CHAPTER EIGHT: THE TOQUE

THERE is perhaps no hat which defies accurate description to a greater extent than does the toque. If asked to give a definition of a toque the average woman would say that it is a round, close-fitting, brimless hat made either in velvet or some other richly patterned material which has been draped and she would, indeed, be supported in this definition by the dictionary.

This description, however, is, by present-day standards, neither sufficiently accurate nor comprehensive. The toque was, perhaps, originally a brimless hat: this is no longer so as many toques are now made with brims, although these brims are so close-fitting as to appear to be part of the crown. Also, the choice of material for the toque is no longer so restricted as it was; silks, satins, taffetas, straws and felts, are all used.

The term toque is, then, a purely arbitrary one, which is applied to a very wide range of small hats, many of which are so called for the lack of another name.

The hat illustrated is a small toque with a turban effect; it is of simple design and may therefore be easily tackled by the beginner. It can be made from one yard of any silk millinery material.

Cut off one corner of the material, the two sides which form the right angle of the triangle thus cut being 12 in. in length. Take up the remainder of the material and fold it over, at the edge just cut, to a width of $3\frac{3}{4}$ in. and cut this strip off. From the diagonally opposite corner cut a further triangular piece exactly the same size as the first. These three pieces form the three sections of the crown.

Lay the long strip, which forms the centre section, over a head or a dome-shaped crown block and secure it thereto, front and back, with a drawing pin at each end. Hold the work in the steam to shrink away the fullness, and pin down the sides of the strip so that it lays flat to the block. Make sure that the strip has taken the exact shape of the block; if any puckers show, remove the pins, steam again, and re-pin.

Stick a pin vertically in the centre of the crown block, measure 5½ in. from this pin to the front and mark the distance with a pin inserted horizontally. Mark a distance of 6½ in. from centre to back, using the same method. Mark a distance of 1½ in. from each side of the centre pin to establish the width, at the widest point, of the middle section. Mark a distance of 1¼ in. on either side of the centre front and mark the same distance across the centre back.

Insert further pins as guides to indicate the outline of the centre strip, which is 3 in. at the middle tapering to 2½ in. at front and back. Tack along each line marked with the guide pins.

Unless another block of the same size is available (in which case the following work may be done separately thereon and without disturbing the centre strip), carefully remove the centre piece for the time being. Match the centre of the longest side of one of the triangular pieces to the base of the left or right side of the block and secure it at this point with a drawing pin. Place a further pin at each corner, smooth the material upwards over the bevel of the block and pin the remaining corner.

Hold the work in the steam and shape and fit the material to the block by pulling away all the fullness. The pulling may only be done on the bias of the material, therefore, refrain from stretching the two short sides and pull on the corners and along the base only (fig. 42).

The work requires a lot of steaming and constant pinning and re-pinning. Have plenty of drawing pins to hand as the work will need pinning all round the edges and particularly at the top corner. Without removing this piece of material, pin, steam and shape the remaining triangle to the other side.

Unpin as much of the top corner of each side piece as is necessary to allow the centre strip to be re-pinned in position

