



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH JEN TURANO



After a Fashion

by Jen Turano

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1. This book seems to be a little different from the books in your first series in that the heroine is not from society, but working class. Was there a reason for creating such a different type of heroine?

In order to keep my writing fresh, I decided to change things up a bit. Having Miss Harriet Peabody, a hat maker who does not mingle within society, develop an unusual alliance with Mr. Oliver Addleshaw, a well-respected member of society, allowed me to create a story that had two completely different people coming together. Sparks immediately began to fly from the moment they arrived on the same page together, and that type of tension is remarkably enjoyable to write.

2. The book is titled *After a Fashion*. Where there any specific fashions of this particular time that you'd care to mention?

Well, obviously hats were quite important during the Gilded Age. Quite frankly, I was appalled to learn that entire species of birds were decimated because ladies of that time demanded their hats be adorned with numerous exotic feathers. But more interesting to me were the bustles. Since I majored in Clothing and Textiles, I've had some experience with bustles, none of that experience being exactly pleasant. I had to create my own bustle in a historical clothing class, and honestly, not only are bustles somewhat difficult to make, the ones fashioned out of horsehair are incredibly itchy, even while wearing petticoats. As the 1880s progressed, the bustles kept getting larger and larger, finally making it next to impossible for the ladies to sit down. Thankfully, bustles weren't a trend that lasted forever, but I'm certainly glad I'm not expected to attach something like that to my backside and walk around.

3. Arnold Constable & Company plays a part in this story. Was there a reason you chose that particular department store?

Arnold Constable & Company was known for its high-end goods, and many of the socially elite shopped there, especially since it was located on what was known as the "Ladies' Mile." This stretch of shops, including Tiffany's, Macy's, and B. Altman to name a few, got its start when A.T. Steward moved his department store into a white palatial building on 9th Street clear back in 1862. To this day, parts of the "Ladies' Mile" can still be seen, although it's sad that there are no longer any private carriages lining the streets as well-dressed ladies in walking gowns stroll through the shops, spending their wealthy husbands' money. As an aside, it does need to be noted that the ladies of high society bought most of their wardrobes from Worth in Paris, traveling there at least once a year to place their orders.

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4. Did you have a favorite scene in *After a Fashion*?

I would have to say my favorite is the dining scene, set in Delmonico's. Poor Miss Harriet Peabody has to sit down to a formal dinner, one where numerous courses will be served, hoping desperately that no more than eight courses show up in front of her since that's about her limit in regard to what silverware to use. Delmonico's was a real restaurant in New York City that the elite did patronize, although they mostly went there for the Patriarch Balls hosted by Mrs. Astor (as in Caroline Astor) rather than to sit down to dine. Another interesting tidbit I learned while researching that particular restaurant was that if a society lady did go to dine at Delmonico's, she would not wear a gown that showed her shoulders or too much cleavage—that would have caused a scandal, although it was perfectly acceptable for her to show a great deal of skin if she went to a dinner party at a private house.

5. Miss Harriet Peabody has two delightful friends in *After a Fashion*—Miss Millie Longfellow and Miss Lucetta Plum. Will readers see these characters again?

Since I love writing series, of course readers will see Miss Longfellow and Miss Plum again. I really enjoyed developing their close friendship in *After a Fashion*, and while doing that developing, Millie's story, along with Lucetta's, began to come together. Millie is a nanny with the unfortunate propensity of getting dismissed from her positions on an all-too-frequent basis, while Lucetta is an actress with a rather mysterious past. To help these young ladies find their way, so to speak, we have the ever-resourceful Reverend Thomas Gilmore, and . . . the charming Mrs. Hart, an elderly lady with matchmaking on her mind. Time will tell if Mrs. Hart gets her dearest wish and sees her three young friends well settled.