

No. 30 straw the braid is coarse and wide, and weighs two pounds and a half. It takes, however, a whole month to plait a single bonnet from such straw. With Nos. 120 to 180 it takes about one pound and a half of straw to a braid. With extra straw (No. 180) the braids are not more than 0.039 of an inch in width, and it takes six months' labor to make a sufficiency for a single bonnet for a lady.

The braids are cleaned, exposed to the sun for a short time, and then sent to the manufacturer to be sewn into shape. This last operation is performed with the very greatest care, the stitches being nearly invisible and yet strong, and not liable to unravel during the pressure to which the hats are often subjected after being sized.

The hats are "ungreased," and any bumps or protuberances on their surface are effaced by rubbing one portion of the tissue against another, or by means of friction with a dog-skin glove.

**Straw-carri-er.** 1. An endless apron in a thrashing-machine to lift the straw as it comes from the cylinder, and discharge it at the tail of the machine. The carrier being of open work, the grain and chaff are sifted out on the way. See THRASHING-MACHINE.

2. A straw-elevator at the end of the thrasher to lift the straw on to the rack.

### Straw-braid.

Rye-straw is commonly used for braid in this country. It should be cut when the grain is in the milk, tied up in small bundles, the heads cut off, and the straw dipped in boiling water. It is then dried in the sun, being taken in at night to avoid exposure to dew. For hats the whole straw is used. For bonnets it is split, and the part under the husk removed. The tool used for splitting straw is a piece of wood five inches long, having a series of sharp spurs near the end, and a wooden or metal spring at one side to press down the straws as they are drawn through. The straw is wetted previous to braiding to make it pliable.

A nicer method of splitting, practiced in Europe, is by means of a wire having four, six, or eight sharp edges, which is pushed up the hollow of the straw, dividing it into an equal number of parts. The varieties of braid are very numerous, depending on the size and kind of straw, whether split or whole, and the patterns formed by the different methods of interweaving.

The Leghorn, or Italian straw-braid is made from a variety of wheat cultivated for this purpose. The straw is harvested in the mountainous regions of Prato, Empoli, etc., where the vegetation is poor and stunted, the soil being light and sandy.

The fields are worked and weeded by hand. 14 bushels of seed are usually sown to the acre; two bushels being "broadcast" at each time, and each sowing made at a different angle to the first. The effect of this is to produce a very close, compact growth, and only one elongated stem rises from each seed sown.

The straw is harvested while green, and before the ear is fully developed. It is gathered into small sheaves, weighing about half a pound each, which are at first placed upright in the field to dry, one acre bearing about three thousand of them. Next day these bundles of straw are spread out over rocks and pebbles in the dry bed of water-courses, where they are submitted to the action of sun and dew. At night they are covered up to protect them from rain. The straw is then bleached by means of sulphuric-acid gas.

The ear is next taken below the first joint, the lower useless portion separated, and the straw cut into lengths of four inches. Each blade of straw usually furnishes three such lengths. It is then bleached again.

At this point the straws are sorted according to their various sizes, — an operation performed by women who acquire, through long habit, a most remarkable tact in distinguishing the smallest variation in diameters, as may be inferred from the fact that in front of each operator are placed goblets numbered from 30 to 180, each of which is the receptacle for a special size of straw.

The braids are plaited with from 11 to 13 straws each. Their length is from 300 to 320 feet, their width and the quantity of straw entering into them varying according to quality. With