CHAPTER I

PLAIN SEWING

The necessity of knowing how to sew is becoming more evident day by day. This is particularly so in the case of the woman with modest means. Fashion changes so rapidly that it requires one with a ready and clever needle to make any attempt to keep up its dictates.

The ready-made garment, which can be bought at the shops, is generally gotten up to catch the eye, much trimmed, but of inferior quality and workmanship. This method of getting our clothes, to be sure, is an easy one, but in the long run extravagant. Better material, better workmanship, and last, though not least, a better style can be gotten at home and the individual style retained. Whereas "store-bought" garments have been made by the dozens from one model.

Hand work is again on the high wave of popu-
larity. Hand-made underwear, blouses, and, in fact, entire gowns, are sold in all the first-class shops and bring large prices. In the fashionable dressmaking establishments some sort of hand work is introduced on every gown. Featherstitching, fagoting, French knots, darning, hand-run tucks, and ever so many fetching stitches are made on the gown, which enhances its value considerably. Quite a bit of pleasure may be had, while giving these little touches to a gown, in the thought that by one’s own cleverness the same result is obtained for which other women are forced to pay such a high price.

To most women the ability to do plain sewing comes naturally, but they do so “after a fashion.” For that reason, let us begin to do even the simplest and easiest stitches in a systematic and proper way, for in order to progress to dressmaking we must have a good and firm foundation.

While hand sewing is of much importance, machine sewing and its place in the sewing world must not be forgotten, for where strength and durability are required the machine holds its own. To obtain the best results, a sewing machine must be well cared for; it must be oiled about once a
week and kept free from dust; the proper needles, a good belt or strap, and proper oil (the name of which can be obtained when the machine is purchased) should be kept on hand. Many very stylish effects are obtained by trimming a gown with simple designs in machine stitching; particularly is this so on cloth gowns. It gives a tailored effect. We will begin with even basting stitches.

**EVEN BASTING**

Basting is a preparation for sewing, and is intended to keep the materials in place while the sewing is being done. If small pieces are being basted place them over two fingers; if large pieces, place them flat on a table. Be very careful when basting on trimming that the fabric is not drawn too tight nor the trimming placed on too full. After the work is completed remove the bastings. Always baste velvet with sewing silk, and it is wise to cut the basting thread every few inches, as the pulling of a long thread leaves a mark. This also applies to silk and fine cloth.
STRAIGHT RUNNING SEAM

A running seam is made by taking the needle in and out of the material, keeping the stitches and spaces the same length. It is probably so called because it is a rapidly made seam. It is much like even basting on a small scale.

Place the materials with the right sides together, keep the edges exactly even and baste one half of an inch below the edge. Fasten the materials together with two stitches and run the needle in and out evenly, holding the work between the thumb and first finger of each hand. Sew directly under the basting from right to left and fasten at the end securely with two or three backstitches. When a very strong seam is required it may be backstitched.

BACKSTITCH

The backstitch derives its name from the fact that the needle is taken backward in taking each stitch. Backstitching resembles machine stitching
on the right side, and is used on various parts of a garment where strength is required and for sewing on tapes. Baste as for a running seam; hold the work around the first finger of the left hand; take one short stitch to the right and one twice as long to the left on the wrong side of the seam. Make one stitch at a time. Be careful that the stitches are of the same size and that they meet.

**HEMMING**

A hem is a fold turned twice, used to strengthen and finish the material on which it is placed. The two turns of the hem are called the fold. A piece of cardboard may be used as a measure or gauge; the stitches should be exact and uniform in size, slant, and space to insure beautiful hemming. We will say that it is an apron hem that we desire. Place the muslin with the selvage edge at the sides;
make the first turn of hem one fourth inch, creasing from right to left. Special attention must be paid to this turn, as the evenness of the hem greatly depends on it. Make the second turn of hem one inch. Begin to turn it at the right-hand side and crease it by laying it in place between the thumb and first finger. Test the result with your measure or gauge. Baste close to the edge with even basting. Hold the hem straight around the first finger of left hand, point the needle toward the right and put through the fold of hem only.