Fig. 42

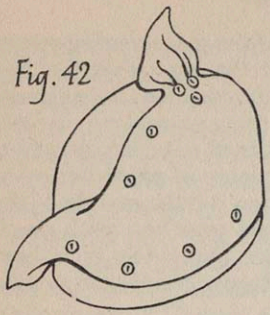

Fig. 42. The Toque: shaping one side piece of the crown

Fig. 43

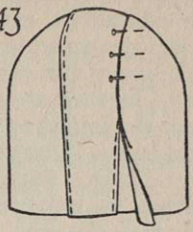

Fig. 43. Pinning centre piece to side piece

Fig. 44

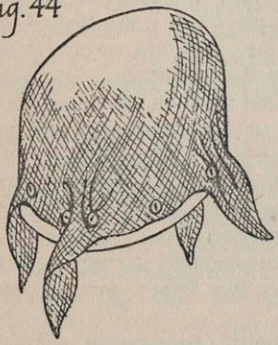

Fig. 44. Shaping the tarlatan foundation for the crown

Fig. 45

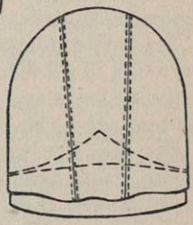

Fig. 45. Crown showing V-shaped headline tacked in the front

on the block. Remove the remainder of the pins securing one of the side pieces, excepting those along the base, fold the two short sides under in a curve which roughly matches the adjacent tack line of the centre strip. This turning should not be less than ½ in. wide at any point. Pin the turned edge into position. Keep the folded edge curved and use plenty of pins inserted at right angles through both the folded edge and the margin of the centre strip. Slip-stitch the two pieces together, with small stitches to preserve line of the curve, along the tack line, removing the pins whilst stitching. Repeat for the other side piece (fig. 43).

Remove the work from the block, machine the two seams, press them open, using a pressing pad, and cut the turnings down to ¼ in. Cut a 14 in. square of tarlatan, pin it to the crown block with its four corners to the front, back and left and right sides and steam and block (fig. 44). After the tarlatan has been blocked to the crown, iron it thoroughly all over so that it presents a smooth surface and carefully pull the material crown over it. The turnings in the silk crown should lie flat and may cause some trouble. This can be obviated by tacking them flat before pulling down the crown.

Tarlatan does not form the easiest of surfaces to work on because of its wide mesh. Therefore, pulling the silk crown over it is not such a simple job as might be imagined. Get the centre of the silk crown exactly into position over the centre of the crown block and pin it there with a vertical pin. Smooth the work in all directions away from the pin, particularly from centre to front and centre to back, with the object of persuading the two seams to lie in a smooth, curved line. It goes without saying that the line of these two seams must not be allowed to waver from side to side. When they are in a satisfactory position, pin them down with vertical pins. Pull down each side of the remainder of the silk crown and secure around the base with drawing pins. Remove the other pins from the seams.

Steam the silk crown thoroughly, bearing in mind that ironing will only impress the silk on the mesh of the tarlatan and consequently spoil its appearance. The crown must now be prepared to receive the brim, when made, by roughly shaping the headline. Fig. 48 shows the headline to be V-

shaped at the centre front and the actual shaping will depend on individual fitting.

The crown has already been made to dimensions which are generous enough to allow for fitting any size of head and it will, of course, be far too deep for the average head. First of all, measure, from the centre, 5 in. to the front, 5½ in. to the back and 5½ in. to left and right sides. Mark each distance with a horizontal pin, tack a line around at the depth thus indicated, and remove the pins. Mark a distance of 1 in. upwards from the tack line at centre front with another horizontal pin. With tailor's chalk, lightly draw a line commencing at the point where the pin crosses the centre line and finishing at the left side mark and draw a similar chalk line on the right side. Tack along each chalk line (fig. 45).

Cut up from the bottom of the crown at centre front to within about ¼ in. of the pin marking the front of the headline and trim off any surplus material to within about 1 in. of the V-shaped tack line at the front. Before removing the crown from the block, mark the headline of the crown in chalk on the block to serve as a rough guide for shaping the brim.

Almost any of the usual millinery materials, such as stiff tarlatan, fine canvas, leno or sparterie may be used for the foundation of the toque brim. The beginner is advised to use a good sparterie—a French one if possible. Cut a strip about 3½ in. wide on the bias completely through the sparterie sheet. Damp this strip all over and stretch one edge of it as much as possible.

Having placed the crown block on a stand, wrap the strip around the block, turban fashion and stretched edge uppermost, matching the other edge roughly to the chalked headline so that the overlaps are at the front and are about the same length. Secure it in position with drawing pins at the front, back and left and right sides with the right side overlapping at the front (fig. 46). Do not stretch the sparterie around the block at the headline, and cover the chalk line to a depth of about ¼ in. all around to allow for trimming the edge at a later stage.

