

MARY. You see... what you described... in your letter... Miss MATTY. Yes, yes... I copied the description from the St. James's Chronicle... it was written by a lady of quality it said... an exact description of the new turban worn by Her Majesty, Queen Adelaide at Court...

MARY (*embarrassed*). But, Miss MATTY... you are so pretty... a turban is such a heavy, clumsy thing... Miss MATTY. Satin, it was... and sea-green...! (*She crosses to sofa.*) Perhaps we will just take a peep at it now... Not, of course, that I care about dress... but I would like to look tidy... and having heard that Queen Adelaide herself...

(*She takes the hat-box and is about to open it when she sees that MARTHA has approached and is peering over her shoulder...*)

MARTHA...! The kitchen...!

(*Exit MARTHA.*)

MARY (*crossing below sofa*). Miss MATTY... before you open it... I must tell you that I did not bring a turban... They are such vastly ugly things and not suitable at all for Cranford... had you but seen them you would agree...

MISS MATTY (*terribly crestfallen*). Oh... not a turban... MARY (*eagerly producing from the box a very pretty cap... all lace and lavender ribbons*). But this cap—look... how pretty it is... And it will be so becoming, I know...

MISS MATTY (*with resignation but no interest*). Perhaps you are right, my dear. I am sure you did your best. It is just like the caps all the ladies in Cranford are wearing, and they have had theirs for a year, I dare say...

MARY (*twirling it round*). See... both back and side-fronts... and such pretty ribbons...

MISS MATTY. It is very pretty, my dear. And, after all...! What does it signify, what we wear here in Cranford, where everybody knows us!

MARY. Come... try it on...

MISS MATTY. Here? In the parlour?

MARY. No one will see...

MISS MATTY (*removing and giving MARY the cap she is wearing*)



MISS POLE

MISS MATTY

MARY

MISS BARKER

Act Three. A corner of the parlour, in front of the bay window D.L., converted into Miss MATTY's tea shop.
(*Courtesy—Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton.*)