Draw the needle through and tuck end of thread under fold of hem, take two stitches through fold of hem and turn your needle toward thumb nail of left hand. The stitches take the place of a knot. Take up a few threads on fold of hem at each stitch through three thicknesses of material. Draw needle out and continue to make the stitches close and slanting. Train the eye to know when the stitch is uniform in size, slant, and space.

Fig. 5.—Hemming, Finished.
PLAIN FELL

A plain fell is a flat, smooth seam between two pieces of fabric made by putting two pieces of material together with one edge extending beyond the other, and hemming the extended edge down.

![Fig. 6.—Plain Fell.](image)

![Fig. 7.—Plain Fell, Finished.](image)

Place material together with upper edge one fourth inch above the lower edge; keep the edges parallel. Place wrong side of each piece out. Baste as for running seam and sew with three running stitches and one backstitch. Take out basting. Open seam and press it to prevent it from forming a fold on the right side, turn down edge that extends, and turn in hem.

FRENCH FELL

Place seam together with right side of each piece out; make edges exactly even; baste with uneven basting one eighth inch below edge. Sew first seam with one running and one backstitch.
Turn seam on wrong side and finish with back-stitching or running stitches according to texture of fabric.

In a French fell the frayed edges are completely hidden and no stitches show on the right side when finished. It looks like a cord or ridge. This fell is particularly satisfactory on bias or curved seams.

OVERCASTING

Overcasting is used to finish the raw edges of a seam and to keep it from raveling. To overcast, first trim off the raw edges until they are even, begin at the right-hand side with two small back-stitches, point needle through edge toward the thumb of left hand, make stitches down one eighth and one fourth inch apart, take stitch over both edges of

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Fig. 8.—Wrong Side of a French Seam.

Fig. 9.—Overcasting.
the goods and draw thread loosely. Be careful to get the proper slant.

In overcasting a lined dress waist, first press open the seams very carefully by pressing the point of the iron along the seam; carefully trim the raw edges and overcast.

GATHERING

Gathering is a stitch used to compress by the use of plaits or even wrinkles a portion of the material which requires to be drawn into a smaller space; this is needed to give ease to certain parts of garments. Double thread is used in gathering, in case one thread should break while the gathers are being placed. The material to be gathered should be divided into halves, quarters, or eighthths, according to its width.

Find the middle of edge to be gathered and mark by cutting a small notch. Hold wrong side of material toward you. Take up two threads on the needle and go over four; or, in other words, the material taken up on the needle should be one half the quantity

![Fig. 10.—Gathering.](image)
of that passed over. When the gathering is finished fasten the end of thread with a knot. Put a pin through material vertically close to the last stitch. Draw the gathering thread up and wind it around the pin.

TUCKING

A tuck is a fold in a piece of material or a garment; very frequently it is one of a number laid parallel.

A tuck may be used by way of decoration, or with the expectation of letting it out as the garment becomes shorter by washing or the wearer grows.

Tucks may be made in various sizes from the smallest or pin tuck to a large one, say four or five inches deep.

When calculating for tucks, bear in mind that a tuck requires twice its depth with once that amount to rest on.

An odd number of tucks, rather than even, is to be preferred. A measure or gauge is necessary to the making of even tucks. The gauge may be made in this way. Take the stiff, even edge of paper or cardboard, make a dot the width of the tuck from the end, then make another dot the
width of the tuck plus the space below the first dot. At each dot make a straight cut into the paper and from that cut an oblique one.

Hold right side of material toward you. Place the second cut to the sewing of the hem, crease by the top of measure. After creasing across bring the measure back to the right-hand side and test the turn. Move the gauge along, at the same time baste under the first straight cut.

In making a second tuck place the straight cut to the sewing of the first tuck and proceed as before.
SHIRRING

Shirring is a number of rows of running stitches parallel to each other. The stitches in shirring are usually very small and if necessary the lines may be marked in uneven basting in order to get exact straight lines.

