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EC462 Repair of Clothing and Household Linens

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REPAIR OF CLOTHING and Household LINENS

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Repair of Clothing and Household Linens

HELEN ROCKE [1]

REPAIR and mending of clothing are parts of the routine of every household and are activities which pay dividends in good appearance, self-assurance, fewer replacements, and greater economy in clothing expenditures. Items in the repair of clothing may range all the way from sewing on a button to mending a hole or a tear in a best dress or suit. Methods and devices vary with different problems and materials but the old, old practice of mending each rent or hole soon after the damage is done, and using patches or darning to fill them still holds as a fundamental principle. It is the purpose of this circular to give information on satisfactory mending practices.

FOUNDATIONS FOR GOOD MENDING

A convenient place to work, good light, a comfortable chair and necessary equipment all help to make mending easier and more satisfactory. Essential items are:

Needles of various sizes including some very fine ones and a blunt one, darning cotton, cotton, silk, and mercerized thread in colors most frequently used.
Hooks and eyes, snap fasteners, buttons.
Crochet hook and thread.
Embroidery hoops for sewing machine darning.
A box of neatly pressed scraps of material to match children's garments and work clothes, pieces of colored net or other sheer material, odds and ends of embroidery floss in different colors.
Pins, scissors, emery, razor blade.

PREVENTIVE PRACTICES

Many times it is possible to offset a difficult mending situation by taking note of places which are beginning to show wear and making small repairs before material is torn or serious damage done. Ripped seams, broken stitches, dangling buttons, weak buttonholes, and spots which have worn thin are common examples of such instances. Sometimes ready-made garments are poorly stitched and seams break at a point of strain as in the armscye. When a few stitches break it may save time to restitch the armscye seams entirely.

It pays to sew buttons on all garments securely and to reinforce material under those subject to strain. Reinforcement may be an extra thickness of material, a strip of tape stitched underneath the line of buttons, or small buttons sewed underneath as in the case of heavy coats. Buttons which have a shank of thread are much easier to fasten and will wear longer than if sewed otherwise. Use heavy thread for heavy buttons

[1] Acknowledgment is given Miss G. Carolyn Ruby, Assistant Professor of Clothing, University of Nebraska, for criticism of the manuscript of this circular.

and conceal the fastening of the thread under the button. Place a pin over the top of the button and sew over the pin as many times as is necessary to hold the button securely. Remove the pin and pull on the button to separate it from the material. Bring the needle out between the button and material and wind the thread around the stitches to form a shank for the button (Fig. 1).

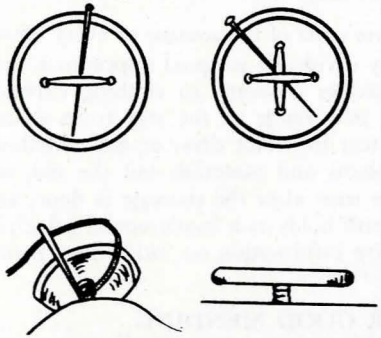

FIG. 1.—Use of pin to form a shank of thread.

Sew all snaps and hooks and eyes securely. Tack across the ends of the hooks and sides of the eyes to hold them firmly in place. Hooks, and the ball side of the snap, are usually placed on the under side of the upper edge of the closing (Fig. 2). Snaps may also need reinforcement underneath if sewed on a single thickness of material.

A device to keep shoulder straps from slipping prevents annoyance and often tearing a strap or the garment to which it is attached. There are metal slides which may be sewed to the shoulder seam of a dress. Straps slipped under these are held securely. A small strap with a snap fastener to hook around the straps may be sewed to the shoulder seam of the dress.

If there is a tendency for a dress to pull across the shoulders a reinforcement of a piece of thin material slightly narrower than the width of the dress across the back, may be stitched in the back armscye seam of the dress. This will relieve the strain on the material of the dress and may prevent pulled or torn seams.

