

**THE FASHIONS OF WOMEN.**  
**A Discursive Chapter Founded Upon the Most Orthodox Models.**

BRANTFORD, Ont., Sept. 11.—I have been lately a victim to several serious reflections, based upon the fact that during the past three months of my periodical remarks to a forbearing public I have systematically neglected to take advantage of that sacred prerogative of my sex—discourse upon dress. My inner consciousness confronts me with the conviction of having evaded a duty which she owes to her fellow-women, if that be not too hybrid an expression, whoever she be, who addresses them through the medium of the daily newspapers, the duty of instructing them as to wherewithal they shall be clothed. Nor have the fashions stood still that I should hold my peace among them. The transformations in millinery are as gorgeously unexpected as ever. The current literature of the modiste still casts shadows of coming events variously trimmed and altogether novel. That field for ornamental writing has not been contracted. There has been much to say, and that I have not said it is probably as little to my credit as filching a venerable rhyme from "Pinafore." I am moved, however, to make tardy reparation to the maids and matrons of my journalistic acquaintance, justly aggrieved at having been talked to for such an unconscionable time without hearing anything of profit, and though conscious of an awful incapacity in the chaotic depths of which gorges and pleats and similar technicalities float about uncertainly, and from which I am certain that the raiment of a rag doll would be evolved with difficulty, I propose to devote this article to considerations of attire. Therefore, O man! whosoever thou art that readest, turn thine eyes unto the contemplation of the cablegrams on the first page or the politics on the fourth, for with these present speculations a creature who has only to be encircled with a tape-measure, and lo! he is arrayed—has nothing whatever to do.

I have a theory as to the proper construction of an orthodox article of this nature, gathered from a careful perusal of "The Queen, the Lady's Newspaper," and several other edifying publications. Beginning with a pleasant allusion to those inconvenient fur-clad ancients who persisted in staining themselves blue in open defiance of the laws of construction in the second book of Cæsar's "Bellum Britannicum," it should amiably proceed with a cursory glance at the ruffles and head dresses and curly shoe points of the middle ages. A reference to the mad theories of one Teufelsdröckh, a reflection upon the remarkable fact that in the course of events the bodices of our great grandmothers are tolerably sure to become our bodices, another to the effect that all is vanity, and a stern charge in closing never to suspend the weight of the skirt from the waist, this last being varied by a fervent adjuration never to suspend it from the shoulders, an attitude of the dress-reformers that leaves the final adjustment of one's garments a matter of doubt and dismay. Allowing, therefore, for the usual disparity of theory and practice, if I fail in my treatment of this question of the day, you see it will not be for lack of a lofty ideal.

We will let the ancient Britons go. I fancy they are principally used for decorative purposes, and beyond acknowledging their virtue in this respect we need not consider them farther. Clearly a treatise upon fashions has most unprofitable business with a people who, however admirably they frescoed themselves, left no patterns. If Cæsar had only thought of illustrations! But he didn't, and all his verbiage only leaves the ancient Briton a picturesque nullity in the fashionable world for ever and ever.

What a sinner, by the way, is this fashionable world! How is it perpetually called to account! I dare say the ancient Briton thinks himself well out of it if he has attained the accomplishment of thought in the sphere that now rejoices in the peripatetic art gallery his presence affords. It would seem that the fashionable world serves its best end in affording a wide and indefinite verbal mark for onslaught upon its inhabitants. Nobody is seriously hurt, but the abstract aggregate is given to understand that it is not approved, that it has been weighed in the balance, and by reason of its hollowness and insincerity and flippancy and falsity a single jean-clad laborer of honest mind has sent it flying high. The inhabitants of the fashionable world, however, differ from other people only in the possession of this quality. Subtract it and they are quite human, but not more nearly related to the dust than the rest. The crime is, therefore, in being fashionable; but the term is a philological absurdity if it does not imply a following. The fashionable world is therefore created by the unfashionable world, which also undertakes to criticize, condemn and execute as well as copy it. It is hard to understand why men find the wealth and position they are all striving for so objectionable before they are obtained. One might hazard the explanation, though, that it is a form of philosophy, both dignified and improving to the popular mind, to moralize over the stomachic disorders induced by eating sour grapes.