Mould the damp sparterie by gently stretching, between thumbs and forefingers of each hand, the centre of the strip at the left and right sides, to make it take a slightly bevelled

shape. The stretched outer edge should stand slightly away from the crown at the left and right sides but should actually lie against the back. The overlaps at the front should slope backwards but not so far backwards as to touch the crown. When the shape of the foundation is satisfactory, cut off the overlaps following the upper line of the brim.

Iron the brim shape to smooth out any irregularities, using a pad at the back for support, and cut the headline, following the chalked outline on the block. Mark the outline of the upper edge all around with a pencil, the width of the brim at the front measuring 2½ in. to 2¾ in. from the headline and decreasing to 2 in. or slightly less at the back. The actual width will depend on head size and personal taste and the directions given below for measuring the brim material should be modified accordingly.

To give the sparterie a perfect finish, both upper and lower edges should be bound with a narrow strip of tarlatan, single thickness, cut on the bias. This binding should be sewn on whilst the shape is pinned to the crown block to reduce the risk of stretching the edges.

Cut a strip 5½ in. wide completely through the bias of the material. This strip has to be draped, or "swathed" as it is called, completely around the outer brim. Commencing at the front, on the right overlap, fold the material into two or three pleats and pin each fold at the end. The entire width of the material may be used for the pleats with the exception of ½ in. for turnings at the mitred end and both edges of the sparterie foundation. Pin the pleats into position at the mitred end and continue swathing the material right round the brim shape, pinning the pleats to the sparterie at suitable intervals. The pleating of the material may be kept uniform throughout or it may be varied by introducing further small pleats, according to choice. Unpin the overlap at the front, continue the pleats underneath the cross-over, allow ½ in. over the end, cut off the remainder of the material and repin the overlap in place.

The pleats must now be lightly stitched into place. Working on one at a time around the entire brim, push the needle, threaded with Sylko to match, through from the back, turn the pleat back, pull the thread through, re-insert the needle almost at the same point at which it emerged, take it through

Fig. 46

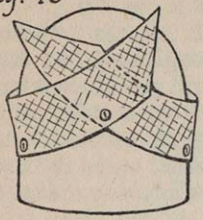

Fig. 46. Sparterie toque brim foundation pinned on crown block

Fig. 47

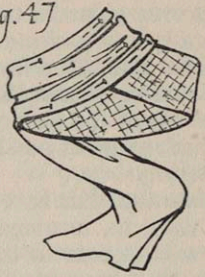

Fig. 47. Pleating the brim material over sparterie

Fig. 48

Fig. 48. The finished Toque

to the back again and re-insert it to make a 1 in. to $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. stitch at the back. Continue thus around the entire brim, turn the pleat down and repeat for the other pleats (fig. 47).

As the attraction of this hat depends on the swathing, endeavour to make the pleats look as though they had fallen naturally into position. Bad needlework will give them a hard, artificial line; therefore, to give the swathing a soft, natural appearance, handle them delicately, bring the stitches out at the point of the underneath part of the pleat, make the outer stitches as tiny as possible and refrain from drawing the thread too tightly.

When the folds have all been stitched and the pins removed, fold the $\frac{1}{2}$ in. turnings over each edge and tack them to the sparterie as near to the edges as possible. Trim the turnings down to $\frac{1}{4}$ in. and stitch the turned edges, picking up the minimum of sparterie with each stitch, to avoid the risk of the impression of the stitches showing on the right side.

For the facing of the inside brim, cut another strip, $3\frac{3}{4}$ in. wide, right through the bias of the material. Unpin and remove the brim shape from the block and, commencing at the right side front, fit this strip of material to the inside of the brim. Working on the upper edge, slightly stretch the material against the brim, leaving a $\frac{1}{2}$ in. turning over the edge, pin it all around at 2 in. intervals, inserting the pins vertically, and tack it to the edge of the sparterie. Fit the material flush to the headline across the width of the brim inside, and pin all round the headline in the same manner. Any fullness may be pulled away in the steam whilst fitting. Tack right round the headline.

