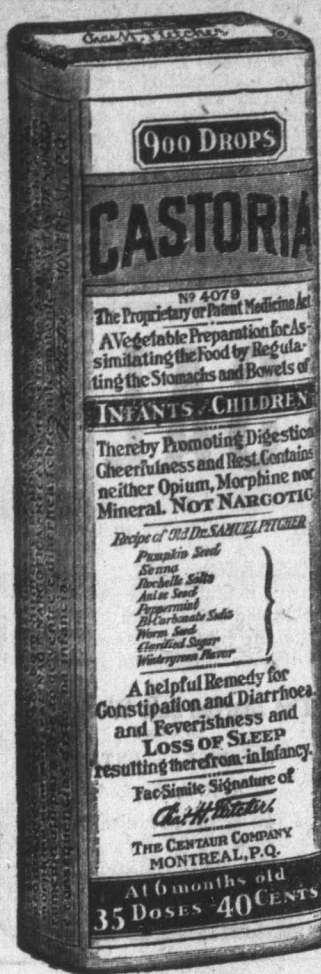




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SPRING HATS.

By FANNIE MEDBURY
PENDLETON.

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The soft spring breeze, with its
promise of wonders to come, entered
through the open window and gently
lifted the silvery curls upon the fore-
head of Miss Honor, as she stood re-
garding herself quite seriously in the
mirror. The reflected face smiled
back at her suddenly and the rose
flush deepened in her cheeks.

"I expect I'm very foolish," she mur-
mured to herself, "but I don't suppose
it's anybody's business if I am. I've
saved up the money by lilies, and to
think that the very one I dreamed of
is right in the milliner's window, just
as I imagined it ought to look! All
violets, and with purple velvet strings.
It seems as though it was right I
should have it." Her eyes dropped to
the gray bonnet in her hand. "You've
served seven years," she said whim-
sically, "and that's long enough."

There was a pleased smile on her
face as she opened the side door and
looked out into the western sky. A
girl was entering the side gate, and
Miss Honor's smile vanished when she
saw her.

"I wonder what's the matter with
Nelly?" she thought. "She ain't walk-
ing as spry as usual."

At Miss Honor's kindly welcome
and invitation, the slender figure in
its neat blue print sank down into the
cushioned depths of the porch
spoke. Miss Honor sat down in the
splint-bottomed chair. She spoke of
the fine weather and inquired after
Nelly's mother, who had been ill for
some time.

"Mother's about the same"—the
girl steadied her voice by an effort—
"but the doctor says she can't ever be
well until she's had an operation."

Quite suddenly the floodgates were
opened and Nelly flung herself down
upon the step with her head in the
lap of the older woman. Miss Honor
did not speak, but let her cry, while
with gentle hand she stroked the soft
brown hair. Miss Honor was a born
mother. In the absence of children
of her own, she mothered the neigh-
borhood. After a little the girl lifted
a face of apology.

"Forgive me, Miss Honor," she said.
"I guess I'm tired. School has been
hard these hot days. I love the chil-
dren, but they are so uneasy, and I've
had to be up a good deal nights with
mother."

"School is almost out," ventured
Miss Honor.

The girl's slender figure straight-
ened with a sudden jerk. "I wish it
wasn't," she cried. "I've got to earn.
Father is behind with his payments,
and it will take every cent I've saved
to send mother to the hospital. What
a horrible thing it is to be poor!"

"Yes," answered Miss Honor, after
a little pause. "I've always thought
it must be dreadful; but I've never
known any really poor people—not
truly poor," went on the gentle voice.
"Of course, there are lots of folks
who never have much money, but they
have friends and love and wholesome
work and a beautiful world to live in.
I don't believe there's a picture paint-
ed to compare with that," she pointed
a finger at the sunset. "Oh, I do think
we people of the country are so well
to do, my dear!"

The girl's mouth set in a straight
line.

"That is because you are good," she
said, "and you don't mind about not
having the things you want. I am
wicked—just wicked, and I can't seem
to help it. I'd give my life for mother,
and I am so thankful I have the
money; but I was just down town and
there in Clara Payne's shop I saw
three hats. One had violets, and one
was burnt straw with a wreath of
pink roses and black velvet ribbon
strings. The violet one was a bon-
net."

