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All is Not Silk That Rustles

Hazel B. McKibben

Iowa State College

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A CHALLENGE to all the communities of the United States which are interested in the problem of better homes for their citizens has just been issued by Better Homes in America, recently incorporated as a national educational institution, with Herbert Hoover, secretary of commerce, as president, and James Ford as executive director. The new headquarters are at 1653 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D. C.


"Why Have a Better Homes Demonstration in Your Home Town?" asks the guide-book, and answers its own question as follows:

1. To demonstrate the advantages of thrift for home ownership. (Only 45 per cent of the families of America are home owners.)
2. To overcome the present shortage of homes—America needs at least 600,000 new homes a year.
3. To make a sweet and wholesome home life available to all.
4. To assist and encourage home makers and home builders. (Over 90 per cent of the women of America do their own home work.)
5. To improve the home environment, thereby helping to build character.
6. To increase the efficiency of the wage-earner of the house.
7. To stimulate sensible and appropriate purchasing for home improvement.
8. To mobilize community pride for a common objective—Pride of Home.

Approximately 1000 Better Homes demonstrations took place last year, when the movement was in charge of Mrs. William Brown Meloney, editor of the Delineator. Its reorganization as a national educational institution will greatly increase its scope of its activities. Participation in the Better Homes movement, and participation in the demonstrations under community direction are urged upon the American people by President Coolidge, who heads the advisory council of Better Homes in America.

"The American Home is the foundation of our national and individual well being," says President Coolidge. "Its steady improvement is, at the same time, a test of our civilization and of our movement provides a channel through which men and women in each community can encourage the building, ornamenting, and owning of private homes by the people at large. We need attractive worthy, permanent homes that lighten the burden of housekeeping. We need homes in which home life can reach its finest levels, and in which can be reared happy children and upright citizens."

"I commend participation in Better Homes demonstrations and in the other work of the movement to the American people."

There is a special challenge to students in the fact that the first prize for a better home last year was awarded to Port Huron, Mich., where the home in question was financed, completely furnished and demonstrated entirely by a group of students in the high school. Their work so impressed the community spirit that practically the entire city fell into line before the week was over. More than 8000 persons visited their house for the purpose of learning the better homes wisdom it offered in its equipment and furnishing.

On the last day of the demonstration it was sold at public auction for $300 more than it had cost to erect and furnish.

All is Not Silk That Rustles

By HAZEL B. MCKIBBEN

YOU'VE heard the remark that things are not what they seem! Consider silk! To how many mixtures is the word "silk" applied? For instance, silk-like, all-cotton, near silk is half cotton, artificial silk is cellulose put through a special chemical process. Because of the misleading names of these materials every woman should know some simple test by which she can tell whether or not her silk is pure or mixed, or not silk at all.

For years crepe-de-chine and other crepes have been considered pure, but within the last few seasons it has been found that there is an abundance of loaded crepe on the market. That is, it has been added to increase the weight. Even though the material is very beautiful and is priced at $6.50 per yard, it may be loaded as well as many of the cheaper pieces. Rather than be too enthusiastic about its appearance, be a bit dubious and ask your sales woman for a sample to test.

Metallic loading is very disastrous to the material if used to too great an extent. But perhaps you wonder why manufacturers ever started to weight silk and why they still keep it up. When the silk comes to the manufacturer, it is in a state called raw silk. That is, the fibers are as they have been reeled from the cocoon. The silk worm excretes a gum or glue called sericin, which holds the silk fibers together as they come from the silk worm's mouth parts.

Before it can be made into most types of material the sericin must be boiled off in order to make the fiber soft. Figure 1 shows the raw silk fibers under a high power microscope. You will notice that the two fibers are held together by large scales of the gum. In the boiling off process, about one fourth of the weight of the original raw silk is lost, due to the sericin dissolving off of the fibrin. This washed silk, as it is called, is shown in figure 2. Notice that there is now no wax on the fibers. Since about 25 per cent of the weight is lost the manufacturers resorted to the use of metallic salts to replace the lost weight. However, they were not content with the 25 per cent, but found they could add as much as 400 per cent. If they stopped with just the replacement, no harm would ever be done to the fiber. When the higher percentages of metallic salts are added, the value of the material to the manufacturer is increased but the value to the consumer is decreased for it results in cheap silks that do not wear well and soon split and crack under their own weight. Also, perspiration unites with the metallic salts causing the material to fall apart. Heavy old silks which are now heirlooms are better than most of the pieces purchased at present, for their weight is the natural weight of the silk and not due to metallic loading.

As stated above, every woman should know a simple test which will show her what the material is and whether or not it is weighted or loaded. The burning test is usually sufficient. The only equipment necessary is the sample and a box of matches. Ravel the sample so that there is a fringe both ways. Apply a lighted match to the threads and if they appear to melt down into tufted heads or beads, the silk is pure; if however the fringe does not burn but looks like tiny red hot wires—the fabric is weighted. What one sees there is not silk at all, but really red hot metal the silk has been burned away. Always be sure to test the threads both ways for the material may be loaded one way and not the other.

If instead of forming the beads, the metallic loading melts and a smell like burning paper, the sample is artificial silk or cotton. Artificial silk is quite easily recognized because of its very lustre. If the material does not form heads or burn with a quick flash, but still burns with a slower flame, it is cotton. Combinations are often found in this testing such as silk one way and cotton the other, artificial silk one way and cotton the other.
and cotton the other or it may be a combination of silk and artificial silk.

