

THE HAT.

The milliner is a personage in Fowlerville. The front window of her shop commands the public square; it sweeps Main St.; it affords a view of the post office, the depot, and the side door of the Grand Central Hotel. Through twenty-five years of glancing out of it, the milliner has acquired an appalling knowledge, and a power that not even the president of the Citizens' Bank possesses. She wields this power as she does her fateful shining shears—despotically, but, as a rule, with beneficent result. She is a diplomat as well as a despot; not even the head dining-room girl from the hotel dares ask her to copy the hat she has just made for Mrs. D Ferdinand Holmes.

Sometimes I take a chair in her work-room amid skeletons of hats and dusty fashion-plates. At such times I am contented audience to a monologue that flows along in some such wise as this: "You needn't say it, child; I know by your eye you've come for your hat. Well, it isn't done. No, I couldn't see as there was anything special for you to go to this week until Sunday, and so I didn't hurry myself none. And anyway I had to finish a hat for Mrs. Andrews—the one that turned Free Methodist. Look at it! Ain't it a sight? You know, it's sinful, according to Miss Andrews, to be stylish, so I sell her a last year's hat, which satisfies her conscience and helps to get rid of old stock. It seems to me a queer notion that anyone can keep righteous by being a year behind the styles, but there's all sorts of heads and I have to fit them. When I go down to the city to buy hats I keep that in mind. Last time I says to myself: Now, there's Jane Marsh. The new drug clerk has been shining up to her a littl' this spring, and it's up to me to hat Jane Marsh so that he'll see what a pretty girl she is in spite of her old-maidish ways. With that I up and bought one of those floppy Leghorn hats with pink roses to go on it. I perked it up in the back and gave it a real naughty tilt over one eye, and actually you wouldn't know Jane Marsh in that hat. It gave her a real lively expression and from the back you'd never guess she hadn't got spunk to say boo to a goose. She got red when she put it on, and said it wouldn't do to wear to church. Just there I up and told her a few plain truths about herself. She nearly cried, but she was down town to the post office the next morning in a white duck suit and that hat; and I'm willing to take my oath that was the first time the new drug clerk really looked hard at her."

"I remember that hat," said I. "It certainly did wonders for Jane."

"But that ain't the only match I've made," she continued. "Do you remember that big lace hat I bought the first summer you came here? When I was getting in spring stock I looked at that hat for two days. I said to myself it would never go in Fowlerville. They'd shy at the first sight of it; but I had in mind that it would look fine on Jennie Delano, so I bought it. And will you believe me, I couldn't sell it. Jennie was a picture in it, but her ma set her foot down; said it was too skittish, and it wouldn't do to wear in the choir! Jennie begged and implored to have it, but her ma's as set as the eternal hills, so we had to give in. I could have sold it to one of the pickle-factory girls, but some way I had got in my mind just the sort of face I wanted to see under

that hat—it was a bluff and soft. Heaven knows I use to sell enough of the old Mis' Dods' kind of hat, and see 'em wore by as soon as homely as I am myself, so that now and then I can afford to be foolish. So I'd hide that hat when I saw the pickle girls coming in, and take it out when a real pretty face come along."

"All of our nice girls tried on that hat, and they all fairly cried for it. Little Dotty Sinclair would come in every evening and say real wistful: 'You haven't sold it yet, have you, Mis' Dow?' Then she'd try it on for the tenth time, and sigh. Of course she couldn't afford eight dollars and forty cents for a hat—no one in Fowlerville ever paid that much for one hat except the pickle tribe and the head dining-room girl at the hotel; and I wouldn't even show it to them."

"It got to be June and I still had that hat on my hands, when one night, just before I locked up, Mary Hubbard come in and set down in that chair there. It'd been a warm day, and I thought to myself, as she leaned her head against the chair back, 'Mary Hubbard, you're getting old by leaps and jumps.' She'd brought her last year's hat for me to make over, but she was too dead beat out to even unwrap it. She'd been sewing since seven that morning on Kitty Delano's wedding things, and she said she couldn't stay long for she had to go home and finish a shirt waist for her sister Debbie to wear to the school picnic next day. There was something about the way she leaned her head against the chair with her eyes closed and her pale-colored hair all fluffing out about her face that made me think of pictures of young martyrs and unhealthy saints I've seen. The sight of her riled me up, some way."

"'Mary Hubbard,' says I, 'how old are you?'"

"'Thirty-two,' says she, without opening her eyes. That shows just the state she was in; she hadn't spunk or pride enough to say twenty-seven or twenty-eight."

