CHAPTER XVI

HOW TO PATCH AND MEND

PATCHING is usually an art, and it requires much skill and patience to obtain a good result. It is the art of restoring the worn parts of a garment by inserting a better piece or part. To patch well one must have a knowledge of the methods and rules of constructing a garment. One must be careful to see that the patch matches the original fabric in color and quality. A garment which needs patching is usually one which has had some wear and has lost some of its original brightness and color. For this reason a patch of new material should be avoided if possible, as one of the fundamental principles of patching is that the repair when completed shall be almost imperceptible.

In patching stripes, plaid, or figures, make the pattern so that it is continuous, every line, flower, etc., exactly in its regular place or space.
The warp of both the garment and the patch must run in the same direction. If possible, attach the patch to a seam. Sometimes it is possible to attach more than one side to a seam; this makes the work not only stronger but very much neater. An invisible patch is often invaluable.

Patches must necessarily be shaped differently to adapt themselves to the break and to the construction of the garment; some of these must be circular, oblong, triangular, half-moon, etc. The half-moon patch will appeal to the mother to whose lot falls the patching of elbows and trousers' knees; this patch is of a most excellent shape to use, especially in places where the strain is great, as the edge may be attached to a seam. The size of a patch not only depends on the size of the actual hole, but also on the condition of the material surrounding it. If the material shows signs of giving way or looks threadbare, it must be reënforced by making the patch large enough to cover the weak place.

The simplest kind of a patch is one that is hemmed to the garment. A piece of material large enough to cover the hole and surrounding weak spots is cut, after the matching of figures, lines, etc., has been attended to. Hold the patch
with the right side toward you, turn the corners down one quarter of an inch on the right side, next turn down the sides one quarter of an inch. Find the center of the patch and also the center of the hole; this may be done by folding them in their diameter; place the right side of the patch to the wrong side of the garment; be sure that the warp is in the right position; baste the edges with fine, even bastings; begin at the center of one side, begin to hem at the same point, as the corner will then have a better appearance. Be careful to have the patch in the proper position while hemming it. The patch, which represents the fold of the hem, must turn toward the point of the finger. Turn the material over and measure three fourths of an inch from the hem, make a square on its sides and cut the material on these lines; in this way the worn material is disposed of. Make a diagonal cut one quarter of an inch long at each corner; turn in the edges with your needle; keep the shape perfect by making neat, exact turnings at the corners; do not have any little threads escape at the corners, as it makes an untidy-looking square. Baste the edges of the turns with even bastings and hem, beginning in the center of one side. Cut the basting threads, do not pull
them, and press the patch carefully on the wrong side. This sort of patch is usually put on garments of cotton or woolen material.

There is another style of patch which is not as easily made as the hemmed patch; it is overseamed, lies very flat, and is made on very handsome cloth or flannel fabrics.

A catstitched patch is also used in patching garments of cloth or flannel. The fact that the material is thick makes this one of the easiest patches to make. The catstitched patch is made like the hemmed patch up to the turning in of the edges; these are left flat on the material and catstitched through the garment with small stitches.

Mitered Corner.—The seam used in mitering a corner is made by joining two pieces of material together, each end cut at an angle of forty-five degrees, and sewing them so as to make a right angle. The material is usually cut into bands, and sometimes ribbons, laces, and insertions are planned in designs which call for nice corners, and the mitered corner gives the best effect. Fold the corner of the band or strip to be mitered on a true bias; cut with the inside of the crease up; place the bias ends together with the wrong side of each piece out; baste together one
fourth of an inch from the edge. Open the seam
to see if it is correctly placed. Sew with fine
stitches by hand, fastening off with two back-
stakes; trim off the edges and press the seam flat.
If this seam be stitched by machine, the upper and
lower threads should be left long enough to tie
or fasten securely; otherwise the seam will rip a
few stitches if the threads be broken off.

Bias Piecing.—Place the bias strips with the
wrong side up; put them over each other so as to
make a straight line of these bias edges at the top;
a point will extend on either side; baste them to-
gether with one quarter of an inch seam; open
the seams to see if they are properly joined, then
stitch and press flat.

THE OUTFIT FOR A SEWING ROOM

Every woman should have some place apart
where she may do her sewing. Every other occu-
pation calls for a special room or place, and why
not the sewing? If one can afford a sewing room
it should be fitted up with system, "a place for
everything and everything in its place." The
room should be well lighted and ventilated, warm
in winter and cool in summer; one should be com-
fortable if a good result is to be obtained. The
floor should not be carpeted; bare, hard-wood floors are the best; but if one desires it covered, matting makes a first-class floor covering for a sewing room. The cuttings and threads are easily gathered from it and it always looks clean.

There should be a closet in which to hang skirts and waists, and shelves on which boxes containing the stock of findings are placed. A gas stove, or stove of some sort, should also be in the room or near it. An ironing board or table should be there, too, as much time is lost in leaving the sewing room going and coming from the kitchen, besides the annoyance it is to those in the kitchen. When one sews, the mind should be upon the work, and not upon half a dozen other things. A good machine which is kept in perfect repair is an absolute necessity. A stock of needles, pins, machine belts, and oil, a pair of shears for cutting garments, cloth, etc., a smaller pair for finer cutting, and a pair of buttonhole scissors, a good tape measure, an emery bag, and a lapboard and cutting table are all necessary. An assortment of needles, tapes, cottons, buttons, hooks and eyes, binding ribbon, Prussian binding, featherbone, and belt tapes, are also convenient to keep on hand. A piece bag or box and a waste basket
should also be in the room. Always close the machine for the night after you have finished using it. Saturday evening is a very good time to oil the machine, as it will soak in during Sunday, and will not be so liable to drop on the work when you begin to sew again the next week.