Worn elbows in tight sleeves may be protected by basting inside the sleeve a strip of material about three inches in width and slightly shorter than the width of the sleeve. The strain is in this way placed on the new material instead of the sleeve.

Many times stockings may be reinforced from the wrong side to prevent a hole from being formed. Use fine thread and a fine needle and work from the wrong side making only tiny stitches on the right side.

A metal eye (from a hook and eye card) may be sewed on the wrong side at the point of plackets to prevent tearing when subject to strain or pull.

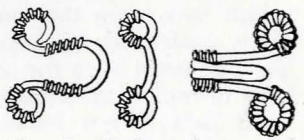

FIG. 2.—Hooks and eyes made secure by thread at ends and sides.

SEWING MACHINE DARNING

Sewing machine darning is easily and quickly done and is satisfactory for mending small holes and worn places in household linens and underwear. It may be done on almost any machine which is in good working

condition. The machine is threaded in the regular way. Care must be taken so that the needle and thread are in proportion to the material being mended. The material to be mended is placed in embroidery hoops and must be stretched tightly in order to be held firm. Remove the presser foot and slip the hoops containing the mending in place under the needle so that the material lies flat on the bed of the machine. Lower the presser foot bar and take a few stitches. After the threads are caught, cut away the loose ends and begin darning back and forth across the hole, and keep the rows of stitching straight with the threads of the material. It requires a little practice to learn to regulate the movement of the material to correspond to the rate at which it ordinarily moves under the needle.

HAND DARNING

Darning is a satisfactory method of repairing many kinds of injuries to fabrics. It is an old, old practice and a skill in which one may justly take pride. The secret of successful darning is the use of thread as nearly like the material in texture and color as possible, a fine needle, inconspicuous stitches evenly made, which follow the thread of the material. Also keep all stitches on the right side going in the same direction. When turning to make the next row of darning, take a short stitch on the wrong side to bring the needle out on the right side in position for the next row of darning stitches. Ravelings of material, fine cotton thread, silk thread, and hair may be used. If using thread, choose a shade darker in color than the material. Silk thread is sometimes untwisted and a single strand used. These threads are soft and inconspicuous, and may be used on material made of different fibers. Human hair may be used as thread in mending lace and other fine materials. Such a darn is quite strong and scarcely noticeable if well done. It is possible to buy skeins of mixed colors of light-weight yarn. These are convenient for such materials as tweed and wool, which are difficult to ravel. The warp threads of material are usually the stronger and are best to use for darning.

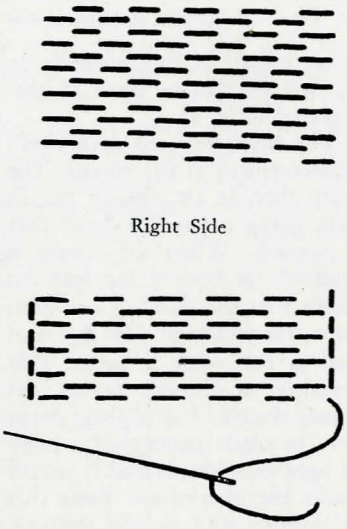

FIG. 3.—Hand darning showing method of turning.

KINDS OF TEARS

In general there are three kinds of tears to be mended, the straight, the diagonal or bias, and the three-cornered tear. The choice of thread for mending depends upon the kind of material in the piece to be mended. The straight tear is easiest to darn. If a tear is large or badly frayed, it is necessary to put a piece of thin material under the darn to

reinforce it. Begin some distance above the tear and make small running stitches back and forth across the hole. Do not use a knot in the thread and do not draw the thread too tightly. In order to weave in the broken yarn along the edge of the tear, have the needle go alternately over and under the edges of the tear. Darning may be done from either the right or wrong side.

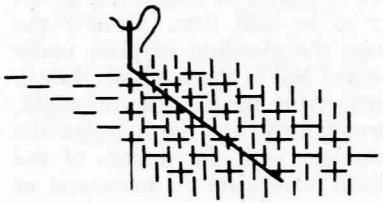

FIG. 4.— Darning a diagonal tear.

