

THE NEW HAT

By Beth Slater Whitson

“O mamma, isn’t it ugly?” cried Mary Frances, holding up the new hat which had just come by parcel post from Aunt Mary, in the city.

A little shadow passed over Mrs. Austin’s face. “I was just thinking how pretty it is and what good taste Aunt Mary has,” she answered slowly.

“I don’t think it pretty at all,” replied Mary Frances with a long sigh. “I did hope she would send me one like Susie Bently’s. It has the sweetest wreath of pink roses around it and long streamers to tie under the chin.”

“But Susie’s had seems to be quite too grown-up for a child her age,” said Mrs. Austin gently.

“O, I just think it lovely!” protested Mary Frances.

Mrs. Austin made no reply, but put the new hat back in the box with a troubled expression.

The next day was Sunday; and instead of being ready for Sunday school on time, Mary Frances came slowly downstairs, where her mother was waiting for her, nearly an hour late. She wore the new hat, but her eyes were red, and the corners of her mouth turned slightly down, and she was looking very unlike the little girl who usually came flying down the stairs on Sunday morning, eager to be off.

Mrs. Austin looked up with a smile, pretending not to see the red eyelids. “We were lazy people this morning,” she said cheerfully; “and now we are too late for Sunday school. Suppose we go for a little walk before time for church.”

It was a beautiful sunshiny day, and before they had gone a block Mary Frances was smiling faintly at something her mother was telling. Presently they met two ladies and a little girl which whom Mary Frances and her mother were only slightly acquainted.

“It is truly delightful,” one of them said when they had passed, “to see a child as simply as prettily dressed as that one. I’d do wonder where Mrs. Austin got that little hat. It is so pretty and childish. I’d like one for Lorain.”

The breeze bore the conversation clearly back to the ears of Mary Frances and her mother, and the little girl looked up penitently.

“O mamma,” she said, “I’ll never be ugly again about my clothes. I just thought my hat wasn’t pretty because I wanted a flowered one like Susie Bently’s. Please forgive me, mamma.”

“Indeed I will,” returned Mrs. Austin warmly. “Mother thinks it best to wear plain little hats that will not make other little girls envious.”

“O,” said Mary Frances understandingly, “I see now, mamma.”

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