

YOUR HAT AND MINE

SOME SENSE AND SOME NONSENSE ABOUT
WHAT WOMEN WEAR ON THEIR HEADS

By MARJORIE MOORE

THERE is—we all know her—the woman who wears a plumed hat in the morning; there is—we see her in caricatures—the tall woman who wears a wide hat with a narrow skirt; there is—quite commonly—the woman who wears a tea hat with a tailored suit, and others, as numerous as those “others” of the Social Column, who don’t “know” about hats.

It is extraordinary, but really it sometimes seems as if women knew no more about hats than men do—i.e., that the more they cost the better they are. I apologize—some men know more about hats than the cost, and some know a great deal but not the cost.

I once knew a man who knew this much about my hat: “Yes, I like that hat you have on. It hasn’t any trimming, and by that I know it cost a great deal—more than I could afford. If it were a big hat with feathers and flowers and ribbons and lace, I’d know it cost something; if there were no feathers, but only flowers, ribbons and lace, I’d guess it cost something more; if it were just lace, the price would go up still higher; but, being what it is—a small black hat, looking what it does—I’d know it cost a very, very great deal more than all that.”

Really, the cost is all there is to a hat—principally. The other points about hats come after the cost.

I wanted to find out when and why women began to wear hats, for no ancient or mediæval woman wore a hat; I mean, no woman of ancient or mediæval times wore a hat. Hats came in with the gay ladies of the court of Charles II, and as working women didn’t wear them, I judged they were largely a sign of rank and wealth. They are so still, but since that time we have discovered that hats have also a use—they do protect the head; they ought—whether they do or not is a question—enhance what beauty the wearer has. At any rate, in pursuit of the elusive hat, we have shamelessly copied men’s headgear of all ages. The styles of the year before last, for instance, were taken from the hats of that jovial monarch—Henry VIII—whose life and trials you may remember.

Hats have improved immensely since the Restoration, but there is nothing really new in hats—or ever will be. The whole point about a hat is the wearer. The wearers are always new. Get that idea clearly and no hat will ever again intimidate you.

For most women are afraid of hats. I suppose all women are who are not milliners or millionaires; the former, because she knows the inmost secrets of hats, the latter because when she pays \$200 for a hat she thinks she owns it. The ordinary woman knows the hat owns her.

The only way to get on terms of real familiarity with a hat is to make it. Yes, I know, you can’t. And that is why you let milliners bully you, and perch hats where they don’t belong.

It occurs to me that if a woman could only be turned loose in a room full of all kinds of hats—without saleswomen—she might, by the help of scissors and pins, manage to get a hat that would “suit her.”

I remember my first experience almost alone with a milliner—first privilege of being grown up. An aunt went along as chaperone and did her level best—and succeeded—in complicating the situation beyond repair. My aunt and the saleswoman joined forces. Now, there wasn’t a hat in the shop that I liked—I knew it. The sad-to-be-related end saw me in tears on the sidewalk and my aunt apologizing to the saleswoman; but I hadn’t bought the hat.

Contrast this scene with the one when I went last spring to buy a hat. It was in April. By good fortune I was able to wear the suit the hat was to accompany, and thus the width of the hat could be adjusted to the shoulders—a most important consideration, as the apparent width of the shoulders varies with changing fashions.

I had made friends with that saleswoman before. Her side of the shopping began with an X-ray glance through my purse, and having judged—she did it to a dollar—just how much I had, she knew what to charge. It was the most expensive shop in town. “You can’t get a hat there under fifteen.” You can’t? I paid seven and originated a fashion.

Madame began with a black hat—the suit was black and white. The black hat was adorable; the price, untrimmed, \$12.00.

Sternly I said:

“Seven, complete—I mean it.”

Madame produced a white hat of the same shape, much cheaper.

A white hat with a black and white suit—impossible! Monsieur came to advise.

“Ah, mademoiselle, it is charming. Black ribbon, madame—it will balance.”

She laid the black velvet across the hat and caught it up behind.”

A touch of color?

“Yellow,” I affirmed.—Yellow it was.

But that was a dream of a hat. One was infallibly, ineffably sure of oneself in that hat. It was a hat that saved one the trouble of talking. I would go for an interview; from office boy to chief I got what I wanted. They copied that hat for two months and never quite “got” it. Alas that hats grow old—it is as sad as when a woman forgets that she is young—and so expensive.

But I started out to tell you how to choose a hat.

A hat is a thing of material, shape, color, and size. Put the shape and size together and you have “line”—or more likely you haven’t but should.

But there isn’t just a hat—there is also you. And you



Why?

are a woman with so many frocks, so many engagements—and so on.

First rule—you never wear a hat—or shoes—lighter in value than your suit or frock—never. It is a disfigurement in the scheme of life to be inflicted with women who wear white hats and white shoes with dark cloth skirts.

It is just as bad—but not quite so apparent—to see a woman in a satin frock with a hat that doesn’t shine, or a woman in a plain, simple frock, with an elaborate hat.