Diagonal tear.—When mending a diagonal tear it may be necessary to replace both crosswise and lengthwise threads of the material. In this case the lengthwise threads are put in first parallel to those of the garment; then the crosswise threads are replaced (Fig. 4).

The three-cornered darn needs reinforcement at the corner. The warp threads are usually put in first, going across the depth that is needed. When the corner is reached, go beyond the tear the depth that the darning has been done, then change direction and put in the woof threads. This crossing of threads makes the corner double. Any of these darns may be made stronger if a piece of light weight material is placed under the torn place. Baste this in position and do the darning from the right side (Fig. 5).

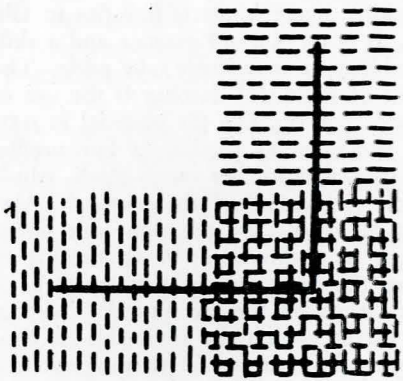

FIG. 5.—Three-cornered darn showing reenforcement at corner.

The darned-in patch is sometimes used on wool garments where the hole is too large to be filled with threads of the material. The edges of the hole are cut square or rectangular in shape and a piece of material like the garment is cut to fit it exactly. Then the patch is darned into place with ravelings, hair, or fine thread. Sometimes a thin piece of material may be laid under the patch and caught with the darning stitches. This serves to make mending stronger (Fig. 6).

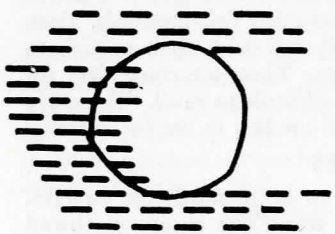

FIG. 6.—Darned-in patch.

MENDING STOCKINGS

Stocking mending is perhaps the most common mending problem. Sometimes it is possible to delay the formation of holes in the foot of the stocking if thin places are reinforced with tiny darning stitches before the threads break. Correct size of hose and well fitting shoes

with unbroken linings help to reduce the amount of mending necessary. When holes appear, select thread to match the stocking in color and texture.

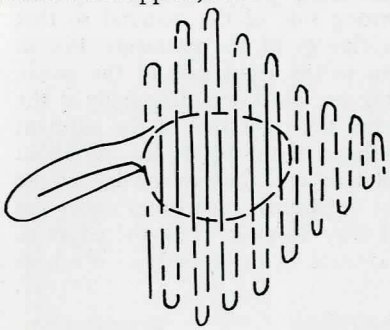

FIG. 7.—Placing lengthwise threads in darning a stocking.

If fine thread is used for filling a large hole, a smoother darn may be made by threading two single threads in the needle than by using one thread doubled in the needle. The darning is begun far enough back from the edge of the hole to reinforce the edges and the lengthwise threads are placed first (Fig. 7). Each row of stitches is made a little longer than the last until the center of the hole is reached; then they are decreased in length. This makes an irregular shape around the edge and prevents strain on any one set of threads. Watch carefully that the threads are not drawn too tightly or the darn will pucker. It will be more elastic if a small loop is left when turning at the end of each row of stitches. The threads are woven alternately over and under the edges of the hole. After the lengthwise threads are placed the crosswise threads are woven in the same way (Fig. 8).

PATCHING

Patching is used in repairing clothing and household linens where there are large holes or worn places. A piece of material like the garment is inserted to take the place of the worn part. The first effort made is to match the material if possible; then in cutting the patch match the figures and the warp and woof threads of the material. When using new material on a sun faded or wash garment, one may wish to fade the material for the patch by exposing it to the sun or by several washings. The kind of patch used depends upon the kind of material, the location of the damaged part, the amount of strain upon the patched place and the amount of time one is justified in spending on the article. The hemmed and overhand patch are the two commonly used.