Sometimes we prefer half silk materials for linings, etc., because it is cheaper and still wears well enough for the purpose. We may really want artificial silk for it does have a very high sheen and is made into very beautiful novelty materials. What the woman who is buying her spring or summer silk wants to know is: “Am I paying a pure silk price for pure silk? Am I paying a pure silk price for adulterated silk which will not wear? And another price for silks which are not worth the money?”

Spotting of silk causes a great deal of trouble also. Do you remember the time you washed your first pongee dress, sprinkled it as any other garment and tried to iron it? It came out with an exclusive design all of it own, much to your dismay. The spots stared at you from every part of the dress. What did you do? Take it to your cleaner or re-launder it yourself? Such spots can easily be removed by washing the dress again and ironing dry. These spots were formed by the hot iron unevenly melting the sericin which is not removed from the yarns in the process.

Then we have a different kind of spotting in the crepes and messalines, this is water spotting. It is not from excess sericin, but from the dressings which the manufacturers put into their materials. A drop of water or perspiration shows up very clearly and unless we test for water spotting before purchasing, we will be faced with the problem of what to do with our perfectly new gown which is all spotty. Can we take care of it ourselves or shall we send it to the cleaner? The safest plan is to test our sample before buying and refusing to buy a silk which spots. If we buy a ready-to-wear why can’t we test the seams by applying a few drops of water. If the sales woman does not permit this, then go to a more reliable place where the buyers know their merchandise and are not afraid to permit any investigation.

These are simple tests which any woman can make and in so doing assure herself of a better wearing quality of silk, one which is not adulterated, one which will not spot and which will give her the service she demands for her money. Just remember—all is not silk that rustles.

**Make Your Own Bias Tape**

By HELEN M. GREEN

**DO YOU** know how to make bias tape of the contrasting material with which you expect to trim your summer bungalow aprons and the children’s school dresses?

We all know that the use of bias tape is an inexpensive and at the same time a neat way for finishing edges or decorating our clothing. It has a great advantage over a straight narrow piece of material for it will stretch and fit smoothly on curved edges of garments. A method commonly used is to take a square piece of material and with a yard stick draw a line from corner to corner. If the bias strip is to be one inch wide the yard stick is moved back one inch and another line is drawn parallel to the first one. This process is continued until the corner of the square of material is reached. It is then cut in strips on the lines which have been drawn. There are disadvantages in making bias strips by this method. It takes a great deal of time to measure accurately and after the strips are cut they are in many different widths. Much time is required to sew these strips together.

There is another simpler method of making bias strips which saves much time. A perfect square of material is cut diagonally twice which gives us four triangular pieces, Fig. 1. Two of the outside edges which we call the thread of the material are placed together in the form of a square. Join the triangular pieces to form one of the squares so that one edge extends one inch beyond, if the bias strips are to be cut out an inch wide, Fig. 2. The other two pieces should be put together to form a perfect square, Fig. 3. These two squares are then joined to form a tube.

A many store which sells sewing machines and supplies purchase a bias tape gage for twenty or twenty-five cents. Slip this gage on the tip of one of the blades of a sharp pair of shears. The gage can be adjusted for different widths depending upon the width we wish to make our bias tape. The advantages of using this bias tape gage on the shears are that it holds the edge of the bias material in place and it is possible to cut the strip at exactly the same width without measuring it. Start to cut around the tube at the projection (A) and proceed until the end of the bias tape has been cut into one long strip.

The next step is to make the strips appear the same as the tape we purchase. On a firm piece of material about twelve inches by twenty-four inches, draw two parallel lines three-quarters of an inch apart. Then make a “cat stitch” or “catch-stitch,” Fig. 5, on these lines across the material, making sure that the end of the thread is firmly fastened. This line of stitches acts as a guide to fold the edges of the bias tape. Guides of catch stitching may be made of different widths, for example, 3/8 in., 1/4 in., 1/2 in., 3/8 in., and 1/4 in.

With the aid of a ribbon leader draw the bias strip under the guide of cat stitching, making sure that the two edges are turned toward the center. One inch strips are used for bias tape which is one-half inch wide when finished. Press the tape with a hot iron while it is under the guide of cat stitching. When the desired amount of tape has been made, always leave a piece of tape in the guide and next time one wishes to make bias tape the strips are fastened together and quickly drawn through to save time in getting started.

A person who has never made bias tape in this manner will be surprised at the amount of tape one can get from a yard of material. A six yard bolt of half inch bias tape will cost twelve cents at the dry goods store. One yard of the same material costs thirty-five cents and will make thirty-four and one-third yards of bias tape, thus saving six cents a bolt.

There is another advantage in making bias tape in that it might be made of any color and any quality of material one might desire. Sometimes it is impossible to buy bias tape in the color one desires and one is able to purchase a piece of material of the correct color.

Colored bias tape may be used as a decoration on collars and cuffs, house dresses, aprons, and the next time one wishes to make bias tape will cost twelve cents at the dry goods store. One yard of the same material costs thirty-five cents and will make thirty-four and one-third yards of bias tape, thus saving six cents a bolt.

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