Chapter VII

VELVET AND OTHER FABRIC HATS

Use of Velvet and Other Fabrics in Hats

Velvet is used a great deal for hats and hat trimmings. It has been popular for headgear since it was introduced in England at the time of the Norman Conquest, when the men of the nobility wore bright colored clothing and caps or bonnets of velvet adorned with long plumes.

Manufacture of Pile Fabrics

Velvet is called a pile fabric because of the soft nap or pile which hides the cloth that forms the back of the material. The back of almost all velvet is of cotton; the pile is of silk. The pile is formed by carrying part of the warp thread over a wire and cutting the loops afterwards, or by a special double-cloth weaving process. (See the manual for the “Silk Department” for a more extended description of velvet weaving.)
Ways to Determine Quality of Velvet

There are a number of ways to tell a good piece of velvet, although it is rather difficult for an amateur to do so. The closeness of weave of the back is one indication of the quality. The two principal kinds of weaves are the German and the Lyons. Both kinds are made in America. The Lyons weave, which is named for a French city which is a great silk and velvet center, is generally the best. The backs of the two kinds look slightly different, as may be seen by examining them; the Lyons velvet is usually lighter in weight, and the back shows through the nap more. Of two grades of Lyons velvet the more expensive has the thicker pile and shows the back less. The thickness of the nap may be clearly seen by folding a piece of the velvet to determine how much the back shows through on the fold.

Uncut velvet is sometimes used.

The quality of silk from which velvet is made has much to do with the value of the finished article. Pure silk from silk-worms fed on mulberry trees, and reeled in great lengths from the cocoons, is the best. The waste silk—that made from pierced cocoons from which the moth has escaped—and other inferior kinds, are called schappe (spun) silks and do not make so fine an article. Although cotton is commonly used for the backs, manufacturers used to speak
of a good piece of velvet as "linen-backed," to indicate superior quality.

Manufacture of Velvet Hats

Formerly, even in factories, all velvet hats had to be made by hand; the operators stretched and pinned the velvet onto wire and net frames. At every place where there was a dip in the shape, the velvet had to be tacked by hand. This made the hats more expensive and the effect was not quite so smooth and tailored as that obtained today by a new method, by which the velvet is pressed onto buckram or willow frames containing glue. The heat in the dies brings out the glue, which, however, does not come through the fabric. This makes the velvet conform easily and exactly to the shape of the frame. The finish of the velvet is slightly affected by this method, but not enough to damage it.

Hand-made velvet hats are often made over wire frames which are usually bought from factories. It is not a very difficult piece of work to make a frame, and anyone who is skilful with her fingers can do it. Strong wire is used and with a pair of pliers tiny thread wire is twisted around each place where the larger wires cross, to hold them in place. This method is taught in millinery classes. (For further information in regard to making hat frames see Chapter XV.)
Silk and Satin Hats

Silk hats are worn between seasons when people are tired of straw or velvet. Of late years satin has been in favor. Satin is a silk, of course, but the weave is usually one thread under and five to seven over, so that the extreme glossiness of the smooth silk fibers is preserved. In a taffeta, where the weave is simply over one and under one (simple or tabby weave) much of the gloss is lost. The more tightly the silk threads are twisted, the stronger they become but more of the shimmer is lost.

Durability of Silk Hats

If the public were more particular about the wearing qualities of a hat, it would pay the salespeople to know thoroughly all about the durability of the popular kinds of fabrics, but the average customer merely wants reasonable service from a hat, as she tires of it, or the season changes before she wears it out. So the appeal of length of service cannot be made to many customers. When it does appeal to a customer, the price of a hat is a fairly sure indication of the value.

Weighted Silk

A stiff silk like a taffeta is apt to crack and wear out sooner than a soft silk of the same value, owing to the weighting or loading of the former. Silk fiber has the power of absorbing certain metals in solution. The
stiffer and cheaper the silk, the more metal (salts of lead) has been absorbed into the fiber in its making, and the more this so-called weighting will cause the fiber to crack and wear out. Dark dyes absorb weighting more readily than light. If you wish to test any piece of silk for the amount of weighting, burn a small piece with a match. If a soft gray ash is left, the silk was of good quality, but if there is a stiff black metal framework left after the silk has burned away, the piece was heavily weighted.

See manual for the “Silk Department” for further information on the weighting of silks.

Silk is used in mourning hats, often in such materials as faille or peau de soie, although the materials vary with different years. Silk is used chiefly in millinery shops and workrooms, especially for the more dressy hats. Silk or satin hats are usually trimmed very simply, perhaps because of the natural beauty of the silk. Many hats are made with combinations of silk or with a brim lining of silk, silk bows, or ribbons. Hat linings are of thin unweighted silks, such as China silks, mercerized cotton, or soft taffeta, that wear well, stand pin holes, and give the hat a good finish.

**Other Fabric Hats**

Every year sees new varieties of fabric hats, made of chiffon, tulle, maline, cotton crêpes, georgettes, silk
ginghams, pongees, lace, net, silver cloth, and cloth of gold. Outing types, as the so-called sport hats, are simple in trimming and finish, often stiff in outline, and made of such materials as crash, duck, eponge, linen, rep, etc. High-grade linen hats are hand-blocked in the factories. The most expensive linen or cotton hats are made in workrooms, and in some years hardly appear at all. Embroidered hats follow the fashion.

In material, form, and general style, fabric hats vary every season. They form a most important part of the millinery trade. A study of textiles would be helpful to anyone who wishes to become well informed on the subject of fabric hats. (See manuals for the "Silk" and "Cotton and Linen" Departments.)

New Materials

An illustration of the new materials that are brought out now and then for hats is Pontine, a fabric manufactured by the Dupont Powder Mills. This material has a silk or satin surface on one side, usually of some pretty color, and on the other side resembles leather. It is made from the waste obtained in the manufacture of gunpowder. Its water-proof, light, flexible qualities make it a desirable material not only for hats but for other purposes, such as motor coats. Whether this article and other novelty materials will win a per-
manent place on the market and have a steady demand yearly, remains to be seen.

**Fur Hats**

Whole hats and parts of hats are made of fur for winter wear. A few appear even in the extreme southern part of the United States. Several kinds of fur were mentioned in Chapter VI.

Fur hats are usually close-fitting and small, or else the crown only is covered with fur, because of the warmth and bulk of the fur. Some furs are heavy, but the lighter varieties are most used. White fur is popular for dressy hats. Much more fur is used in trimming than in body hats. Fur is used in band, crowns, tufts, or brims are faced with fur.

**Miscellaneous Fabrics**

Hats are also made whole, or in part of velour, moiré, satin cire, Angora cloth, duvetyne, hatter’s plush, bullion cloths, metallic cloths, jet cloth, celophane combined with metallic threads, panne, French kid, wool, taffeta, satin, georgette, and others. Some of these, such as wool and Angora cloth, leather, or imitation leather, are for sport hats.