"Yes," breathed Miss Honor.
"I want that rose hat. I want it
more than I ever wanted anything to
wear. I didn't have a new hat last
year. Father has needed money, so I
made the old one do. You are so good
that you don't think about such things
as new hats. I don't suppose you
could understand."

Miss Honor's gaze was fixed upon
the shadows of the distant hills.

"I don't suppose so," she echoed
softly.

Suddenly Nelly caught her breath in
a little gasp. A young man and a
girl were walking slowly up the street,
talking earnestly. When they reached
the gate he looked up and a hot wave
crimsoned his face at sight of Nelly
on Miss Honor's porch. The girl with
him laughed in an amused fashion.
Her dark eyes were shining like stars
from beneath a hat that was crowned

with crimson poppies. They passed
on.

Nelly laughed with a little catch in
her voice. Miss Honor leaned for-
ward.

"Have you and Roger had a falling
out?"

The girl's face drooped. "Yes," she
said at last. "We had some words
last week. I don't know how it start-
ed. I guess I was so tired that I was
touchy. Anyway," with a brave at-
tempt at fairness, "you can't blame
him. Beryl Wright is better looking
than I am. A man thinks of that."

"Nonsense," said Miss Honor crisp-
ly. "you must come back in about
an hour and a half and get some jelly.
I'll have ready for your mother."

She laid a gentle hand on the girl's shoul-
der. "Don't worry," she said, "things
always work out, you know."

The gate clicked. "Yes," mused
Miss Honor, "they always do some-
how, but there are times when we are
expected to help work them out, our-
selves."

She went into the house, put on
her gray bonnet, took her purse and
went out again, locking her door and
hanging the key in perfectly plain
view inside the vines. At the gate
she encountered Roger coming back.
He hesitated, cap in hand.

"Has Nelly gone home?" he said.

"I want to see her."

Miss Honor swept him with a swift,
keen glance. "Yes, Roger, she has
gone home. Nelly has a great deal to
do. Her mother is worse and is go-
ing to the hospital and poor Nelly
has not only been teaching days, but
been up a great deal with her mother
nights. There are not many girls like
Nelly."

The young man's face set in lines
of misery. "Perhaps there are girls
who are handsomer."

"There aren't," interrupted Roger,
quite unconscious of rudeness.

"Which do you like better, Roger,"
asked Miss Honor, "red poppies or
pink roses?"

"I don't know," said Roger, puz-
zled, his mind far from the proper
consideration of floral beauties. They
reached the corner.

"Good-by, Roger," said Miss Honor.
"I must hurry back and do up the
jelly that Nelly is coming over for
later." The young man went down
the side street. He was not whistling,
and once he turned and looked
thoughtfully after Miss Honor.

But that lady had forgotten him.
Her eyes were fixed upon the not dis-
tant windows of Clara Payne's mil-
liner's shop. She knew that the violet
bonnet was there, looking more tempt-
ing than ever. Beside it was the rose-
crowned hat, but the one with the
poppies was gone. She refused to
dwell upon the beauties of violets,
and entered the shop with lifted chin
and determined air. In a few mo-
ments she came out with a hat bag.

This time she walked by the window
without looking at the violet bonnet.
Her heart was singing, and she looked
younger than she had for years. "It
is quite fun to buy a rose hat," she
murmured to herself, "even if it is
not for oneself."

On her porch were two figures. She
saw them and went around the house
and into the back door. They were
deep in conversation, Miss Honor
nodded pleasantly to herself in the
dusk.

From time to time she tiptoed
through the sitting room and peered
out between the curtains. The two
figures were quite close together and
there was a dark line about the girl's
waist that was not a sash.

She went out the back door very
softly, and going around the house
came up the path. The two rose at
her approach. It was Roger who
spoke first.

"We have made up," he said boyish-
ly, "and if Nelly's mother is well
enough by fall, we are going to be mar-
ried."

"I am glad," said Miss Honor. She
held out the hat bag to Nelly. "Just
an engagement present," she said.

The girl opened the bag and gave
a little cry of pleasure. Then the hat
went on. From beneath its drooping
brim her flushed, happy face looked
like a delicate flower. "Oh, dear Miss
Honor," cried the girl, "I ought not to
have told you, I ought—"

"Stuff and nonsense!" sniffed Miss
Honor briefly.

A sudden comprehension seized
Roger.

"Miss Honor," he said solemnly, "I
like roses best."

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