

WANTED: MAD HATTERS

SITUATED in the no-man's-land of the war between man and woman are hats—floppy hats, veiled hats, clinging hats, hats feathered and fruit-laden, hats buttoned, and hats bowed, hats with everything in fact except the ability to keep out the sun and the rain.

Most males retain some scars acquired in the battle of hats. They can tell you the course of the battle goes something like this:

"Did you manage to get that book for me today, Gertrude?"

"But, dear, I *couldn't*. I didn't have enough money."

"You had three pounds ten; the book was only two pounds five."

"Oh, yes, dear, but you see, I had to buy a hat."

"But, my dear, the book was . . ."

"I know, dear, but you see I just *had* to buy this hat. It was such a darling."

"But the book . . ."

"Don't you like it?"

"Well . . ."

"There! You never like anything I get. Men just never understand . . ."

At this point the husband wisely forgets about the book and makes the placating suggestion that the "darling" hat was just too, too, darling to be left all on its own in that great, expensive milliner's. He knows that for women hats have a mystic of their own. He knows, too, that the ritual of purchase is that (a) a hat should be bought when it can least be afforded, (b) it must have little or no utility value, and (c) it must be in the prevailing fashion.

For a woman, it seems, a hat serves the same purpose as a few extra drinks do for a man. It makes of her a different person. She can escape from a tiring or depressing day simply by becoming someone else. If the hat's a floppy, Garbo model, she may feel sultry and alluring; if it's a beret, she'll feel chic and Parisian. In short, she changes as

much as the male does after his first three or four—and if the catalyst is more expensive, at least it usually lasts longer.

Whatever the esoteric meaning of hats, however, their design is still a matter for public discussion. Soon, men and women both will have a chance to vent their feelings on this subject in a constructive and profitable manner. Following the example of an American "disc-jockey" who ran a competition for "zany" hats, Station 2ZB, Wellington, will shortly be inviting entries for *Hatsamania*, a competition to determine just how crazy a hat can be.

There are no rules worth noting. Entries may be as fantastic and ingenious as imagination can devise. They must, however, still be capable of being worn by a woman. The best entries will be exhibited by mannequins at 2ZB's studios during broadcasts of the three preliminary rounds and at a city store during the broadcast of the final.

Cash prizes of 25 guineas, 10 guineas and five guineas will be awarded for the three most frenetic entries in *Hatsamania*, while purchase orders for five guineas, two guineas and one guinea will be given the first three place-getters in each of the three preliminary rounds.

The first programme of the series will be broadcast from 2ZB at 3.15 p.m. on

Tuesday, April 21. Elsie Lloyd, of 2ZB's *Women's Hour*, and Lyell Boyes will describe the hats, interview the judges and announce the winners among the first batch of entries. The next two rounds will be broadcast from the same place at the same time on successive Tuesdays, and the final from a Wellington store at 3.15 p.m. on Thursday, May 7.

The public is invited to attend each session to view results for itself.

When *The Listener* called on Elsie Lloyd and Lyell Boyes at 2ZB's studio recently they were contemplating, with a mixture of horror and fascination, three preliminary samples (see cover) of the kind of mania their programme will encourage. "I don't know," said Elsie. "Hats are pretty crazy these days anyway."

"But," she continued conscious of a measure of male assent, "I think there's nothing like them for the morale." Hats, she thought, were the one thing women bought just to please themselves. "They must do—because all the man ever says is 'Oh, it's all right, dear. . . Is that the only one you could get?'" And, of course, if *The Listener* really wanted to know, they kept the hair tidy, they gave finish to an ensemble, they imparted

dignity—in fact, without one no woman could consider herself completely dressed.

A millinery expert *The Listener* spoke to fully agreed. Hats were not only a physical necessity; they were a mental tonic. No other wearing apparel gave such pleasure. Accordingly, most women were impeccably careful about the choice of a hat. "It has to be just right," said the expert. "It has to please from every angle. You'd be surprised how many women say, 'But I can't wear this hat with my nose.'"

As for crazy hats, well, it seemed a milliner would find it hard to make one. The creation of hats demanded a special talent. "It's art, you know," said the expert. "Don't you think so, really? It is art. . ."

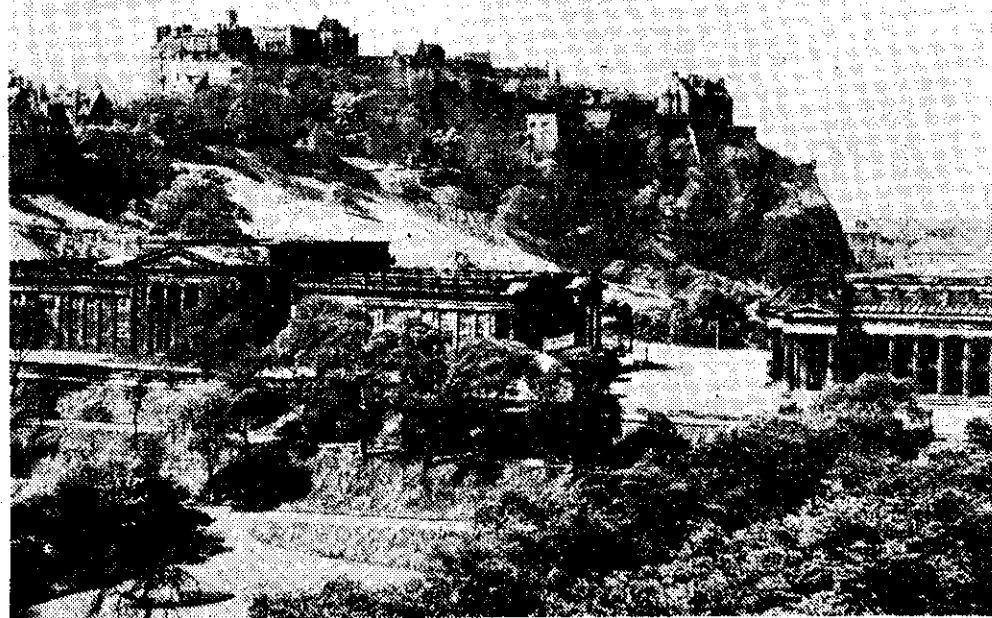
Back at the studio, *The Listener* examined *Hatsamania's* three pipe-openers. They were entitled, simply enough, "Egmont," "Doughnut," and "Coronation." Made of cardboard and paint and trimmed with green raffia, "Egmont" was a more-or-less true replica of Taranaki's pride—even unto its satellite peak. The raffia, it seemed, represented the bushline. Everything was in keeping, in fact, except the absence of a Taranaki gate. "Doughnut," made of bits of felt strung together like chain mail and sprinkled with icing sugar, was at the time the subject of argument. There was, it appeared, definitely one way it *should* be worn. "Coronation," a creation of pegs, clothesline and cardboard, was generally accepted as being the most lunatic of the hats present. "But, just wait," said Elsie Lloyd, "till the entries start rolling in. . ."



ELSIE LLOYD, PAULINE MICHAEL, LYELL BOYES

"Hats are pretty crazy these days, anyway"

N.P.S. photograph



SOMETHING of the noble setting of the Edinburgh Festival is caught in this picture of the castle with, in the foreground, the National Gallery and the Royal Scottish Academy