

HATS OF THE MIGHTY

LARGE SIZES USED BY SOME OF THE MOST NOTABLE MEN.

How and When the Silk Hat, the Hat of the Mighty Ever Since 1797, Came into Vogue—Size of Head, Other Things Being Equal, Measured the Greatness of Men From That Period Down.

Ever since a certain John Hetherington, on January 15, 1797, appeared in the Strand wearing—to quote a newspaper report of the period—upon his head "what he called a silk hat, a tall structure, having a shiny lustre and calculated to frighten timid people," the top hat, which, to quote "The Thunderer" of the same date, was "destined to work a revolution in headgear," has been the headgear of the mighty; and in the case of Joseph Hume, the political reformer and financier, a mighty headgear. Joseph Hume, who, when member of Parliament for Middlesex, proposed in 1834 a fixed duty on imported corn, apparently had the largest head of any man famous in the English history, judging from some interesting statistics respecting the headpieces of celebrities, which were forwarded, together with a traveling cap, by an admirer of Mr. Gladstone in 1897. His size in hats, indeed, was 8½, or half a size larger than that of Dr. Thompson, who succeeded Archbishop Longley at York, and of Daniel O'Connell, whose head covering, which was on view a few years ago at a meeting of the County Kildare Archaeological Society at Naas, measured 8½ inches in width and 10 inches in its longest diameter, and was of sufficient dimensions completely to extinguish the chairman of the meeting as far as the chin when he elected to try it on. Following "Dan" O'Connell in the size of headgear comes Dr. Thomas Chalmers, the eminent theologian, and one of the few Britains who have been elected members of the French Institute; and following him W. M. Thackeray, who was a short head, in sporting parlance, in front of Mr. Gladstone, Charles Dickens and Robert Burns, whose head was never graced by a tall silk hat, for the poet died exactly six months before the happening of the stirring events that marked the occasion of the birth of the tall hat.

The painstaking correspondent of the Grand Old Man did not conclude his statistical record of headpieces with Burns, but extended it so far as to record the fact that our King Edward VII. requires a No. 7 head covering, his nephew of Germany a hat bearing the mystic figure of 6½, the late Dean Stanley a 6½ "tile," and the Duke of Cornwall and York a "topper" of the proportions represented by the size 6½—information that the original recipient found, as he mentioned when acknowledging the gift, "full of interest." Large as some of these mighty head coverings appear, they would, if placed side by side with a couple of straw hats made in 1899 and last year at Luton, appear almost insignificant. In the one case the crown of the straw erection measured about twelve inches high, and across the brim the measurement was 6½ feet; the hat, which required the services of three experienced men to block and iron it, contained no fewer than two hundred yards of jumbo pleat one inch wide, and the hat box in which it traveled to Newcastle (Australia) measured seven feet square and was two feet deep. The second "straw" was even larger, for it measured over seven feet across the brim, twenty-one feet around the brim and three feet round the crown. Moreover, it contained 250 yards of dark blue and white jumbo pleat, and no fewer than four men, of vast experience, were occupied in its manufacture.

Granting the indestructibility of tall silk hats if placed in the hands of experienced renovators and duly steamed and reshelacked, it may

be asked what becomes of all those hats that are not transported to Australia or Africa, to be proudly donned by the artless savage? The answer to this question could be supplied perhaps in bated breath by many—they are collected. It seems perhaps incredible that any man should care to turn his house into a museum of "shocking bad hats," but it is done none the less, as is evidenced by the startling prices that some famous hats attain; such, for instance, as the sum, £300 in gold, paid for the Mexican sombrero presented to General Grant while he was in that country in 1882. This now rests in the National Museum at Washington, where, if we remember rightly, reposes the headgear worn by President Lincoln on the night of his assassination in Ford's theatre, and is considered the finest specimen of its kind extant. It does not matter in what state of disrepair the hat may be, or the material out of which it was fashioned; the collector is influenced in his regard only by the degree of celebrity attained by the original wearer and the uniqueness of his head covering. A hat made out of an old pair of trousers worn by George Buchanan, the poet, historian, and tutor to the Earl of Murray, son of James V. of Scotland, such as the cap used in the graduation ceremonies at the University of Edinburgh, or even a cap fashioned out of a similar garment once donned by John Knox, such as the cap at St. Andrew's University, would not be appreciated by the ordinary individual, but to the collector they would be almost priceless. This is shown by the fact that when Baron Christiani damaged the headgear of President Loubet at the Auteuil racecourse a few years ago, an enterprising American collector promptly offered a bid for \$400 (£80) for the ruined hat, but only received from the President a smile and an evasive reply. — From The London Globe.

MOND GAS.

Discovery by a Chemist, for Which Great Things Are Claimed.

A recent consular report from England says that British commercial and scientific circles are much interested in a discovery made by Dr. Ludwig Mond of the great chemical firm of Brunner, Mond & Co., limited. This discovery is a gas for furnaces and gas engines which, it is claimed, can be supplied to consumers at a maximum price of two pence per 1,000 cubic feet.

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There are many stories of the years when the Duke of York was in naval service, one of which at least has the merit of being absolutely true, for it was told at a public dinner by Admiral Sir Frederick Bedford, who took an actual part in the incident. Sir Frederick was at the time in command of the ship in which the Duke was serving as lieutenant, and as the vessel was coaling in Turkish waters the Sultan sent a representative to greet the grandson of the British sovereign.

The Pasha was naturally received by the Admiral, then a captain, to whom he showed but scant courtesy. "I am come to greet the Prince who is in command," he observed. "I am in command," replied Captain Bedford; "the Prince is one of my lieutenants, but if you will wait a minute you will see him."

And just then Prince George, who had been in command of the coaling party, and who had in the exercise of his duties become smothered in coal dust appeared. The spectacle of Queen Victoria's grandson so engaged apparently inspired the Turkish official with mingled surprise and horror.

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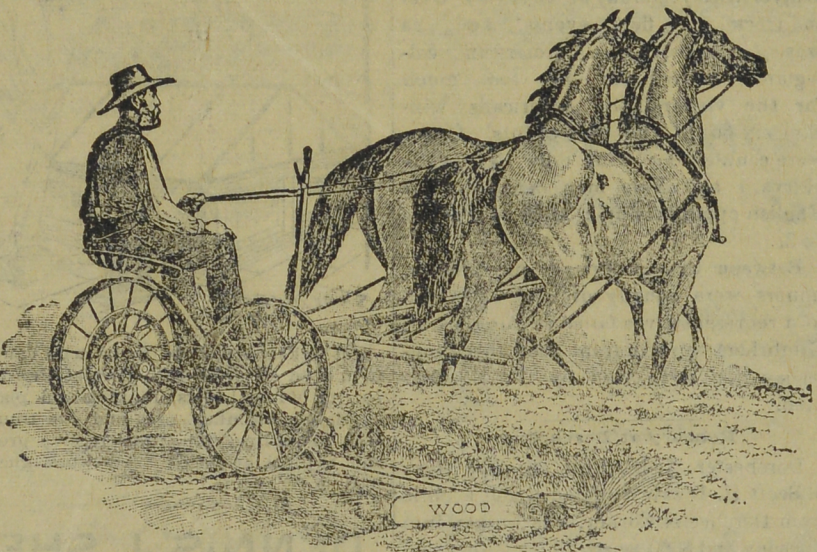
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