Remove the tacking on the outer edge of the brim and fold in the turning flush to the brim edge, working on a few inches of the brim at a time. Pin the turned edge into position with pins inserted at right angles to the brim edge at 2 in. intervals. Slip-stitch the turned edge of the material to the brim edge with very small, neat stitches, and remove the pins whilst stitching. Repeat for the other edge of the material around the headline.

If this work has been well done, ironing will not be necessary. However, if the required degree of neatness does not seem to have been achieved, ironing with a slightly damped cloth around the edges will, if lightly done, help to camouflage any

inadequate needlework. Do not under-rate the difficulty of stitching the two edges together in such a way that the stitches do not show; if the student has not tried this little job before it would be as well to practise it first. In any case, steam the edges and pinch them between thumb and forefinger to finish off.

Place the silk crown on the crown block and lay the brim over the crown, matching the V shapes of brim and crown. The headline of the brim should not overlap that of the crown by more than ¼ in. Pin the brim to the crown around the base, and remove the hat from the block for the purpose of trying it on the head, so that its line can be studied and any necessary adjustments made.

Stitch brim and crown together, using the same stitch as that employed in stitching in a headband. Take care to keep the base of the crown ¼ in. inside the brim headline all around to avoid a double thickness of material. Stitch in a petersham ribbon headband in the centre of the ¼ in. space between brim and crown; this will cover the join just made.

If a silk headlining to cover the tarlatan foundation of the crown is required, this must be made in the form of a tip and sideband which are joined together (see chapter on "Pillbox" for details). A much easier job can be made of covering the tarlatan foundation if a soft pliable headlining silk or tulle is used. These two materials will allow the lining to be moulded on the crown block in one piece by the same method as that used for pulling down a tarlatan crown. Any headlining must be slip-stitched in the crown ⅛ in. inside the headline.

The hat is to be trimmed with a bow of one loop and one mitred end of the same material. Such a bow as this is inclined to droop without a foundation, and a tarlatan lining must therefore be incorporated. The size of the bow may be varied slightly according to taste, but in conformity with the design of the hat, the loop and the mitred end should not be smaller than 11 in. by 4 in. and 8 in. by 4 in. respectively.

Cut the tarlatan, on the bias, to the exact measurement given for both loop and mitred end. To form the actual shape of the mitred end, fold one corner to meet the other edge (as in folding a sparterie sheet) and remove the half square thus formed by cutting along the fold.

Lay the tarlatan for the loop on double material, with one long edge lying exactly on the edge of the fold, and cut along the other sides allowing ¼ in. margin on the other, long, side for turnings. Open the material, lay the tarlatan inside and tack it to the material through and along the folded edge. Turn in the other edge of the material. Tack the turnings in position and finish off by neatly slip-stitching the turned edge.

Lay the tarlatan for the mitred end on a single thickness of material and tack them together around the edge of the tarlatan. Cut the material, allowing ½ in. all around for turnings. Cut out a further piece of material to the exact size of the first, using, as a pattern, the work just prepared. Pin together all three thicknesses, tarlatan on top, and machine the edges together leaving open the small right-angled edge for turning the work to the right side. Use the tarlatan only as a guide and refrain from machining it to the material. Cut the turnings down to ¼ in. and turn the work to the right side. Make sure that the corners of the mitred end are sharply defined; if necessary, poke them out with the points of the scissors.

Remove the tacks from each piece and lightly press them, using a slightly damp cloth. Fold the loop in half, make two or three pleats through the double thickness of the material towards the folded edge and firmly stitch them in position. Make two or three similar pleats in the mitred end and secure them in the same way.

The fact that the loop and mitred end may be separately attached to the hat inside the front of the brim is an advantage, since their position may be varied according to taste. For example, where extra width is required, in order, perhaps, to detract from the wearer's height, they may be spread across the front by widening their angle and reducing the amount of overlap at the centre.

The hat should be tried on many times during this final stage. To make quite sure that the bow is just right, pin the loop and end in position, try on, re-pin if necessary, try on again and repeat until the correct positioning has been found. Stitch the bow to the inside of the brim; the needle may be taken right through to the front of the brim provided that the stitches are hidden under the pleats (fig. 48).