

## HOME-MILLINERY UP TO DATE.

LIKE all other things, the art of millinery, as practiced at home or abroad, has undergone a change, the greatest change of all, to my mind, being that the necessities of those persons of moderate means, and the chief requirements of the home-milliner are provided for in the most popular shops. In earlier days the possibility of making things at home was carefully ignored in the shops, and it was generally inculcated that an educated hand and trained eye were needful to bring the simplest hat or bonnet into existence, and the people who attempted to do things at home were much deterred and depressed by the scorn lavished on their efforts. The worst epithet was, I think, "home-made," and this remains even to-day the final apex of all horrible ideas. Within the last two years we have changed all this, and bonnets and their trimmings can be purchased either together or separately, and so can hats; and, wonder of wonders, the shop-assistants will take much trouble in making you understand exactly how the shape they are selling you should be trimmed, and what you must buy to make it look quite up to date. You can have it trimmed too, if you like, for a stated sum, and, altogether, your path is much easier than it would have been some years ago.

Having said thus much, and having tried to make you comprehend that certain conditions are changed for the better, I now want to explain that the requisites of the "up-to-date" milliner to-day consist not so much in skill as quickness of perception, a good memory, and a certain artistic sense, without which no one would ever be well-dressed, were they millionaires or paupers. The home-milliner is really born, though she may make herself if she be sufficiently clever in other ways; and we all know numbers of people who could never trim a bonnet, make a bow, nor put in a flower, if they tried their hardest. These people will generally be found lacking in all artistic tastes, though they are probably excellent and practical managers in other ways. A bonnet or hat must, in its way, be really a work of art, and have an individuality of its own. It must be made of the best and most expensive materials, and be of the latest and best fashion. I always think we should save much in money and trouble, if we bore in mind Shakespeare's admonition—

"Costly thy habit, as thy purse allows,"

and I want to impress it on your minds, especially in regard to millinery. In this, cheap things should have no place, for they are unprofitable, they soon look shabby, and do not wear half the time they should, to enable us to derive pleasure from our head-gear.

The work of the home-milliner is divided into two departments—the new and the old, and she must know how to make the best of both old and new materials. It is here that she will immediately realise the value of the good, as contrasted with the cheap and poor material. Velvet, especially, should be of the best that our means allow; and the same applies to satin, to ribbon, and to flowers.

The only way to avoid a home-made look is, I think, to try to educate your eye. This is only to be done, and ideas are only to be acquired, by seeing what models you can of the best kind, and from them you have to inform yourself on all the questions of "up-to-date" millinery.

The most important points to observe are—  
The general style of the new shapes.

With what description of materials they are trimmed;

And what is the general feature of the decoration (*i.e.*, feathers, or flowers).

Is it high or low? If high, how is the height obtained, by feathers, flowers, or bows?

What are the colours, or their combinations?

What are the styles to be avoided? and which are those adopted, or likely to be so, by really nice women? and which, amongst these, are the best and most adaptable to my own particular needs?

To myself personally, the last is often the most difficult question, and the only solution of it is to make your mind up, once and for ever, as to what style of bonnet or hat is really becoming to you. Then proceed to adapt the prevailing styles to it. The chief essential of either a hat or a bonnet is that it should be becoming to the wearer; and, while setting forth her manifest beauties, shall considerably veil her deficiencies. For instance, amongst very simple rules two may be given: first, that a person with a broad face must avoid narrow hats or bonnets, while the face that is thin and narrow will probably find her refuge in rather an excess of trimming, which should not be placed too high above the forehead, but much towards the side or the back.

Certain shapes are very generally becoming. The small princess, the close-fitting *toque*, and what has been known lately as the French sailor hat, which is in reality a sailor, with a brim made to turn over at the edge very slightly; all these are safe, and eminently becoming. They are suitable to both youth and middle age. The hat has a straight brim, which casts no shadow; and the line it produces on the head, if put on as it should be, absolutely straight above the brows, is a becoming one. It seems more so in either felt or straw, than in velvet. Indeed it will be found that hats with smooth surfaces are more generally becoming than those of rough ones, such as beaver, or velvet.

The wide-fronted bonnets of the last season, which are still worn, have proved unexpectedly becoming to many people with broad faces, though not to all; while they do not seem to have suited youthful ones. Wavy lines in the brim are not, I think, at all suitable to middle age, nor, indeed, to anyone over five and twenty. They need the rounded face of youth to match their airy outlines and generally coquettish look.

