

MAD HATTERS'

M.B., whose observations on human nature in its more eccentric moments have frequently entertained our readers, succumbed to the lure of 2ZB's Crazy Hat contest. Her entries "also ran," but she claims to have learned a lot, as others — non-starters or also rans — may read.

I'VE never been a clothes-conscious woman, but even I felt some misgiving about appearing at the Grand Finale of the *Hatsamania* contest uncovered. It seemed a little disrespectful, considering the importance of the occasion. But what choice had I? The crown of my best black straw, butchered to make an Indian holiday, is an essential part of my "Squaw" creation, and my peach-bloom black pillbox, currently smothered by a pillow, is absolutely basic to my "Desdemona." But I am not alone in my hatlessness. Have the other bare-heads likewise put their hats beneath rank outsiders? All the men present are, of course, bareheaded, but probably for a different reason. (The only advertised male entry in the competition was contrived from an old pair of trousers.)

IT'S early yet, and I have time to go the rounds of the display tables once more and marvel at the infinite ingenuity of Woman. The tables are more crowded than they were a week or so ago, and it's now obviously impossible to display the 270-odd entries in a manner befitting their originality—there's a certain amount of quarrelling going on between styles, colours and periods. I feel the urge to impose some order on the richness and extravagance about me. Can we generalise at all about the Woman Behind the Hat? Let's see.

She reads the newspapers.

ONE hat, in the form of a gondola, is actually made out of newspaper. (Of course it could have come round the fish-and-chips.) But we have ample evidence that she knows what's going on around her by the tendency to topicality in many of the models.

There's the United Nations Topee, an early prize-winner. Then the enormous number of Coronation models, many combining the Patriotic with the Domestic motif—one hat was called Coronation Buttons and Bows, another had a realistic border of gilded clothes-pegs. Awareness of local happenings was indicated by an intricate model of Maraetai; "Petone Overbridge" was a second-heat prize-winner, a very conscientious piece of work unmarred by the suggestion of flippancy noticeable in the Harbour Bridge Model (sub-titled "Auckland's Dream").

She's a Sporting Type.

I PARTICULARLY liked the two race models made out of expired tote tickets, particularly the one with the horse and the balloon that had gone up, but now unfortunately had gone down. Our other national game was represented by "The First Try," I think it was called, a football rampant on a field vert, with a complete line-out of opposing teams. Then there was an impassioned little model, "Save the Ashes," consisting of an outsize ash-tray and cigarettes, garnished with crossed bats and wickets. Several hats featured card tables with hands half-dealt.

She's no Wowser.

I CONFESS I was rather shocked by the number of models based on the Hangover theme. Certainly there was one cocktail hat composed entirely of tin-foil milk-bottle tops, but the major-

ity boasted everything from crown-tops to champagne corks. The inclusion of a packet of aspirins among the trimmings was almost *de rigueur*, and this further reinforced the unwelcome suggestion of direct personal experience. Several equally sincere models took Smoking as their theme.

She's Incurably Domestic.

IT looked as though most of us found it hard to escape the domestic angle, either in theme or in materials. The wash-day motif was popular ("Professor Mundy"—a revolving clothes-line on a mortar-board drying-green, was a first heat prize-winner.) Charring came a close second. One model was composed of an inverted bucket with check dish-cloth and feather-duster for ornament. One of my favourites was "Friday pack-horse," a cornucopious string-bag crammed with packages and protruding vegetables. Many of the hats were based on sewing and knitting themes—you can

make a smart toque out of a hank of wool and two knitting needles.

She has a Well-developed Maternal Instinct.

I'M not a Freudian by any means, but I couldn't help feeling there was something significant about the large number of hats based on the nest-building theme (certainly Elsie Lloyd did mention nests as *Hatsamania* possibilities in one of her early broadcasts on the subject, but I prefer to think that the contest provided an outlet for a basic urge rather than that women are all that responsive to external suggestion). Be that as it may, I saw hope for the national future in the birds' nests, hen-coops, and sitting hens. And I think we could include under "Maternal" the model houses, the Stork number, and one perfectly sweet Christening Model, which consisted of a bassinette with drapes.

She's Resourceful.

ACTUALLY all the models showed this to a greater or less degree, but it was gratifying to see how many *objets* if not *d'art* then *de vertu* could be contrived from unconsidered trifles like scraps of wire netting, old corks, handbags, shavings, and, of course, that old pair of trousers.

She's a Good Citizen.

OUR current road safety campaign was reflected in several models—notably the Traffic-'at, a third-heat prize-winner, which boasted a trafficator arrow on either side worked by strings, a rear-vision mirror in front and a red light at the back.

She's Not Noticeably Literary.

THERE were very few literary concepts (my *Desdemona* was nowhere to be seen) but listeners would have been interested in a charming model called "Dinner at Antoine's"—a gloved black hand with a cigarette, emerging from a black velvet cushion. There were two Garden of Eden models, incorpor-



JUDGING the final of "Hatsamania" at 2ZB. The entry "Petone Overbridge" is under scrutiny here

N.P.S. photograph

★ THE three place-getting entries, below left are (left to right): "Busy Line" (second), "The Week-end Joint" (first), and "Bats in the Belfry" (third). "The Week-end Joint" was the creation of Miss E. Judd (below, right), of Lower Hutt

N.P.S. photograph ★

