

Weekly Chemawa American

VOL. IX.

AUGUST 3, 1906

No. 20

Dressmaking

BY JULIA SELATHIEL, '06

"When Mother Eve began to sew
Her needle was of bone
How would you like to make your
dress

With such another one."

One of the very useful things taught Indian girls to-day is the use of the needle—or to speak more plainly—sewing in all of its different branches.

It has not been a very long time since dressmaking institutions have held a place of their own. Years ago, in every community there were seamstresses who went about among the families sewing; and making dresses then was not an art as it is now. The goods used usually were woven at home on hand looms, and each garment made was put together entirely by hand. My people did not do so much. A skin of an animal was their dress material, a fish bone their needle and deer sinew their thread. There are some old Indians now who sometimes wear a dress of such skin, but there are not many. It would be hard to find one who has not clothing made in the white man's way, and put together with a needle and thread. The changed condition among my people

brought about by civilization is marvelous. And this is, in the main part, due to the missionaries and to the things learned in the Government Indian Schools.

When I came to Chemawa four years ago I knew nothing at all about sewing. I could not use a thimble in sewing a straight seam. Many beginners think a thimble not an essential article, and say they can sew as well without one.

My first sewing was making sheets, pillow cases, hemming towels and learning the different kinds of stitches, such as basting, cross stitching, back stitching, over casting, darning and patching.

The second year I was taught how to make a plain dress, common cutting and the complete finishing of a garment. Neatness of work was insisted upon. If the completed garment is not satisfactory to the instructor, then it must be taken apart and done over. This is not a pleasant task, but it serves its purpose and next garment will be made with more care.

The third year, I learned how to take correct measurements for drafting patterns, how to draft patterns, and how to cut gowns, and how to fit them; how to use a sewing machine properly and