A yardstick and a piece of marking chalk are acquisitions to a sewing room. Bust and skirt forms should also be found in a well-ordered room; these may be placed in the wardrobe when not in use. When skirts are draped ready to finish they should be hung on a coat hanger in the closet. A very great help to the home dressmaker is the wooden or brass rod which may be placed in the wardrobe to hang the unfinished gowns on. This rod should be placed about nine inches from the top or the shelf of the closet and extend from side to side. A number of gowns and waists may be hung on it if they are placed one behind the other. Very fussy or elaborate waists may be put away in paper suit boxes, and all the pieces of material and trimmings with them while they are in an unfinished state. Pieces of white muslin should be kept in readiness for wraps in which to keep the sewing free from any dust or soil.

If called away from your sewing never leave
it uncovered. After fitting a garment hang it in the closet or put it away in a box until you are all ready to rectify or finish it, as the shaking out of the pins sometimes renders the time and labor spent in fitting and draping lost. Be sure that all your work is put in its place or covered before the cleaning up begins. A bag made of common cambric sufficiently large to slip over a bust form on which a waist is being planned or draped is the neatest disposal of the situation I have yet discovered; the drawing string may be pulled and tied under the figure, which may then be placed on the top of the closet out of the way.

Pins are every dressmaker’s extravagance; this may be helped if the sweepings of the sewing room are sifted. A little sieve may be had for a few cents; it should not be too coarse, as the pins would fall through, nor too fine for the dust would not drop through. The sweepings should be placed in this sieve and shaken until all the dust and dirt are gone, leaving the pins by themselves. Put the sieve, with the pins in it, under the faucet and let the water run through them. After the pins have been thoroughly washed drop them into a pan of sawdust. Thoroughly dry the sieve and put the sawdust and pins back into the sieve,
shake all the sawdust through the sieve and the pins will be found nice and clean. This is a little trouble; but if the sweepings are saved until there is quite a lot of them one will be repaid for her labor.

When a thread is taken from a spool of cotton, slip the end into the little cut in the edge of the spool intended for it, as long threads hanging from spools of cotton are not only wasteful but untidy. Have the machine drawers in good order; the attachments and instruction book in one drawer, the bobbins in another. Keep the oil can and cloth to clean the machine in another drawer by themselves. Many otherwise neat women keep the machine drawers for a sort of catch-all.

Pieces of crinoline, canvas, and haircloth should be rolled in separate bundles and tied up securely; the little stiff fibers catch in everything, and often ruin pieces which one needs if they are left loosely in the piece bag. When pieces of dresses are left over they should be tied in neat little rolls and put where they can be gotten at easily; woolen and silk pieces in one bag and cotton pieces in another. When one is sewing on light materials, such as dainty silk or muslin, it
is a wise precaution to place a sheet on the floor and a large piece of muslin around the back and sides of the machine. Another good idea is to have a small bag, into which pieces of the lace or trimmings which we are using may be dropped, hung on to the side of the machine or near it. Much valuable time is lost in looking for things.

A thimble is another thing which should have its own place, as it is quite provoking to have to stop and look for it. A good plan would be to have two thimbles. Some people advocate the saving of the basting threads; it is a most economical habit if there is some one in the household who has plenty of time to save them and roll them on spools, but for very busy people it is simply "straining at the gnat" to attempt to save them; for something else of more importance worth many times the value of those old basting threads must be put aside and time given to the saving of them.

A good supply of darning cotton should be on hand; a fine brand may be gotten on spools. The darning thread is given special attention, as a carelessly darned stocking will often cripple the foot and make one appear lame. The darning should be done so that it lies flat and not in
humps. Woolen stockings are very little worn, but they should not be darned with wool; use the regular darning cotton, the result is more satisfactory. A darner, an egg-shaped contrivance, is a great help. Silk or very fine lisle stockings should be darned with fine silk or very fine darning cotton. Never use sewing cotton to darn stockings with, as it becomes firmer and harder when washed. The needle used in darning stockings should be of a medium size.

When garments are torn the parts of the fabric should be united by inserting new threads in a manner as nearly like weaving as possible. The quality, texture, and color must be considered in selecting materials with which to darn colored or figured fabrics. The predominating color should be matched and the darning done with that color. If the surrounding material is strained it might be well to draw the edges together into their proper place with basting stitches; these may be removed after the darn is completed, or a piece of material may be basted under the torn place and the edges of the tear darned down to it. In fine linen the darning should be done before sending it to the laundry.

The materials used in darning woolen gar-
ments are the raveling threads (warp threads) of the material, sewing silk, and filoselle; for darning linen fabrics, linen floss or flushing thread; for cotton fabrics, cotton thread corresponding in thickness with the finest thread in the fabric; and for alpaca or mohair a very fine hair or fine silk. Laces may be basted on a piece of stiff paper, every point of the pattern basted in the proper place, and the spaces darned together; if there are any large breaks endeavor to get a piece of the net exactly like the mesh of the lace, place it on the back of the lace and appliqué the edge of the pattern on it; if possible, get a flower or leaf and place it in the break and hem it with very fine stitches to the net. Lace may also be darned very artistically with very fine cotton. The lace should be placed on the paper wrong side up and gently pulled into the proper position; the edges must be basted to the paper and darned, keeping the openings of the mesh as nearly opposite as possible; do not draw the darning threads too tight, as that will strain the mesh out of its proper place.