And now we have discussed the suitability of shapes, let me give a word of advice to all my readers; and this is, that they should not fail in paying a monthly visit to a good hair-dresser's, or if their purses do not allow of that much luxury, to go every three months; but, particularly at the beginning of a season, or when that educated eye, of which I have been talking, informs you of a change of style in hair-dressing. To-day, thanks mainly to the shillings spent at the hair-dresser's, our women and girls in England dress their hair more beautifully and in better taste than in any European country. Even a half-worn bonnet can be made to look new, if the hair beneath it be satin-smooth, and glossy, with good brushing and constant care in dressing it.

The authors of various articles on the subject of "home millinery," as a rule, profess to give rather too much instruction. There are many works on making drawn lace hats, or bonnets; wiring edges, making buckram, wire, and net shapes, and covering bonnets and hats. Now much of this is quite useless to a perfectly unpractised hand. It is rare indeed that a shape of some kind cannot be procured, and one only needs experience and an artistic eye to make something of them. When we are more advanced no doubt we shall aspire higher; but at present, even covering a shape had better be avoided. If you can find one in jet, fancy-straw, or felt, to suit you, do not discourage yourself by aspiring

to do too much. I have been a "home milliner" all my life, and I am fairly successful always. But I prefer adaptation to any kind of home-manufactured specimen, and I should not dream of making a shape, though I do adapt them to my needs; and I often find that, turning an old bonnet or hat, and making the front into the back, or the sides into back and front, will suffice to bring them entirely "up to date."

And now we will suppose that you live either in London, or in some large town, and that you decide that you want a new hat. The first thing will be to make-up your mind as to its style; either by a search through the columns of one of the leading fashion journals, if you live in the country, or by a walk down Regent Street, New Bond Street, Westbourne Grove, or High Street, Kensington, if you affect any of those localities. Do not gaze idly into the shop-windows, but having made up your mind as to the colour which will go best with your dresses, find the style of hat which will suit you; and go into one of the shops which sell shapes, as well as hats of all kinds; and try on the selected shape. If it be all your fancy painted it, buy it; and tell the saleswoman that you are going to purchase the trimming in the proper department, and have the hat taken there, wherever it is. We will say, for instance, that the pretty hats with double or treble *ruches* of two contrasting hues of silk have captivated you, for example, black and pale blue, with some black and blue wings, and some blue poppies made up of the silks—placed at the back where it slightly turns up over the hair. You will choose a black hat of felt, or even a black straw (if you like it), and you will need the black and blue silk, the centres for the poppies as well as the wings, or you will find in several of the shops the *ruches* and the rest of the trimmings all ready made to put on; and if you doubt your own ability, purchase these by all means. They cost very little more than the materials, and you will not be nervous over your unaccustomed task. If you decide to make the *ruches* yourself, you will need at least a yard and a half of each, the black and the blue, and you must study the method of making the *ruches* carefully, and of putting the silk on the poppy centres.

When your bonnet is fully prepared and trimmings planned you must think about your sewing equipment. Plenty of good pins, black and white, remembering that the effect of trimmings must always be ascertained before the final stitching. Indeed I have many home milliners in my mind who never stitch, unless the bow or trimming be a peculiarly heavy one. A pin or two always suffices. Steel pins are best for pinning velvet, as they make fewer marks. A sharp pair of scissors, and some long milliners' needles; some stout linen thread which is better than either cotton or silk to hold bows together, while it is so strong it does not need so many stitches. Fine black silk for sewing, and fine cotton, and if you are trimming in colour you must match it exactly with a sewing silk.

You will often, no doubt, have heard the expression that a bonnet "looks as if it is blown together," it is so light, so fittingly arranged, and so firm as well. Now the secret of this appearance lies in the quickness with which you act, and with which you make-up your bow or tie the final knots; do not handle any of your materials, and be sure to be speedy; and make your mind up on the instant. A bow pulled to pieces even once, will never look as fresh as one tied (as the doctors say of the healing process) "with the first intention." Velvet is very easily marked, and lace and net, *chiffon* and *tulle*, look limp

and shabby with too frequent handling. Try to learn the art of putting in very few stitches, as well as of making one stitch do the work of a great many. And in putting on all trimmings remember that they must be firm, even though the stitches be few.

