

TABLECLOTH UNDERWEAR

“ Sometime back, I guess it was the year after the woolen mills burned down, I remember there was a short supply of cloth and clothing.”

Under normal circumstances the “home industries” program as recommended by the brethren would have provided for the clothing needs of each family. In earlier times, consistent with the faith and expended effort of the household to abide by the council, yarn would have been carded, spun and made into cloth for the needed family clothing articles. For some time however, many had come to depend on the co-op for such commodities.

In addition to the wool provided by the co-operatively owned herds of sheep, cotton was raised on a cotton farm also established by the order near St. George in the south of the territory. After some processing was completed, it was brought the long distance to the woolen mills in Brigham City.

That particular season many of the ginned cotton bales were left stored at the cotton farm four hundred miles to the south of Brigham. The quantities of spun thread hauled to headquarters could not be finished into cloth in time to meet the seasonal demand, in spite of the united effort of the saints to rebuild their precious mill in less than a year.

Clem and his brother, John, had undershirts but their drawers were worn out beyond reasonable patching. Elizabeth considered every way possible to keep her boys warm and modest for the winter months, but at length there were still no underdrawers available.

When there was no more time left for planning and devising, her pioneer enterprising and imagination came to the rescue. Her parents had given her as a wedding present a fine linen tablecloth brought from the “old country”. She had tried for several years to keep it back for special occasions but, somehow it had sustained a bad tear in the middle. It would have to be sacrificed for the sake of two backsides. She skillfully cut from the material the makings of two pairs of drawers, oblivious to the decorative prints in the middle and at each end of the precious linen. When they were finally sewed together into the finished product she presented each boy with his own linen drawers and assured them that any English gentleman would be proud to wear such quality linen underwear.

Both boys expressed concern over the decorative print on the cloth but thanked Elizabeth for her ingenuity and effort to provide for their dire needs. It wasn't until they were alone in the bedroom putting on their new drawers that they discovered the strange working of coincidence. Precisely located on the endgate, the backside flap of Clem's underwear was a rose. Yes, prominently and strategically situated, there it was of exquisite design and detail. John, who was bent over laughing at his brother, exposed a derriere covered with a lovely cluster of grapes.

“Pshaw, what a humiliating thing. We were careful not to undress in front of the other boys the whole winter. We named mine ‘the rose butt’ and John's ‘the grape buster.’ Nobody in town looked forward to the rebuilding of the confounded woolen mills with better reason than ours.”