CHAPTER TWO: MATERIALS

It is impossible to list and describe all the materials which are used in making hats, so that only those used most frequently are briefly described below.

With the exception of the few materials mentioned which may obviously be bought through the usual medium of the retail trade, all of the purely millinery materials may be purchased only at wholesale millinery supply houses.

FOUNDATION MATERIALS. In model millinery most hats with a brim necessitate the use of a sparterie brim shape. This is, in effect, a brim of the shape required, made in sparterie, which is used as a mould on which the actual brim is shaped, or blocked, as it is called. Many hats which are covered with material require a stiff foundation, and the choice of material for the foundation itself is governed by the nature of the actual hat material.

Sarterie deserves to be mentioned first as it is unique in that it is used both for brim shapes and foundations. Its chief use is for making brim shapes and it is, in fact, the only material which can be used successfully for this purpose. Further information about the actual use of this material may be found in Chapter Four wherein the making of a sparterie brim shape is described in full detail.

Sarterie is a comparatively heavy material, and therefore used for brim foundations only. Tarlatan and leno are the two materials of which complete foundations, i.e., brim and crown,
are made. These are rarely used in single thicknesses and the
number of layers employed varies with the weight and texture
of the hat material. Of the two, leno is the more difficult to use
because of its coarser nature.

The other foundation material, canvas, is not so extensively
used as tarlatan and leno. The millinery variety of canvas is
very finely woven and light in weight; it is often used for beret
foundations and for making rigid crowns.

LAWN (or mull). Fine white cotton material used extensively
for covering brim and crown shapes, and for binding brim
edges. It is also of exactly the right texture for millinery press-
ing cloths and no better material can be found for this purpose.

MILLINERY WIRE. Wire is used in millinery for two purposes,
viz., for strengthening sparterie brim shapes and for stiffening
hat brims. There are three kinds: lace wire, silk wire and paper
wire, all of which have an outer covering to prevent rust from
forming and marking the hat material. Lace and silk wire are
respectively of fine and medium gauges and are both silk
covered. Paper wire is used only in making brim shapes and
derives its name from its covering of paper.

FELTS. Felt hats are usually made from capelines, or "hoods"
as they are commonly called. These are usually of good quality
fur felt, that is, felt which is made from the fur of rabbits and
hares. Hand-made hats are made from this kind of felt only.
There is another, and much cheaper, kind of capeline which is
known as wool felt, and is made from waste sheep's wool.
This kind is usually used in the wholesale manufacture of the
cheaper grade of hat.

Both fur felt and wool felt are also obtainable in strip
form. This strip felt, as it is called, is used for many types
of beret. It is also used for making hats which have draped
crowns and which, consequently, require more fullness than the
capeline possesses. Strip felt is also used for making such
trimmings as large bows and imitation flowers.

BERET HOODS (FELT). These are simply balloon-shaped cape-
lines made in various sizes. The variation in size lies in the
amount of fullness, not in the actual head size. The particular size to be chosen depends on the type of beret desired; in general, where the beret is made with a number of folds, tucks or pleats, these must be allowed for when choosing the hood.

STRAWS. It is futile to attempt to describe all the kinds of straws available for millinery purposes as they are obtainable in such a very wide range of weave, texture, colour and finish. There are literally hosts of the cheaper varieties, made either in Italy or Switzerland, which are unnamed. The most well-known, such as Baku, Bangkok, Balibuntal and Leghorn are also the most expensive. With the exception of Leghorn, which is a fine to medium flat straw made up in circular fashion, these are fine woven, smooth-surfac ed straws. A large variety of strip straws in various thicknesses, widths and colours, sold by the packet, may be obtained for making up into hats.

VELVETS. These are made in most colours. Millinery velvet, so-called, is the most frequently used; it varies greatly in quality, the most expensive being silk-backed and the cheaper and heavier kind being cotton-backed. Another kind of velvet used in millinery is known as Panne velvet. This, when made up, has a finish resembling that of a man’s top hat and the pile, for the crown, has to be “turned” in the piece by steaming and brushing it with a stiff-haired brush in a circular, clock-wise movement.

SILK MATERIALS. These are satins, crêpes, taffetas, georgettes, piece petersham and faille, which is a fine, corded silk.

WOOLLEN MATERIALS. Jersey, Angora, wool georgette are all used in making hats. Worsted flannels and finely-woven lightweight tweeds are sometimes used for plain pull-on sports hats.

COTTON MATERIALS. Piqué and organdie are the more obvious cotton millinery materials. Lightweight summer hats with stiff foundations of tarlatan or leno can be covered with practically any kind of cotton material.
LINEN. This material is available in many colours and makes up into attractive summer hats.

TULLE. There are two sorts of tulle; silk tulle, which is used in dressmaking, and blocking tulle, which is used only for millinery purposes. Blocking tulle possesses a quality which is absent in silk tulle, i.e., it becomes limp in the steam, but after blocking and drying re-assumes its former soft, yet slightly stiff texture.

FURS. Lamb fur, so-called, broadtail and astrakhan are, together with seal and mink, the more commonly used in good millinery. Small hats to match coats or jackets are sometimes made of such furs as fox, squirrel and musquash, but these long-haired furs are really more suitable for making trimmings. Lamb furs, which are short-haired, lend themselves readily to fashioning into caps, toques, pill boxes and berets.