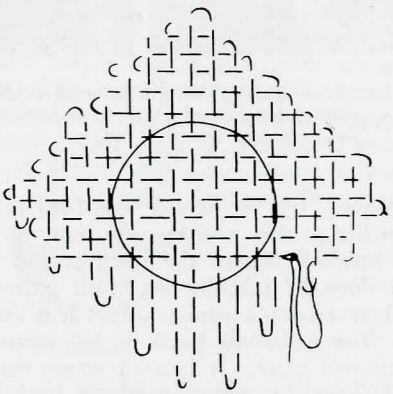

FIG. 8.—Completing the darn.

The hemmed patch is perhaps the most useful and substantial patch because it is neat and strong, has no raw edges and will stand much laundering. It is especially suitable for work garments, underclothing, and household articles.

The patch is usually square or rectangular and must be large enough to cover the hole and the worn parts around it plus one-fourth inch for a seam. The patch is placed on the wrong side of the material so that it exactly matches the threads and the figures of the garment. Pin in position, then crease a quarter-inch turn to the right side of the patch, turning the corners carefully and clipping one thickness diagonally if the material is heavy. Baste to position. From the right side of the garment trim away the elges of the hole to the shape of the patch, leaving about a half inch margin between the edge of hole and the under edge of the patch. Cut each corner diagonally about one-fourth inch, turn under the raw edge and baste to the patch all the way around. Hem the edges to the patch using a hemming stitch and concealing the stitches as much as

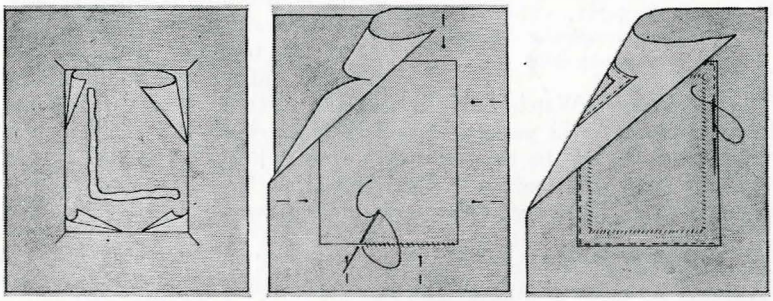

FIG. 9.—Steps in making a hemmed patch (left to right): cutting away the worn part; patch pinned in place and hemming begun (right side); finishing the patch (wrong side).

possible. On the wrong side hem the patch to the garment taking tiny stitches so they will scarcely show on the right side. When the stitching is finished remove the bastings and press carefully. The stitching may be done by machine on work garments, bed linens, and other articles where a more conspicuous patch is not objectionable (Fig. 9).

The overhand patch is less noticeable but is not as strong as the hemmed patch. It is used where there is little strain and on garments which are not often laundered, such as silk and wool. The size of this patch is determined in the same way as for the hemmed patch. The edges of the patch are turned under to the wrong side and the patch is placed on the right side of the article to be mended, with figures and threads of the material and the patch matching carefully. Baste in place; then crease the article back along the edges of the patch and overhand the patch to the garment, using very small stitches. When the overhanding is finished, cut away the worn edges of the garment on the wrong side to within one-fourth inch of the stitching. Press the seam open and clip each corner diagonally so the seam will be flat. Overcast the raw edges if the material frays easily. If such a patch is used on wool material it may be made less

noticeable if one runs a raveling of material through the machine, stitching from the right side (Fig. 10).