I observe that the crinoline is to be *en vogue* in Boston. That it is to be very much *en vogue* I gather from the fact that appears in the newspapers—perhaps on this account I had better call it a statement—that a number of young Bostonians of the genius male have banded together to stamp the hateful thing out of existence. The way in which it is to be done is exquisitely simple and will commend itself to everybody. These young men have decided that the crinoline must go and, to insure its departure, that it must go alone. In other words, they have "solemnly vowed to marry any lady" whose costume is even remotely suggestive of the hooped ingenuity which masculine taste has been pleased to find obnoxious. Heroic remedy! Empty opera boxes, desolate promenades, programmes *sans* initials, life *sans* matrimony! Verily pride goeth before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction. Where is she that now envieth the Boston girl, compelled to a tearful renunciation of at least one of those ameliorating circumstances that make existence dear, while the rest of us may pursue the unclassical tenor of our way in what attire we will, and no man revileth save covertly, perhaps, and to his wife. But when one reflects upon the metaphysical make-up of the Boston maiden, her convictions, her conscience, her consistency, the issue of this fateful matter is not far to see. She will retire into the seclusion of her inner girl, and, with the assistance of Joseph Cook, she will conclude that while mere personal adornment is a matter of infinitely small concern compared with the infinities of her usual contemplations, she would feel herself forever false to Henry James and the whole wide world if she countenanced but for an instant this abrogation of the sacred rights of woman. It will be her duty and her privilege to maintain them by wearing the article in question whether she likes it or not, and she is a Spartan about her duty.

And the Hub shall be filled with hoopskirts. And the youths who presumed to bray Shall fold up their ears like their kinsfolk, And as foolishly amble away.  
 I hope Longfellow's kind ghost will consider no offense intended, and vex me not in consequence of this. It is ex-

tremely difficult, as everybody knows, to properly express ashinuity in prose. The crinoline, however, needed something to popularize it. It is ugly and ungraceful, and its reign is always short. Its makers and vendors will have reason to rejoice at this spirit of insurrection in the youth of Boston. Yet I have no doubt that some short-sighted dress reformer, catching at the noble idea of these young men of Boston, will uphold it to the world as an admirable plan to induce the frivolous young woman of the age to adopt the dress designs submitted to them by philanthropic parties without any waist. Indeed, I think it has been urged upon the world before now that if the men would only "take a stand" upon the question of dress reform it would be speedily and satisfactorily settled. The idea has its origin in the old fallacy that womankind arrays itself primarily, secondarily and finally to please mankind. The fact is that we dress to please ourselves—not that it is any subject for self-gratulation—and that men are pleased with the result, as they generally are, whatever they pretend, is entirely incidental and often astonishing. Of course in this matter men imagine themselves despots. Witness the final dictum of the newspapers upon the advent of anything startling in the fashionable costume, only equalled in absurdity by the complacency with which they accept and admire it after it has been calmly worn long enough to give them the impression that their approval brought it into favor. It is very funny, but it is quite as true that the density of masculine ignorance about feminine attire is only paralleled by the audacity with which it attempts to dictate the same.

But I have every confidence in the Boston girls. They will not fail to reflect all sorts of credit upon the sex at this crisis; and we may confidently look forward to the early appearance of a paragraph stating that the crushed masculinity of Boston, to show the depth of its abasement, has recorded an equally solemn vow not to honor with its slightest attention any lady not possessing crinoline qualifications.

I wish I hadn't stated my idea of an article of this description, for I discover with remorse and contrition that it has all followed the ancient Briton. I might "call your attention for a few moments in closing," as the preacher hath it, to divers remarks upon the prevalence and atrocity of stripes this season. I have no reason to suppose, however, that such dilatory comments would make my shortcomings longer. Confessing their extreme abbreviation, therefore, I shall retire into the depths of *Demorest's* and kindred authorities, and remain there some time before again aspiring in print unto those things that are too high for me.

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