

Chasing a Hat

By C. B. Lewis

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Arnold Thompson, bachelor of forty, was bored. He was bored because the warm weather had come, and he must go away to some resort; because he had to buy a new straw hat; because he had tried the roof gardens and they had offered nothing new; because he had indolently tried to flirt with a good looking girl that day on the street and she had exhibited her contempt; because of a dozen other reasons belonging to bachelorhood.

When Arnold Thompson bought a hat it was an event. He argued that the fate of a nation depended on the appearance of that hat when placed on his head, and he was therefore a full hour in making his selection. It was an hour of anxiety to him and an hour of misery to the salesman who waited on him. On this day, however—on this day when he strolled into his hatter's and made his wants known something out of the ordinary was to happen. The bachelor had tried on only nineteen different hats and had posed before the glass only nineteen different times, when he made a discovery under the sweatband of the nineteenth hat. It was a slip of paper, and on it was written in a feminine hand:

"The buyer of this hat is a single man. If a gentleman, he may write to Genevieve Burton."

The address was added, and as the hatter held the slip in his hand a romance began to creep into his mind. That's what he had been waiting for for years—romance. He was now from twenty to thirty, but he was thirty to forty and came to the conclusion that his heart never would be broken again.

The buyer of this hat is a single man. He was not only called rather good looking and a fairly good income. He was a gentleman."

He was a gentleman, and no one could be found to dispute the fact. Should he follow? He would write to Genevieve Burton. The name pleased him, and as he stood there with the nineteenth straw hat in one hand and the slip in the other he called up a vision of a handsome face and a curly head and a willowy form. He had no business to think Genevieve good looking, curly headed or willowy, but he took the responsibility and said to the salesman, much to the latter's surprise:

"I'll take this hat."

"But is it a good fit?"

"I said I would take this hat. Send me home."

As a matter of fact, the hat was not a good fit, and the bachelor had meant to buy over at least nineteen others.

It struck him that he must have written as well as the slip of paper beneath its sweatband. The two slips went together.

When he reached his club he sat down to write to Genevieve. He found it a hard task. She was a braider of straw hats; she lived far away; she was innocent hearted; she couldn't be taken a ride in his auto or to take any him to the theater and dinner. He was a coy, sly country blue-bird and must not be startled. The hatter started three different letters and then suddenly he remembered that he had no address.

But why write at all? The case that hat down until the address was discovered?

He was reached in an in-ter-est-ing hour later the man was asking where he referred to.

The man said he was attempting to force joint jurisdiction on Arizona and New Mexico. He is as

told that it might have been in any one of half a dozen places they mentioned, and the only thing to do was to give up further thought of Genevieve or pursue his quest.

He decided at once to pursue. He always had been flattered by women running after him; now he was running after one of the opposite sex, and there was something novel in the change. He went to Massachusetts and was sent on to Vermont. There they sent him over into Canada, and he reached Canada to be told that Michigan was his likely field.

This occupied a full month. The bachelor did not travel by lightning express. He stopped on the way to think of Genevieve and take his Turkish baths and get his nails manicured. He got around to Michigan at last, however. He had no sooner set eyes on the Maumee river at Toledo than he began to be hopeful. During the ride of eighty miles to Detroit he saw many cattails and much marsh grass and other things of which straw hats are made, and his hopes continued to increase.

Arriving at the City of the Straits, the bachelor located the only hat factory in town and then went to his hotel to make ready for an interview on the morrow. He was alternating between fear and hope when a drummer with whom he fell in reached for his hat in the familiar way drummers have on two minutes' acquaintance and looked it over and said:

"Once in awhile one of you New York fellers shows a little common sense in articles of dress."

"How do you mean?"

"This is the best straw hat made, and it was made right here in this little burg."

That settled it, and a bland and complacent smile broke over the face of the bachelor. He could forgive the innuendo because his long chase was at last ended. In the language of Sherlock Holmes, he had run his quarry to earth, and the morrow would bring a crisis. Mr. Arnold Thompson realized that he was off on a tangent. He had the reputation of being a cool and imperturbable fellow, one who never lost his head about women, but he had to acknowledge that he had made a fool of himself in this affair—that is, all his friends would say so. He had some excuses for his own ear, and if they were not sufficient he wasn't going to admit the fact.

At 10 o'clock the next morning the bachelor started for the hat factory. He intended to walk right in and talk about hats and perhaps pass himself off as a retailer. It was a small concern, employing only about half a dozen women to sew the braid purchased somewhere else. The business office and the workshop were in one, and the romancist entered to find a woman about forty years old in charge. She explained that the boss had just stepped out and asked what was wanted.

Mr. Thompson began to talk about hats, and he was making slow work of it when one of the girls came forward and said to the woman:

"Excuse me, Mrs. Burton, but am I sewing this right?"

"Are you Genevieve Burton?" asked the bachelor as she turned to him again.

"I—I am," she replied as she tried to blush.

"You—you wrote your name and slipped it behind the sweatband of this hat?"

"I did, sir."

"W—what was your object?"

"Just a trick of the trade. I am paid \$2 a week extra for that. That's why we call it the 'Romance' hat. We have sent out 12,000 hats, and every one has my name in. Has it given you a backache to find out where the hat was made?"

"Never again, Genevieve—never again will I believe in woman or romance!" exclaimed Arnold Thompson in his most tragic tones. And an hour later he was fleeing the town and trying to make himself believe that he was traveling to broaden his ideas on his own country.

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A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL.

I feel thankful to all who patronized me in my business the past year and hope to be able to serve you better in the future than I have in the past. I hope to still hold your confidence and also to be worthy of it. I want to tell you something that I want you to think about. It is this:

Some merchants, when commencing to do business, put the news out that they sell goods cheaper than the old-timer. After getting a trade established and the people fixed to that belief they will charge exorbitant prices for some things which the people think they are getting cheaper than they could get anywhere else. Take this for example: I have a can of goods in my store that came from one of the so-called cheap stores and it is marked 15 cts, and for which I have never asked but 10c for. Still the people pay for it and think they are getting bargains. I am satisfied that if the people will take the time to investigate they will find it much the same all along the line.

I want to put you to thinking, for I know that the merchant who sells staples cheaper than I go has to make it up somewhere else or he can't make a living. I want to educate you up to the idea that it is better to buy things at a reasonable profit all around than to get some things as you think cheap, and not know what you pay for others. Think about this, and if you find that I have told you the truth, remember I told you so.

T. D. ENGLAND

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