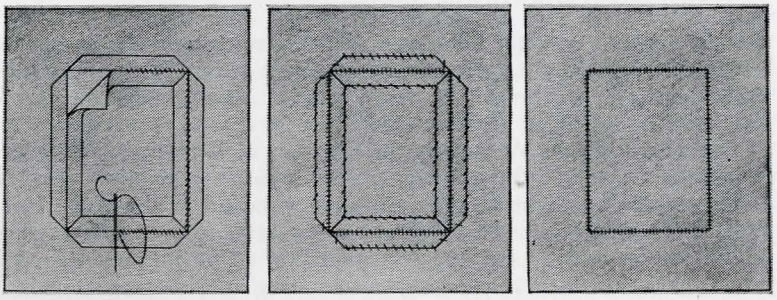

FIG. 10.—Steps in making an overhand patch (left to right): overhanding the patch in place from wrong side; finished patch showing overcasting of raw edges on wrong side; finished patch (right side).

PRESSING

Careful pressing of each mended place is essential to secure a finished appearance for a mended article. The darn or patch is made much less noticeable and the whole garment appears in a better state of repair.

Woolen articles especially need careful pressing. Wool scorches easily so it is necessary to watch that the iron does not come directly in contact with the material. A woolen pressing cloth is most satisfactory to secure a good effect. The woolen cloth is placed over the garment to be pressed and covered with a heavy muslin cloth. This cloth is moistened; then when heat is applied steam is formed which helps to remove wrinkles and lift the nap of the material. The woolen pressing cloth distributes and holds the moisture better than cotton.

It is essential to remember that pressing is not ironing, and in pressing the iron is alternately placed and lifted as one works over the surface instead of pushing it over the fabric as in ironing.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS

Fur.—Rips in fur are mended from the wrong side. Use a fine needle and soft thread which will not cut the pelt, and join the edges with a close overhand stitch. The stitches should be just deep enough to catch the edges of the skin; otherwise some of the hair may be caught with the stitch. Waxing the thread may help to make the sewing easier. If the pelt is weak and tears easily, it may be strengthened by a backing of soft cambric. This is placed over the back of the skin and caught down by stitches which barely go through the pelt. The length and number of stitches depend upon how much strengthening is needed. If necessary to cut fur, the cutting should be done from the wrong side with a razor blade or sharp knife. Cut through the pelt only. When joining pieces, watch carefully that the hair all runs in the same direction.

Gloves.—When sewing leather gloves, choose a thread which will not cut the leather and in proportion to the texture of the glove. Use a fine needle and as nearly as possible the same kind of stitch as was originally used in the sewing of the glove. Sometimes one strand of mercerized darning cotton is used for kid gloves. Blanket stitching the separate edges before drawing them together makes the mended place stronger. This also gives a bit of extra width. Adhesive tape placed under the mended place will strengthen it.

Sweaters.—Elbows are usually the first part of sweaters to show wear. Sometimes a break in the knitting may be avoided by reinforcing it with darning stitches of light weight yarn. If heavy yarn of the same color is available, it may be untwisted and only part of the strands used. A skillful knitter may replace the worn out portion by knitting it in with yarn. A stitch which resembles plain knitting may be made with the needle and yarn to match the garment. In this case the frayed edges of the hole are raveled to form a rectangle and yarns are first put in lengthwise in groups of two threads. These connect the loops of stitches at the upper and lower edge of the hole. Working across these threads it is possible to form interlocking loops which closely resemble plain ribbed knitting stitches.

Overalls may be quickly mended on the machine when it is necessary to set in a large patch covering the knee.

1. The hole or worn place is trimmed so that the edge is of firm material. Trim carefully along the grain of the material so that the lengthwise and crosswise threads of the material make true right angles at the corners.

2. Crease a three-eighths inch seam allowance on all edges, then snip each corner diagonally from the edge to the creased seam allowance. Cut the corners as accurately as possible.

3. Cut a piece of material for the patch at least enough larger than the hole to take care of the seam allowances. It is not necessary to cut the patch the exact size, but be sure that the edges are cut straight with the grain of the material.

