled). The rest can wait (the caller ID of your incoming phone call shows up on your TV). The avalanche is only picking up speed and this catalog, which has the widest collection I've seen, is the best way to keep up.

—KK

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