Embroidery may be sewn on by hand by rolling edge between the thumb and first finger and whipping on to the edge of garment or piece of material. Another way of sewing on embroidery is to gather the embroidery with very small
running stitches, place it on the edge of garment right sides together, then place a narrow bias band of material with them, baste them all together, and sew with fine, running stitches. This joins the facing, garment, and embroidery together in one seam. Turn in the bias facing or band to the garment and hem.

Narrow laces generally have a thread at the top which may be drawn up as gathering string. Lace is usually sewn on the edge of a hem by whipping.

**BUTTONHOLES**

A buttonhole is an opening or hole made to admit a button. It is made in double material, sometimes three ply is put in for added strength.

The size of the buttonhole is determined by the diameter of the button, and is worked on the right side of the garment. It is cut a little distance in from the edge.

**How to Make a Buttonhole.**—Hold the folded edge along the first finger of left hand, baste two little running stitches on wrong side of material, point needle toward you. Bring the needle from underneath close to the folded edge of cloth. Work from right to left. Put in the
needle again the same distance from edge and directly in front of its first position. With the needle halfway through the cloth and pointed toward you, take the double thread at the edge of the needle and throw it under the point of the needle from right to left. Draw the thread tight. Work the buttonhole along in this manner until you reach the end nearest the fold of cloth. Work around the edge until you are directly opposite the first stitch taken at this point. Draw the stitches so that the sides are close together. Make three stitches on the right side of cloth at the end of buttonhole the full width of the stitches. These are called the bar. Work over the bar with buttonhole stitches having the purl toward the buttonhole. If the buttonhole is large it may be overcast and barred first and a new thread taken for the buttonhole stitches.
BUTTONS

A button is a piece of bone, metal, or wood used to fasten one part of a garment to another by slipping through a buttonhole. It is sewn on by means of a shank or perforation.

Buttons are sewn on the right side of the material. It is advisable to put an extra fold as an interlining, as this serves to strengthen the place where the button is sewn on. Buttons which have no shanks require to be stemmed. This is done by leaving the threads loose so that the thread may be wound around them between the cloth and button, forming a shank.

When sewing on buttons, first make a mark where you intend to sew the button. This can be done by making a small knot on the end of your thread, put the needle through the cloth so that the knot makes the mark.

Double thread should be used in sewing on buttons. Be sure to avoid letting the thread knot in an untidy way on the wrong side under the button. Break the thread in such a case and begin again.
HOW TO APPLY A FLAT FACING

A facing is a piece or fold, usually bias, placed on the edge of a garment to take the place of a hem. The facing is generally placed on the wrong side.

The garment to be faced should be placed flat on a cutting board or table right side up, the facing placed on so that the right sides of garment and facing are together, edges meeting exactly. Baste one fourth of an inch below edge, and sew either by machine, or by hand with a backstitch and one or two running stitches, below the basting. Fold over on the wrong side so that the seam comes at the edge, but does not show on the right side. Place the garment on the table and baste through the middle of the facing. Turn in the other edge of facing about one quarter of an inch, baste close to the edge, hem or slip stitch. Press with a moderately hot iron.
TAPE

Tape may be used in loops to hang up clothing. Tapes of this kind are sewn on flat, usually on the bands of skirts, neck band, and armholes. A piece is cut about four inches long and turned in at each end about a half inch, so that it will be strong, then it is hemmed on three sides to the garment. Two loops are better than one for most garments as the weight is more evenly distributed.

LOOPS OF TAPE FOR TOWELS

Cut a piece of tape the desired length, fold in the middle, and overseam it down about an inch, flatten out the seam and turn it so that it forms a point at the top. Turn the ends over about one fourth of an inch on the right side, and place them on the wrong side of towel, and hem the loop on the three sides. Turn the towel on the right side and backstitch it down to the tape.