4. Place the material for the patch right side up on the machine with the lengthwise edge under the needle. Match one lengthwise edge of the hole to the patch and begin stitching along the crease and in the center of the length of one side.

5. Stitch to the corner, stop with the needle in the material, raise the presser foot, and turn the material, pushing it well up under the needle before beginning to stitch the other side. When the stitching is finished on the four sides, lap the stitching for an inch and stitch diagonally to the edge. Trim the patch if necessary so that the seam allowance is even. Next stitch the edges of the seam together and diagonally across the corners to reinforce them.

Buttons which have been torn from overalls or jackets may be replaced by cutting a button from a worn-out pair, leaving about an inch of material on all sides of it. Push the button through the hole where

the other has been torn away and stitch the material by machine to the overalls with a double row of stitching.

REPAIR AND MENDING SUGGESTIONS

Shaped, top-stitched patches are sometimes used to conceal worn or torn places and appear as decorative features of the garment. Top-stitched patches on sleeves of dresses may sometimes be shaped like some other trimming feature of the dress and used to conceal or replace a worn elbow portion.

Kimono sleeves which are pulled may be repaired by setting in a square patch on the under-arm seam. The patch should be just large enough to replace the worn portion and set in so the two opposite corners are in line with the seam.

Pocket linings for trousers may be purchased ready made and used to replace worn or torn ones.

Shirt collars and cuffs may be ripped off and reversed when they begin to show wear. If the shirt shows wear across the shoulders the back may be ripped out and the tail of the skirt turned to the yoke section.

Leather patches on elbows of boys' sweaters are sometimes used as a preventive or to cover a hole.

Refooting stockings may be more satisfactory than darning large holes in children's stockings. Extension Circular 428 gives directions for one method of refooting children's stockings.

Runs in hosiery or fine knitted garments may be mended on the machine or overhanded by hand. If the run is long, hold the edges together and stitch as close to the edge as is possible by machine. The tension generally needs to be a little looser and the stitch shorter than for ordinary stitching. When mending a run be sure that the loop at the end of the run is caught and fastened or another run may be formed.

Replacing elastic insets in foundation garments and elastic straps on brassieres often lengthens the amount of wear to be obtained from such garments. When joining replaced elastic bands, lap the elastic for an inch, overhand the edges together, and buttonhole across the ends.

New shoulder straps for undergarments made of material similar to the garment help reduce mending costs. One-half inch or less is a good width for the finished strap. The strap appears flatter if the seam is creased to one edge. This edge is usually turned toward the neck when the strap is sewed in place. Both edges may be stitched from the right side if desired.

Knit underwear for grown-ups may be cut down or made over for children. Extension Circular 427, "Making Over Underwear" gives suggestions for doing this.

Supporters may be made to replace worn ones by buying new elastic to combine with fastenings of the original supporters. This is less expensive than buying those ready made.

Worn edges on bindings on some undergarments may be replaced by crocheting along the edge with a row of single crochet stitches, closely spaced. Other worn bindings may be replaced by similar material, or in

some cases the use of contrasting material applied as a facing may serve as a finish and give a new appearance to a worn article.

Applied hems are sometimes a means of lengthening a dress, a slip, or even curtains which are too short to be useful.

When sheets become thin in the center it may pay to tear them through the center, turn the outer edges to the center and stitch together with a plain seam.

Pillow cases may be made to last longer by cutting the seam off the end and turning the case so the edges come to the center. Then make a new seam across the end.

Blankets which have worn too thin to be serviceable may be covered with any soft wash material similar to that used for making comforters and tied in the same way. These make easily laundered summer bed coverings.

REFERENCES

Suggestions in the preparation of this circular have been secured from the following references:

Repair of Clothing, Bulletin 134, by Edna M. Callahan and Bertha Baker Everhart, Agricultural Extension Service, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

Sewing Secrets, Book 53, The Spool Cotton Company, 350 Fifth Ave., New York City.

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