

**DIRECTIONS FOR KNITTING  
SOCKS AND STOCKINGS,  
REVISED AND ADAPTED FOR  
USE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

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Directions for knitting socks and stockings, revised and adapted for use in elementary schools  
by Mrs. Lewis

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**MRS. LEWIS**

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Directions for Knitting  
SOCKS AND STOCKINGS.

Revised, Enlarged, and Specially adapted  
FOR USE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.

By Mrs. LEWIS.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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**K**NITTING is an art which has been practised in England for many centuries, though in the last few generations it had fallen somewhat into disuse.

The Education Act of 1870 has endowed it with new life and vigour, which bid fair to strengthen year by year, for now every girl *must* be taught to knit. She is not to be left to pick it up (if she be inclined) anyhow,—to do a few stitches at her granny's knee and then to forget all about it; but knitting is to be part of the education which, in these days, every girl must receive, and she is to be taught so thoroughly that she is to be able to knit socks and stockings well.

There can be no question but that it was a very wise judgment which made knitting compulsory in National Schools.

I do not think that hand-knitted stockings are always an economy. They take a very long time to make, and, if the wool is not good, they have been known to fall into holes with heart-breaking rapidity. Still, for all this, I am strongly of opinion that knitting is an immense advantage to girls, and that it is most important that they should be taught enough to enable them to go on by themselves when they leave school.

The use of knitting is not altogether in the various articles which can be made thereby. The first thing to be noted about it is, that it makes little girls fond of work. Long before they have learnt to take pleasure in ordinary sewing, they will like their knitting, want to take it home to do in the evening, and thus get in the habit of sitting quietly down to work when quite small, which they would not be likely to do in any other way. If we can succeed in making girls *like* work of any kind, we have accomplished a great deal,—a point that is too often overlooked. Then knitting gives a certain dexterity of finger most valuable in all future work, and is a great help in educating the eye,—advantages which can scarcely be over-estimated.

It has sometimes been said of knitting, as of



sewing, "Why take all that trouble, and spend so much time upon a thing which can be done so much better with the machine?" At first sight there appears some force in the argument, but it will not bear looking into. The present high price of the knitting-machine prevents its being widely used, and, unless it becomes very much cheaper, it will be unknown in the cottage. I believe the next generation will see it in very general use among the upper classes, and the better class of servants will be expected to understand it, as they do the sewing-machine at the present day. This alone would be an all-sufficient reason for having knitting thoroughly taught in National Schools. To a person unable to knit a stocking by hand, a machine would be useless—exactly as a sewing-machine is of no use to a woman who cannot sew. The remark which I made in another place—"that the more accomplished the needle-woman in hand-sewing, the more useful will be the sewing-machine"—applies also exactly to hand-knitting and the knitting-machine.

But the machine will never supersede hand-knitting. There will still be those who like knitting for its own sake; like to have it to take up at odd

times ; to whom knitting is a source of pleasure to themselves and profit to their poorer neighbours. There will always be the old, for whose failing sight and trembling hands knitting is exactly adapted, provided always that they have mastered the art before the "evil days" have come upon them. There will always be the child to knit muffatees for "father," learning lessons of carefulness and industry while she is guiding her needles with eager fingers, and we are reminded of the words which a living statesman applied to sugar, —it is at once "the delight of childhood and the solace of old age."

It is not, however, easy to teach knitting. I have known many grown-up people to whom the intricacies of the heel presented an insurmountable difficulty ; and therefore we can understand that to teach a class of children requires thorough knowledge of the subject on the part of the teacher, and unflinching patience, joined to which there should be uniformity of teaching. I have known cases where the children were making excellent progress when the teacher has left ; a new teacher comes, whose method of knitting stockings is equally good, but not the same, consequently the children are all at

sea, and weeks of valuable time (all too short, under the most favourable circumstances) are wasted.

Being deeply impressed with the importance of needle-work, and of knitting as a valuable aid to it, I have, for some years, devoted much time and thought to the subject; and it seems to me that there is a very pressing need for a book which shall be a reliable guide to the teacher, and sufficiently simple for the children to understand. The most experienced knitters require some scale to refer to for various sizes, and can we expect children to learn, orally, sufficient to be of any use to them when left to themselves? My experience is, that they quickly forget all about socks and stockings, or at best can only do one size; whereas, had they been taught from a book at first, made to understand it, and accustomed to its use, they would never have the slightest difficulty afterwards. The only book which I have been able to find at all suitable for the purpose is that published many years ago by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Unfortunately, it is now out of print, and therefore not available. In a few points improvements might be made, but taken as a whole it is by far the best book on knitting socks and