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Renovating Silk Hats.

THE art of renovating men's silk hats, or "Beaver hats" as they are often erroneously termed, is now so extensively practiced by hatters that a brief description of the manner in which it is done may not be altogether uninteresting. Many people think an old silk hat worthless after it has become badly soiled and crushed, or has done service for a year or two,

or quality. To such perfection has this branch of industry arrived that often the most skilled hatters can not distinguish a revamped hat from a new one.

A silk dress hat consists of three parts—the body, the cover, and the trimmings. The body is made of short fur finely woven together, and shrunk to a proper size by means of hot water. It is then placed in a strong solution of alcohol and shellac taken out, and drawn over a hat-block to give it a proximate shape, and thoroughly dried. The shellac having hardened, the body becomes very stiff. By means of a hat-block and a hot hatter's iron, it is then properly shaped, receives a coat of hatter's varnish, and is ready for the cover. Silk plush is the material for the covering, varying very much in price and quality, and is for the most part imported from France. Three pieces of silk plush constitute the cover: these are the "tip," a circular piece that covers the top or crown of the hat; the "side crown," cut to go around the sides; and the piece which covers the upper portion of the brim. The "tip" and "side crown" are sewed together with fine sewing-silk. Having fitted the cover, the finisher proceeds to attach it to the body. This is done by putting a proper sized hat-block in the hat body, drawing on the cover, and applying a hot iron to all its outer parts. The heat of the iron melts the varnish, which, being of a sticky, tenacious nature, adheres to the cover and holds it firmly to the body, the varnish becoming hard again after the hot iron is removed. After the plush for the brim has been put on in the same manner, and the hat rendered perfectly smooth by being ironed several times over, it is considered "finished," and passes into the hands of the trimmer. The trimmer sews in the inside lining, puts on the band and binding, and returns it to the hatter, who gives the brim the required "curl," and smooths it over with a hot iron. The hat is now ready for the sale-room. So much is required for describing in brief the process of making a new silk hat, and is necessary for a proper understanding of the subject.

Renovating does not require as much labor, although the process is similar. When a silk hat is received to be "done over," or renovated, the lining, banding, and binding are first taken off. Then the silk plush is removed from the body, or the hat is "skinned," as hatters say. Great care is necessary in this operation, in order to prevent tearing the cover; for should such an accident occur, it would be a serious blemish, if not spoil the entire job. In order to guard against such a misfortune, a hot iron is generally applied to the hat. This softens the varnish, and the cover peels off like the skin of an orange. After

That is not so. However, it matters not how badly soiled and out of shape a hat may be, or how long it may have been used; placed in the hands of an expert silk hatter, it can be made in a short time and at small cost to look quite as good as new. And, moreover, such a renovated hat will frequently wear longer and give better satisfaction than a new hat of inferi-

the plush has been thoroughly brushed, so as to remove all dust, a mixture is made consisting of hot water, an extract of logwood, chrome potash, and spirits of ammonia. The plush is put into this liquid, and allowed to remain there for half an hour, over a slow fire. It is then taken out, well rinsed in clean cold water, and hung up to dry. By this means, the silk plush is thoroughly cleansed and redyed. Persons unacquainted with the subject would be surprised at the brilliant gloss this simple process gives to soiled or faded silk plush. Having dampened the cover, and, with the aid of a "penetrating brush" and hot iron, removed all wrinkles, thereby rendering it perfectly smooth, the hatter turns his attention to the body. Being already shaped, or nearly so, a suitable block is inserted, and by the application of a little shellac, gum damar, and a hot iron, the hat is speedily brought to the required stiffness and form. The cover is then put on, and the hat is "trimmed" and "curled" as before described. New trimmings are invariably necessary in order to give the hat the appearance of being new; and as their cost is trivial it is always preferable to have them. There is a method of so-called renovating practiced by dishonest hatters that requires little or no labor. This method is as follows: The inside trimmings of the hat are cut out, a block is inserted, and after the iron has been passed over it a few times it is sent to the trimmer and finished up as a new hat. The writer knows of an instance where a guest at one of our New York hotels sent one of the waiters to buy him a new black silk dress hat. He gave the messenger an old hat to take with him, in order that there might be no mistake made as regards the size, and at the same time telling him he might sell the old hat after he had purchased the new one, and keep the money for his trouble. He took the hat to a friend of his, a hatter, who ironed it up, gave the brim a different "curl," put on new trimmings, and returned it to the waiter. In one hour after the guest had given the order, he was admiring his supposed new hat in a looking-glass, and the messenger was "down-stairs" exulting over the three dollars made in the transaction.

There are perhaps hardly more than a dozen wholesale hat houses in the city that do not keep renovated silk hats for sale as new. This species of goods are known in the trade as second quality dress hats, and are mostly shipped to the country. Often, no doubt, many an innocent countryman is priding himself on his beautiful new hat, when if he could learn its history, it would reveal the fact that it had done good service on other heads before. By no means is the city free from them, there being few retail stores in which they are not kept for sale. The men who manufacture these hats are called by those in the hat trade "skimmers." The only guide inexperienced persons can have who really desire to purchase new dress hats, and at the same time to avoid being peculiarly skinned by the "skimmers," is to pay particular regard to the price of the hat they wish to buy. If a silk dress hat is offered for sale at five dollars, or less, the person desiring to purchase may reasonably conclude that it is nothing but an old hat done over.