The first thing to do with your hat is to put in the head lining. Now this is always made of what is called "saracenet." Half a yard, if cut on the cross, will make several head-linings. The width is measured from the head-line to the crown of the hat, allowing a quarter-inch hem at the upper side, into which you must run a very narrow China ribbon. Then join-up on the wrong side, and put the lining on the wrong side on the head-line, and tack it to the straw. Then turn up the lining, and when you have trimmed the hat, draw up the ribbon and tie it in a bow.

Lining the brim of a hat is generally an anxious problem to the "home milliner," and how to do it without wrinkles or drawing is really difficult, without previous practice. The velvet is, of course, piece-velvet and is bought on the straight. Lay the hat downwards upon it smoothly, and cut a round, following the line of the hat, but leaving a turning of about half an inch. Secure with a pin here and there, at the edge, and taking it up, put careful tacking-threads in it to hold it in its place. Cut a hole for the crown, leaving a turning also, and slash this downwards towards the brim, so that a faultless fit may be made when you have tacked and trimmed it. Now begin on the edge of the hat, and pin the lining firmly, while you turn up, and stitch (with invisible stitches) the velvet, or silk, round and round the wire which edges the brim.

Piece-velvet for making bows and ends, *rouleaux* and folds, is purchased on the cross. I think, perhaps, that next to putting in a head-lining, or the lining of a brim, the hemming of velvet is the most difficult thing to do. The needle must be very fine, and so must the cotton or silk, and the stitches must on no account be taken through to the right side; and, I think, if you be wise, you will practice first on some velvet that has been already in use. The easiest way is to turn the edge down once, and herring-bone the raw edge, taking one stitch through the velvet, and the other through the turned-down part. Do not hurry over your work, for it needs both patience and attention. When the velvet is hemmed, and you want to make it into bows, sew each loop firmly, and do not twist the material more than you can help, as the bow will be too thick. The ends are now generally made into "donkey ears," by turning the bias end of the velvet over to the straight side, and turning in the edges, very neatly, so that you may slip-stitch them together. The stitches must be invisible, of course. For making-up bows, and keeping them upright you can have the assistance of the millinery stiffeners, and wire ribbons, which have been introduced within the last year or so, and which you can obtain by asking at any fancy draper's. The advertisements in most of the leading fashion-papers are generally mines of valuable information, and you can find in them all kinds of new assistants in both millinery and dress-making at home. Just at present the rage seems to be for satin ribbon, and in making-up bows of ribbon, you will find that you must be a spendthrift, not a miser, in its use. A yard goes no distance where a bow is concerned; and a handsome hat-bow will probably take nearly three. A good milliner makes-up her bows without cutting the ribbon, or, indeed, without sewing at all, in order to keep it firm. She uses a long piece of coarse cotton, which she winds round the loops and bows, so as to keep them close and firm. But the present style of hat-bows, as well as those for bonnets, can be made without even this assistance, if you hold them firmly, and tie the final loop

over with a strong knot. A bow which barely hangs together is not to be tolerated, either in millinery or where the dress is concerned.

I must now deal with the subject of renovation, and this is where I should advise the "home-milliner" to begin her career, because here she can gain experience, and make no losses, and if she do spoil her first attempts, she need not worry herself with self-reproaches that she has wasted any portion of her small store. The first thing to be done with an old hat, or an old bonnet, is to pick them to pieces, and never to feel discouraged at the sight of them, however faded or depressed they may appear. Brush everything carefully, the hat included; and if it be of straw, look it over carefully, and make your mind up about the shape, and if it be of a sufficiently modern fashion to be worth retaining. Because all kinds of straw hats are now so cheap, that it is sometimes wiser to get a new hat for the old trimming if it be good, than to feel vexed if we look less well than our neighbours. If you make up your mind to retain the hat, and it be a black one, you will find almost any of the shoe glosses, or polishes, or even, I am told, "Berlin black" will freshen it up, and give it all the appearance of youth. If it require new wire at the edge, try to put it on exactly like the old one. You can purchase the covered wire for millinery at any of the fancy draper's.

With a white straw hat, I always feel that I have heavy odds against me. But there is nothing like trying, and if it be very dirty, give it a good washing with warm soap and water, and brush with a nail-brush till quite clean. But before you commence this, you must take off the wire at the edge of course. Dry it after its bath, and see how it looks, and if it need stiffening, make a thin solution of gum arabic and water, and wash it over. Then dry it, and put on the wire at the edge again, and bend it into shape, to suit the most recent ideas.