"'Old enough to have sense, Mary Hubbard, what are you killing yourself for? To keep a husky boy in college studying to be a lawyer when he'd make a better blacksmith? To dress a feather-headed schoolgirl up to the last notch of style? To keep your mother in patent medicine when she'd forget she had a liver if she had to work as hard as you do? And what's you pa doing these days? Does he pay the interest on that mortgage your digging you grave with? I noticed him this morning making tracks for the pool room, and for all I know he ain't come out yet.'

"'Oh, Mrs. Dow!' she said shocked and sitting up at last.

"'Oh, I know you, Mary Hubbard,' I says, 'and I tell you to your face you're a fool. Self-sacrifice can be overdone till it's silly. When the Lord put you in this world He didn't make you pretty for nothing—yes, you are pretty, too; at least you would be if you got some rest and wore the right kind of clothes. I don't believe you've been to a party in six years; and how many times have you made over that brown cashmere? You hadn't ought to wear a bilious color like brown, anyway; and as for that black straw I sold you three years ago, I won't make it over again. You're going to have an all-new hat this summer, just to see how it seems.'

"'With those words I got an idea. I never stopped to see what she had to say, but I went into the shop and brought out that lace hat. Mary set there looking stunned, with a pink spot in her cheeks, and I clapped the hat onto her before she could wink. Then I turned up all the lights and brought the mirror. She took one look at herself, and then to my amazement she begun to cry. And what do you suppose she was crying about?'"

"'I've seen a ghost!' was all she said, but I knew what she meant. It was the ghost of Mary Hubbard! At twenty she had seen and it was the hat that did it. The soft lace fell over her hair and the white trim made her skin like a rose. You could never have believed that Mary Hubbard could be so pretty! Of course she said she couldn't afford to buy the hat, but that made no difference to me. I just cut the price in two, and got that in love

with the look of her in it; and she went home with it in a bag. She was half laughing and half crying, and said she felt ashamed as a thief. I told her she had been stealing from herself so long I didn't wonder."

"Two or three nights later she come in again. 'Have you worn that hat yet, Mary?'" says I.

"'No,' says she, 'I don't dare to. I take it out and try it on when I go up to bed, but I haven't the courage to wear it. Folks will think I'm dreadfully silly to buy such a hat—a girl of my age and circumstances.'

"'My land!' says I, 'you can't keep it in a bandbox under your bed all summer. When you do come to wear it though, I'm afraid your old brown cashmere won't go very well with it—'

"'I've been thinking of that,' says she, wrinkling up her brow. 'Mrs. Dow, I don't know what that hat's done to me, but ever since I got it I've thought of nothing but things to wear with it. Now there's a piece of old-rose-colored silk in Smith's store. I've been thinking for a month that I'd get Debbie a dress off that piece, so that she could go to parties next winter, but—'

"'Yes,' says I, snappishly 'I'd get my pa a dress suit, and my ma a sealskin sack, too. Mary Hubbard, you'd never look over twenty-four in a rose colored silk and that hat. You'd better hurry along now, or Smith's will be closed.'

"Twenty minutes later she sneaked by my window there, on her way home, with a bundle under her arm. She looked as if she was running from the police, but when I rapped on the window—if you'll believe me, she winked one eye. Five years just dropped right off Mary Hubbard with that wink!"

"Toward the end of the month she put her head in that door there and wanted to know if I was alone. She come in laughing and blushing like a girl with her first beau, in a rose-colored dress and her new hat."

"'Now, Mary Hubbard,' I said, 'you see it's true what I told you; the right kind of clothes was all you needed. I suppose you'll wear them to church tomorrow.'

"'Mercy, no!' says she, 'it would upset the minister.' And then she set down with her chin in her hand, and I could see there was something working on her mind. Pretty soon she says: 'Mrs. Dow, I've been thinking over what you said the other night and I know you're right. I'm thirty-two and I look five years more. When I was eighteen and going to parties with the other girls, I never dreamed that I'd get to be careless about my clothes at thirty-two. It's been five years since I had an invitation to a party. I know why, now. The last party I went to I hadn't time to get a thing pretty to wear, and I had to sit round with the married people most of the time. I never accepted an invitation after that. Naturally people stopped asking me after a while. The set I used to go with have got to taking my shabbiness and dullness for granted—and it's too late now to get acquainted all over again; they'll never understand that my hearts as young as theirs. And so—I'm going away for a trip somewhere—to some place where people don't know me well enough to call me "conscientious" and where I can wear rose-colored silk in the morning if I want to! I've got an aunt in Washington who takes life like a grasshopper. I think she'll be a good one to start with; and I've told Pa that he'll have to look after the family this summer.'

