

LAUNDRY, a place or establishment where soiled linen, &c., is washed. The word is a contraction of an earlier form *lavendry*, from Lat. *lavanda*, things to be washed, *lavare*, to wash. "Lauder," a similar contraction of *lavender*, was one (of either sex) who washes linen; from its use as a verb came the form "launderer," employed as both masculine and feminine in America, and the feminine form "laundress," which is also applied to a female caretaker of chambers in the Inns of Court, London.

Laundry-work has become an important industry, organized on a scale which requires elaborate mechanical plant very different from the simple appliances that once sufficed for domestic needs. For the actual cleansing of the articles, instead of being rubbed by the hand or trodden by the foot of the washer-woman, or stirred and beaten with a "dolly" in the wash-tub, they are very commonly treated in rotary washing machines driven by power. These machines consist of an outer casing containing an inner horizontal cylindrical cage, in which the clothes are placed. By the rotation of this cage, which is reversed by automatic gearing every few turns, they are rubbed and tumbled on each other in the soap and water which is contained in the outer casing and enters the inner cylinder through perforations. The outer casing is provided with inlet valves for hot and cold water, and with discharge valves; and often also arrangements are made for the admission of steam under pressure, so that the contents can be boiled. Thus the operations of washing, boiling, rinsing and blueing (this last being the addition of a blue colouring matter to mask the yellow tint and thus give the linen the appearance of whiteness) can be performed without removing the articles from the machine. For drying, the old methods of wringing by hand, or by machines in which the clothes were squeezed between rollers of wood or india-rubber, have been largely superseded by "hydro-extractors" or "centrifugals." In these the wet garments are placed in a perforated cage or basket, supported on vertical bearings, which is rotated at a high speed (1000 to 1500 times a minute) and in a short time as much as 85% of the moisture may thus be removed. The drying is often completed in an apartment through which dry air is forced by fans. In the process of finishing linen the old-fashioned laundress made use of the mangle, about the only piece of mechanism at her disposal. In the box-mangle the articles were pressed on a flat surface by rollers which were weighted with a box full of stones, moved to and fro by a rack and pinion. In a later and less cumbersome form of the machine they were passed between wooden rollers or "bowls" held close together by weighted levers. An important advance was marked by the introduction of machines which not only smooth and press the linen like the mangle, but also give it the glazed finish obtained by hot ironing. Machines of this kind are essentially the same as the calenders used in paper and textile manufacture. They are made in a great variety of forms, to enable them to deal with articles of different shapes, but they may be described generally as consisting either of a polished metal roller, heated by steam or gas, which works against a blanketed or felted surface in the form of another roller or a flat table, or, as in the Decoudun type, of a felted metal roller rotating against a heated concave bed of polished metal. In cases where hand-ironing is resorted to, time is economized by the employment of irons which are continuously heated by gas or electricity.