The hat must emphasize the costume—by harmony or by contrast; but, chiefly, the hat must emphasize you.

Why, if you are a little woman, extinguish a petite face under an ellipse of black velvet? Why, if your face is round and—fat, do you compress it in a tight toque? Why, if your face is all lines, wear a hat that accentuates the hardness of the face? Why?

Hats add to the joy of living, if you don’t take them seriously; but, of course, you have to have the joy first. I adore hats.

A woman of my acquaintance once got a hat with the most beautiful blue feather. It was a joy, that feather. It was fastened to one of the descendants of Henry VIII’s hats, with a bunch of bright colored objects—now, you will begin to see how little I really know about millinery.

These “objects” and this feather were sources of great joy to the lady’s small grandson and to myself. They exactly expressed my friend’s bubbling vitality—a joyous vitality that the conventionalities of life restrained to the blue feather and the multi-colored buckle. I like the memory of that long, curling feather. How it swayed with every movement of her head, and how the spring winds loved that bit of blue!

It wasn’t expensive, either; and then you tell me that so and so has plumes that cost—how much? Well, I don’t know how much they cost, but I do know that the face under them often does not laugh or smile as much as it might.

And if your face isn’t right, your hat never will be. Your face can’t be right until you are—so hats become important. What I mean directly, is, I never could design a hat for a woman who had soaked her face in cold cream and put on the wrong color. I’m not so bigoted as not to know there are times and seasons when rouge may be useful, but why always? And why—in the name of heaven—why the wrong tint? If a woman will make up, she should at least get the color right.

Then, when you go to choose the hat, don’t go when you are tired, and don’t go down-town in the morning and begin to try on hats in the afternoon when your hair is all disarranged. It’s not fair to the saleswoman; it doesn’t give her a chance.

Down “town.” That’s another point. Your hat depends on the town. Not always nor necessarily, but somewhat. You sigh “New York” or “Paris”—not at all.

But some towns are discouraging. Lately I’ve come to live in one. No, the population is not 1,000, but 500,000; and I’d swear the hats are the same as when I was here five years ago. Which wouldn’t matter if they were good hats—but they aren’t.

The chief characteristic of these hats is the scraggy thin feathers. They lie all over the brim. Originally, back on some little dancing girl’s hat, they were as perky, as piquant as they are not, now. But, as I say, these feathers are all over the place; there is no joy in the streets for me, and none in the shop windows. I have a grievance in a world where the hats look home-made, and are ticketed \$10.00.

But the town doesn’t matter.

Once I was in a small town—population 1,000 certified—one train a day and all that. I don’t remember what had happened to my hat, but I had to get one to wear with a very plainly tailored suit; I couldn’t leave the town without a hat and so was forced to go shopping at the local drygoods shop.

They had plain black sailors. Proprietor said he always kept them in stock as there was always a demand. I inferred he was trying to snub me because I wouldn’t buy a creation at \$10.

Briefly, a hundred miles away I met a very dear friend. She said: “Was that hat expensive?”—“No. It was \$3.50.”—“Were you long in New York?”—“I wasn’t in New York.”

I thought she was making fun, but having made up my mind that that hat was all right, I would not change it.

But she meant it, really, and when plain black sailor hats were announced two months later, with a great flourish of Canadian trumpets, as the latest thing from New York, I never could persuade her that I had not meanly withheld from her valuable information. I never could persuade her that I had come out of Numsquash with the kind of hat that became the rage in New York two months after. But why not?

As for the kind of hats one must never wear: principally, the hat that is out of date—an inexorable rule. There is a kind of hat that is even worse than the old hat—I mean the one with all the little birds. Oh, no, they might all be artificial and be just as bad. It’s the aesthetic and not the humane side that really matters here. Once in a long while you might wear a frame for little birds to perch in—oh, at a tea or at a supper party, you just might if such a freak developed your personality. But to make use of such a hat day in and night out—that is an offence against whatever sense there is. I saw a woman last Sunday morning wearing a black suit with the white birds on top. It’s too much exercise of one’s mind to think out the why of such a combination.

So far as color goes the possibilities are the same as in dresses, only more so. The black hat is nearly always right for anything; the white hat beautiful, if you can wear it, with white frocks or frocks of light material; beyond these two certainties stretch the infinite possibilities—and pitfalls—of color. For when you come to colors, there are the colors and there is—you. There are the laws of the beautiful in color combination, but any given combination has to be applied to you. Generally speaking we know what colors are wearable if we are fair or if we are dark, but there are combinations and permutations of colors the extent of which only the Parisian designer has yet had the instinct to explore.

Which is about all that can be said on hats on paper. Except that the world would be a dull place without them, and so it is “up to us” as women who have to decorate the world as well as work in it, to see that the hats really are beautiful, and help to make life worth while.



It's not fair to the saleswoman.

If a woman could be turned loose in a room full of hats!