"And Pa did, too. All that summer and fall it done my soul good to see Alonzo Hubbard (who always hated to get up in the morning) driving a milk wagon. He didn't have much time to squander in the pool-rooms and even Alonzo Junior, when he come home from college, accepted a position selling soda-water in the drug store. Mary's vacation seemed to be working both ways. I was glad to see. Mary herself didn't come home till most cold weather, and when she poked her head in the door there and laughed at me, I blinked twice before I knew her. She had on the friskiest little hat I ever saw, and she didn't seem to care much as give it a thought."

"'Well, Mar,' Hubbard,' says I, 'I

see you don't need me to make over your lace hat into something fit for winter."

"'I should say not!' said she. 'No one shall ever touch scissors to that hat—it's my mascot!'"

"'Your what?' says I.

"'My mascot,' says she 'a sort of lucky penny, you know. I'm going to be married next week.'

"'Land of love!' says I, 'who to?'"

"'Representative Jerry Tomlinson,' says she.

"'With that I fairly glared at her. Why, Jerry Tomlinson was the one single man in Fowlerville it was worth any girl's time to marry—and Mary Hubbard had landed him! Why, he had gone to school with Mary Hubbard, he had seen her as often as he had seen the hitching-posts around the square, and to my certain knowledge he had paid her just about as much attention. I said so to Mary, and she laughed.

"'When I think of that brown cashmere I used to wear,' said she, 'I can forgive you for likening me to the hitching-posts about the square. I can forgive you anything, in fact, because of that lace hat you made me buy. Mrs. Dow, I just looked at him once from under its brim, and he began to remember the day we skipped school and went hunting for arbutus together, and the licorice and mottoes we used to exchange. He seemed to enjoy talking about our childhood so much that I didn't remind him it was Lizzie Sinclair he hunted arbutus with, and that I never could bear licorice—I just laughed and said to myself, 'It's the hat!' But next day when the charm of that hat seemed still to be working, I felt myself getting younger and younger, and now, Mrs. Dow, I've come back to have you make me a heap of them—something suitable for twenty-four!'"

Mrs. Dow picked up her shining, fateful shears once more. Her black eyes looked at me shrewdly.

"'With your color of eyes,' said she, 'you ought to wear violet. Now, I've just got in some new mauve velvet. Shall I—?'"

"'Yes, please,' said I. 'anything you think is right!'"—GRACE SARTWELL MASON in *Everybody's*.

It is a noteworthy and curious fact that of our three Canadian peerages one has a male heir to continue it. Lord Strathcona's title will presumably descend one day to his daughter, Mrs. Howard, who will thus add another to the small and select company of peeresses in their own right.

Lord Mount Stephen, though he has been married twice, has no children; and the one other Canadian peerage, that of Macdonald of Earncliffe, is now held by the widow of the first Lord Macdonald, and as yet no provision has been made for its inheritance by her only daughter.

About 10 o'clock one morning two men entered and began threatening and calling each other names. One finally called the other a liar, and the two men were about to grapple, when a woman opened the door and said: "Gentlemen, are you about to fight?"

"'We are!' they answered together.

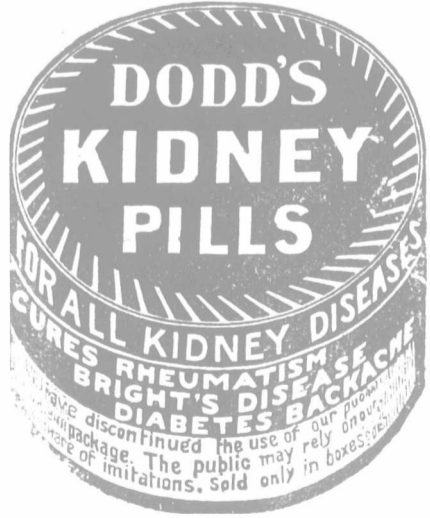
"'Then have the kindness to wait a moment,'" she continued. "My husband has been sick for weeks, and is now just able to sit up. He is very down-hearted this morning, and if you'll only wait till I can draw him up to the window, I know he'll be very grateful to both of you."

She disappeared into the house, and after one look into each other's faces, the men smiled, shook hands, and departed together.—*Weekly Telegraph*.

"Do you think I can reach the heart of the haughty beauty?" sighed the sentimental youth with the guitar under his arm. "Better try tunnelling, old man," advised his friend. "Tunnelling?"

"'Yes, I heard her say you were a great bore.'"

Citizen: "Has your volunteer company secured a fire engine yet?" Suburb: "Yes, but we haven't had a chance to test it." Citizen: "No barns or houses on fire, eh?" Suburb: "Oh, yes; but they've always burned down before we got there."



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