CHAPTER IV

MAKING HATS OF BRAID

SEWING straw, or other kinds of braid, on frames is not at all difficult, and the results are very satisfactory if a few simple instructions are borne in mind. Braids can be purchased very reasonably, and a hand-sewn hat is much superior looking to a machine-made and stiffened hat, except in Milan, Tuscan, and Neapolitan braids, which no amateur can handle.

COVERING FRAMES WITH PLiable BRAID

Hats are begun at the edge of the brim in two ways; if it is a soft, pliable braid it is best to bind the edge wire with it, running the two edges of the braid together, thus inclosing the wire; turn the end in and finish neatly. Sew the braid on the upper side first. Lay the edge of the braid level with the bound edge of brim and sew the second row of braid to the edge of the bind where it is
sewn (not the outer edge); this leaves about a quarter of an inch of the braid free around the edge, which makes a prettier and more becoming hat edge. Sew from right to left, a stitch half an inch long on the under side, and a tiny stitch on the surface of the braid. If the braid is one inch or less in width, you need not cut it at each row round, but lap over when you reach the beginning. Slant the braid downward, and continue round and round till the brim is filled in. In sewing the successive rows, do not lap them more than is absolutely necessary to sew one row to the other; it only makes the hat heavy and clumsy, and uses an unnecessary quantity of braid.

If the braid is pliable and will stretch a little, it is well to do this as you sew, as it will leave less to draw into shape at the inner edge of the braid. You will find that the inner edges of the rows are full, more or less; more as you get nearer the crown; it will be necessary to run a strong thread along and draw them to shape, then sew the next row on; and be sure to sew to the frame, catching the stitches around the wires whenever you meet them, or you will not come out right.

If the brim is the same width all round you will have an even number of rows from edge to
head, but if the brim is wider one side than the other, go around as many rows as will cover the narrowest part, then set on part rows from side to side, cutting the braid, and letting the cut ends come up against the crown. When the space is filled up the first row around the crown goes over these cut ends and neatens all (Fig. 28).

To sew the crown, continue round and round the same as the brim, taking especial care to cling closely to the frame till the middle top is reached. This seems always the greatest difficulty to the beginner, but is just a matter of neatness and deft fingering; usually one can finish the center by twisting under the cut end and sewing down; sometimes it is best to make a tiny rosette of the braid, gathering or plaiting it up tightly in the middle and sewing this on middle of crown. There is no rule for this; common sense and the nature of the braid will direct the best way in each case.

There is, however, another way to cover crowns, when they are of the "Bell" shape, that is, wider on top than at the head size. Supposing the braid to be of the same soft make as has been described for the brim, it is well to bind the edge of the crown in the same way and sew the flat top from edge to center as before described. This
done, the first row around the side is sewn on with the \textit{scallop up}, and must be "slip stitched" to the bind row of the crown top. Hold the edge of the braid level with top of crown with the left hand, pass the needle through braid and bind, on a forward and upward slant; make a tiny stitch in the bind, return the needle downward with a slant, and back again with a tiny stitch in the braid. The rows may now be continued round and round to the head line, sewing in the same way.

\textbf{COVERING FRAMES WITH STIFF BRAID}

In using stiff, harsh braids the edge is not bound, but the first row is sewn on the wire, allowing from half to one third to project beyond the wire; this is best put on with a half-inch buttonhole stitch, such as is used for sewing on wire. The remainder of the work is the same as before.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{schematic}
\caption{Sewing Braid on Frame, Front Deeper, Showing Part Rows, and Slip-stitching First Row of Under Brim.}
\end{figure}
described, only as there is no bind, the two edge rows of the crown are slip-stitched together; and the first row of the under brim in the same way. (See Fig. 28.) The succeeding rows of the under brim are all slip-stitched on with the slanted stitch between the upper and under brim, and the tiny stitch on both sides. Let the last row of the under brim turn over the head wire into the crown with a long stitch inside and little one out, and to this sew the head lining. (See Fig. 29 of finished hat.)

**THREADS USED IN COVERING FRAMES**

For shiny braids use silk; for dull braids thread, always to match; when the under brim of a hat is of a contrasting color, as a black hat with white under brim, or the reverse, it is safest to use black thread, as black is more easily buried in white than white in black; in other contrasts it is well to experiment which will work best.
Sew always from right to left, and hold the edge of the hat away from you.

**WINTER BRAIDS**

The same rules and suggestions apply to winter braids, which are more or less of silk-covered fiber mixed with chenille, or felt strips woven up with one or both of these; and sundry other combinations that each season brings into the market. But most of these braids are much more pliable, and stretch more than straw braids, and many are heavy, therefore it is very necessary to use care in sewing, to lap them only the least bit, and stretch the edges so as to have as little fullness as possible to draw up.

