## HAT TRICK

by Denis Glover

CHE sat there making a hat. Why a hat I don't know, when there were socks to darn with holes in them as big as a railway tunnel. But on these occasions it is best to say nothing, to light up a pipe, go on reading the paper, or perhaps, in restrained but obtrusive husbandry, to fill up the coalscuttle.

"What do you think of it, Herbert?" "Very serious, indeed. If the whole Delta goes, the situation is as good as lost. Now this is the way I see it. You take a look at the map—" But I was only being asked, as arbiter elegantiarum, what I thought of a creation (as I believe it is more popularly called) knocked up out of what were immediately recognisable as left-over bits of the new under-felting. Pivoted slowly on a couple of pedestal fingers it reminded me of a football roughly cut in halt. . . Of course, it would ruin our chances if Stringleback weren't playing next Saturday. . .

"Oh, but look at it, Herbert, please! Of course, it isn't finished yet."

Groggy against the ropes, playing for time, I knocked out my pipe and surveyed it with the deliberation of an insurance claims assessor. Putting on an expression of critical concentration, infinite comprehension and ignorant admiration, I carefully considered this latest embryonic addition to the sum total of the world's creative achievements. A thing of no great importance perhaps. Yet who knows? Contentment lies in small tasks lovingly performed, in the eager or unpretentious efforts of many busy fingers impelled by the tentative, the exploratory mind ever eager to soar to greater heights. .

"Don't look so sour, Herbert. Say you like

Gigantic vistas of the world of the imagination opened before me. They contained no hat. Unvisited by any blinding glimpse of the infinite, the revelation unrevealed, I could only grasp haltingly for the pleasure-giving word.

"I think it's lovely, Tilly. Very plain and sensible — chic is the word, I believe. It's going to suit the new way you do your hair. But won't you feel a bit silly going round with a bit of the carpet on your head? I mean--'

"Herbert, you're a fool -all you men are so hopelessly unpractical. If, you want to pay pounds and pounds—"

"Oh, well, I know you haven't finished it

yet. I only thought—"
"There you go again—always thinking. Oh you unpractical men! If you'd only do something for a change. Why, you can't even mend a simple fuse, Herbert.

That was below the belt. I can and did mend a fuse. I did it with a piece of wire from the hen-house netting. It lasted out the evening, too, when the main fuse happened to blow. It was illegal (they told me later), but a masterpiece of brilliant extemporisation for all that. Thought translated into Women don't realise that action.



"It WAS my old Bowling Club tie"

thought is the basis of doing. No builder would put up a five-storey block of offices without at least making a few rough sketches on the back of an envelope, no man without careful thought would walk out into the rain in stockinged feet. . .

"Tilly, dear, will you have my golf stockings darned ready for Saturday? There's a match foursome—"

"You know I will. I always do, don't I? But tonight I'm going right on with this hat. No one's to know it's underfelting. After all, underfelting is under-

felting. Not even Mrs. Pryson is going to pull up the carpet when she comes, is she now?"

There was a pause while she surveyed Creation with a critical frown. Perhaps I had tarnished the mirror of clear imagery, smeared an ugly streak of practicality over the intangible quintessence of mystical vision.

"You're a very clever little woman," I said gallantly, and I trust movingly. "How you manage to think up marvellous things like that hat, after a hard day's work in the house, and shopping, and getting the kids off to bed-"

"Oh, it's nothing, really, It's just getting something done, if you know what I mean. Just leave me alone with it for a while, please, Herbert."

Quietly I left that haunt of hattery. I went into the kitchen. I opened the oven and gave my attention to the roast. Something I always do myself, because there are certain little niceties no woman knows about roasting a beef. Then I washed up a few dishes, in an application of thought to practical action. Then I turned on the water heater for baths in the morning, fed the cat, stored the groceries I had lugged back from town, cleaned out the washing machine, made up an alluring eggmaking mash for the sit-down-striking hens, carted the rubbish tin down to the gate, and put out the milk bottle. After that I serviced the beef again, put the plates to warm, laid a pretty table for a late dinner, ground fresh coffee, cut the kids' sandwiches for next day (a daringly imaginative mixture, as I remember, of marmalade and sweet pickles), and set three mousetraps.

When I returned to the living room Tilly looked up.

"Bert, dear." It's always Bert when something besides tea is brewing.

"Yes?" warily.

"What have you been doing?"

"Pottering about, You know-this and that."

"Well potter off and split a few blocks for the fire, please. How you men go mooning round without getting anything done is beyond me. Can't even keep a fire going."

When I got back from this trivial task the hat had been entirely dismantled, re-assembled, transmogrified. It sported a ribbon closely resembling my old Bowling Club tie (it was my old Bowling Club tie), and trembling above its untroubled dome was a Dali décor of bent copper wire, mystic, wonderful, clothed in white samite.

"Darling," I exclaimed, "it's a trolleybus triumph!"

"What do you men, trolley-bus? You know you'll have to give me a pound for a taxi to the tea party, especially since rain's predicted tomorrow. But," said Tilly, "a new hat as smart as this would have cost you pounds and pounds."

Rain it did, next day. And blew. I got the early tea, fed the kids and chased them off to school, brought in the rubbish tin and the milk, thoughtfully boiled a couple of eggs from hens not our own, and turfed Tilly out of bed to make coffee as only she can make it.

"Darling!" she shrieked as I strode out into the storm. "You're not going to town in that awful, shapeless old fishing hat!"

"Yes, I am," I replied with wintry morning malice. "It keeps me warm and dry. I'm being practical."

A to the weather than I want to the

(Solution to No. 705)



## Clues Across

- 1. Suitable fruit for nomads?
- 4. With gun, Ada finds herself in Africa.
- 9. This light displays a sea bird.
- 10. "Such sweet Soft — as yet musician's cunning Never gave the enraptured air" (Browning, "The Pied Piper").
- 11. Long or tiny?
- 12. I'm in gear for a sick headache.
- 14. Go shop early for choice of words,
- 18. Uneasy advice for the lazy?
- 19. Region in the Far East.

## "THE LISTENER" CROSSWORD

22. Solomon's forte?

23. Pure art gives rise to ecstasy. 24. These straws are for eating, not drinking.

Collins.

17. "And that one - which is death to hide

Lodged with me useless"

(Milton, "On His Blindness").

25. What Elizabeth did not do to Mr. 20. It may bring a blush to your cheek.

21. Part of a fine picture.

No. 706 (Constructed by R.W.H.)

Clues Down



and the same of the contract of the same o

1). 7. A soft one proverbially turneth away wrath.

8. Rainv ravens

(anag.) 13. In these ships you 22

see Len's goal. The innkeeper is

over age.

16. It may be of Cancer, 24 but has nothing to do with cancer.