Now, please, bear in mind that while I wish to show you how to make the best of your old trimming, I must warn you that faded and rusty feathers, or feather trimming, dirty flowers, and dirty ribbons must not be considered fit for use. Feathers can, it is true, be freshened-up and recurred by the aid of a pen-knife and a little patience; but if in the least rusty or faded, they must be sent off to be re-dyed, and feather trimming *ruches*, unless they can be freshened by the dyer, must not be used at all. Last year's ribbons may usually be refreshed sufficiently so, by dipping them in weak ammonia and water, and pressing, while damp, between the leaves of some blotting paper; or they may, while wet, be plastered on the back of any door, which presents a clean enough surface; if you press and plaster them down well, while wet, they will stick on till dry, and come off quite as smooth and far stiffer than if they were ironed. This is especially the case with satin ribbons. Old velvet can be restored to new beauty with a little fresh butter, or, still better, a piece or two of bacon rind, which you use by passing it very tightly over the surface of the velvet. You will be surprised to see how beautifully the shabby black velvet will be restored to brightness by a little of this treatment.

The following detailed recipe I quote from a well-known source:—

"To clean, freshen, and do up plush and velveteen trimmings. According to their condition the above should be well dipped successively in either two or three baths of benzine, weakened by adding a little water. After this they should be dried thoroughly, but not too quickly, and the pile must be brushed quickly the right way. Before you attempt brushing the pile, however, you must prepare the fabric to bear that treatment. This is done as follows:—Make a strong

solution of gum arabic in warm water, and when you take the velveteen or plush out of the last benzine bath and have dried it, brush the back all over with gum solution. This will prevent the pile from being pulled out by the brush, and will also stiffen and restore substance to the fabric. As soon as the gum is dry turn the plush, etc., upon the right side, and brush it with judgment *smartly* so as to make it stand upright in the proper direction. Unless you apply the gum water you cannot brush it without pulling out the pile and ruining the whole. You must be careful to observe the right direction for the pile to lie in. These directions are particularly useful for the renovation of the cheap half-cotton plushes and velveteens or even velvet pile and velvet."

Another method, which may be tried to advantage when the velvet or velveteen is very greasy, is to heat some sand very hot—the ordinary white house-sand will answer—and sprinkle it over the soiled surface, rubbing it lightly in with a brush. You will be surprised what a difference you will make in the material, and how much it will be improved.

Now that *ruches* are so much worn, it will, perhaps, be well to give a few instructions on the subject of making them. They are generally made in treble box-pleats, that is three pleats one on the other, a set facing each way, then they are held with a firm stitch or two in the centre. A *ruche* for the neck, if of a thick material like satin-ribbon, will need at least three and three-quarter yards of material in length to make a full *ruche*. Chiffon is doubled three or even four times, and it is thus more of an economy to buy the chiffon in the piece, double-width; one yard of this will make a *ruche*. You will not wonder that the made-up *ruches* are expensive, when you know how much material they take to make them, and also that it requires a somewhat skilled hand to make them up.

There are some very bad faults in bonnets and hats, and of these I must mention two or three. The first is to put on too much trimming, especially if you are a small person, because it gives you a top-heavy appearance. An almost worse error is to stint the decorations, and try to make two roses or half-a-dozen violets do the work of two dozen, or one yard of narrow ribbon do the work of a yard and a half of wide. Fancy-headed pins, brooches, and buckles are, all of them, great helps to the home-milliner, and relieve a bonnet or hat of the home-made look. Hats should be tried on before purchasing, to see that they fit comfortably, not on the head, but on the usual style of *hair-dressing* which you adopt. The same is the case with bonnets, and here care should be taken to avoid buying one too long in the head—I mean from front to back. This is a very bad fault, and it is the cause of the bonnets lifting up in the front when the strings are tied, which you cannot cure, unless you pull the whole bonnet to pieces. The only way to avoid it is to take out the head-lining partially, and try to get at the wire foundation; sometimes you can put a tuck in that to alter the fault.

And, after all, the advice to a home-milliner may be summed up in a very few words, and it is: Be observant of all changes in style, and make up your mind finally what suits your own the best, and keep to that. There is one exception to this, a change in the dressing of the hair, which may necessitate a smaller or a larger bonnet. The veil and its proper putting on, are also of importance, and fashions in veils change a little with every few months, and it is just that little which may spoil the effect of a pretty bonnet or hat. But beware of adopting ugly or remarkable styles in veils; indeed in everything you will find yourself a better-dressed woman, if you keep to a quiet, lady-like, and unobtrusive fashion.

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