**COLORING AND COVERING FRAMES**

Solid braids, and such as look sufficiently substantial when the upper and under brims are finished, need no extra covering over the frames; but if braids are at all transparent, the frame must match the braid. Now, as this is more often than not impossible to obtain, a quick and efficient plan is to tint the white frame the color of the braid. Every house has a paint box of some sort; mix the color wanted and lay on with a little
brush, going over twice if once does not tint deeply enough. Red, or blue, can be done with inks of these colors, black also, or with shoe varnish.

But there are pretty lacy braids that need an under covering over the frame; both must match; this under covering may be tulle, net, or a cheap silk mull, costing from fifteen to twenty-five cents the yard. Fold the material double, lay the frame on flat, pin around the edge, also around the head, and cut out, allowing one half inch turning around the edge and one inch inside the head size, which is to be snipped to the wire line. Remove the under layer of the mull, pin the other on the frame again, turning the edge up over the wire, and secure by running along under the wire. Slip the other piece over the crown, front to front (which should have been marked with cross pins), pin in place, turn the edge under over the wire, and run down. Run the two head margins together beyond the wire.

The crown is covered with a round piece, plaited down neatly and sewn to the head margin of the brim. The braid is then sewn on precisely as before directed, or run by the straight edge only on the mull.
If tulle is used for covering—and this or silk veiling net is best for fine horsehair or very open lace braids—it must be used double on each side of the brim, and four times on the crown.

A bind of velvet or silk is very pretty around the edge of brim and crown in place of the braid bind, or between the two edge rows of braid, even if the hat is not to be trimmed with velvet.

Many pretty things can be done with and made of braids—rings, shells, curlycues, full gathered and tucked effects—but all these are so dependent on the taste and ingenuity of the maker that it is impossible to give rules or descriptions; but anyone who will sew a few hats by the foregoing instructions will, by noticing and examining prevailing styles, see the various ideas employed and readily be able to copy them. When any fancy design is to be carried out, it will be necessary to cover the frame, and it will be best to practice on old braid first.

**PLATEAUX OR FLATS**

These are mats of braid sewn without a frame and without a crown; they may be made small to just cover a toque or make a Tam-o’-Shanter, or large enough to form the entire hat. These flats
are sewn *from the center out*, beginning with a close twist or little flat rosette of the braid, then one sews round and round, lapping the finished row over the one being sewn; this is a little more difficult, as the row that is being sewn must be a little crowded or fulled at the lower edge, in order

![Diagram](image)

**Fig. 30.**—*Sewing Flat or Crown, from Center Out.*

that the outer edge of the work may be perfectly flat, neither full nor contracted, or you will have either a mat with frills or a bag-shaped affair (Fig. 30).

Such plateaux are mounted in many ways; they can be squeezed and draped over all kinds of frames, the edges coming over the brim of a toque and plaited around the head size; or they can be set on a low crown made of wire, buckram, or stiff muslin, and covered with velvet or silk (see
Figs. 11 and 33), in which case the plateau has to be "braced" with wires. If the edge is wanted soft and rather floppy, only two, three, or four loops of wire are sewn on flat, extending from the head size to about three inches from the edge; these are sewn on with half-inch-long buttonhole stitches on the wire, and tiny stitches on the braid. (See Fig. 31.) If the flat is desired extended or turned up flat, then buttonhole a wire around one quarter of an inch from the edge, and also sew six or eight wire braces in even lines and spaces from...
within the head line to the edge, where the wire is cut, pushed under the edge wire, and turned back tightly over it; an extra row of braid or a fold of velvet is then slip-stitched over the edge wire (Fig. 32).

**LEGHORN HATS, FELTS, AND BEAVERS**

Leghorn hats and soft felts and beavers are supported in the same way when necessary. When sewing wires on felt, the needle must be passed back *at a slant* through the same hole where it was pushed through; thus no stitch will show, the thickness of the felt holding the stitch. If wire is needed in the crown, use the flat ribbon wire.

A word as to the crown bandeau, which is really a hat crown without a top or brim, the shape being easily made from any old plain hat crown, and cut down where the hat is to droop, the side that is to be high being from two and one half to four inches deep. These under
crowns, or bandeaux, are made of buckram, stiff net, or stiff crinoline muslin, wired around both edges, and covered with silk or velvet cut to shape, both sides neatly slip-stitched together along the edges. (See Figs. 11 and 33.)

QUANTITIES OF BRAID REQUIRED

Twelve yards of one-inch braid will make a good-sized hat, covering the entire top and under brim. A toque will take from six to nine yards, according to size, and a bonnet from three to six, according to whether it is put on plain or full. Very sheer, light braid, fulled up on a draw thread (which is usually woven into the inner edge, the same as in lace) and sewn on like lace ruffles, but only slightly full, on a previously covered frame, makes one of the prettiest of hats, toques, or bonnets; of course, it takes more braid, but if not done too full and lapped not more than just enough to hide the frame, half as much again will be sufficient.

When sewing braids more than one inch wide, each row should be cut off and neatly finished, but the joins are best scattered over the back or least conspicuous part of the hat, which is determined by the shape and trimming.