

From the *Forget me not* for 1839.

THE FLAG OF ENGLAND.

BY CHARLES SWAIN.

When whirling flames round Moscow rose,
And fetters bowed the pride of Spain;
When Austria, chased by Gallic foes,
Fled from Marengo's fatal plain;
When Italy and Egypt knew
The woes their dread invader hurled;
Then high the flag of England flew
And carried freedom to the world!

Then honoured be the flag that bore
The light of triumph o'er the sea,
That burst the bonds which Europe wore,
And made the homes of millions free!
May Peace her laurelled reign prolong,
Whilst beauty crowns each valiant name;
And be the poet's noblest song
The Union Flag of England's fame!

ORIGIN OF THE POT-HEADS.

BY WILLIAM COX.

"What a shocking bad hat!"—*Modern Impertinence.*

The world has improved essentially in many particulars: we do amuse ourselves with roasting each other alive for differences of opinion, and we use forks instead of fingers. But there are declensions.

Now a hat!

Was there ever such a shapeless, makeless, idealess, clumsy, ungainly, uncomfortable utensil manufactured by man as a modern hat? Short-brimmed or broad-brimmed, high-crowned or low-crowned; silk, felt or beaver; black, brown or white, 'tis all the same. Of a verity it is the most unmeaning covering that ever son of Adam put his head under, since Noah's sons began to replenish the earth and hats became generally requisite.

We have no trace of fashions antecedent to those times, but the profligate through grateful oriental antediluvians would never wear such things as we carry about the streets. It is not to be supposed for a moment.

There never was such a race of hats. Even the sugar-loafs of the puritans, ugly as they were, had some sort of character about them. They put you in mind of a church-steeple or the Peak of Teneriffe, on a small scale. They had resemblances in nature or art. A modern hat is like nothing but itself.

Who first invented it?

His name, fortunately for him, is shielded by oblivion from the execrations of posterity.

How came it to be adopted?

It must have been in times of intense political excitement, when people knew not what they did, that these excrescences first crept upon their heads. In their calmer moments they could never have given themselves up to such a delusion.

And now, behold, the things are almost universally worn! Europe, America, great portions of Asia—strange! Calcutta is the great depot from whence hats will be disseminated over the East: the English have much to answer for. The French are carrying them into Africa on the north; the John Bulls are moving them from the Cape into the interior of that continent. The Ashantees will get them in time!

They are the great counterbalance to the blessings of civilization. However, there is no help for it; if the heathens get civilization, they must take hats along with it. There is no such thing as unmixed good in this world. But why wear them? The question is easily asked.

Yet what can a helpless individual do? Nothing else is to be had for love or money.

Were you to go without a hat, people would think you affected singularity, and stare. It is unpleasant to be stared at.

A Highland bonnet accords not with a forked swallow-tailed coat, neither would the dashing looped beaver of the time of Charles harmonize with the unromantic surtout.

Should you cover your head with the graceful and convenient turban, your officious friends and neighbours would directly infer from the covering, that there was something the matter with the head itself. They would lay hold of you, remove the turban, shave off your hair, and put you in a receptacle for the insane; and, should you happen to have property, ten to one your nearest of kin would never think your senses sufficiently recovered to be let out again.

This deters the discriminating from setting a good example. No! The prejudices of the times must be complied with.

But there is no occasion to submit in silence. We will utter a few indignant truths.

Almost everything used by man has something to recommend it—some good property. A hat is most ingeniously and perversely adapted for discomfort at all times and seasons. In warm weather, it is hot, hard, and makes not even a pretension to shading your face from the sun's rays; in cold weather it is equally comfortless, altogether lacking warmth; in windy weather it manifests a constant disposition to take itself off without permission, leaving you exposed to general admiration; and in rainy weather, the two spouts with which, by the turning up of the rim it is furnished,

act as conduits to convey the water to the small of your back, down which, should the shower be heavy and long continued, it runs with great velocity. Hence the prevalence of rheumatism, lumbago, sciatica.

But it is most afflictive to the eye. Never was there a more disgraceful object. Ask an artist. The very boldest of them are afraid of an hat. Step into an exhibition-room: look at the innumerable "portraits of gentlemen" which adorn (or cover) the walls in all directions, engaged in all sorts of occupations—in-door and out-door—and how many have their hats on? No—the artist is a better judge. He knows right well that all the component portions of modern male dress are meagre, shabby, ill-adapted for effect, but that the hat is more especially execrable. If he wants to paint anything graceful or striking, he goes to the ancients or the orientals—to the Celt or the savage, for the sake of the costume. Modern fashions afford but poor "drapery" studies. Coats and small clothes are bad enough, but the hat is the crowning-piece of hideousness; and there cannot be the slightest doubt that three hats placed on the heads of as many figures, and "located" any way prominently in a romantic picture, would utterly ruin the best reputation ever established by man.

When a hat has become old, bruised, weather-stained, torn at the rim, the crown partially knocked out, the sides squeezed together, in short, as much altered from its original shape as it well can be, it then becomes of some value for the purposes of art, and placed on the head of an interesting-looking vagabond, it has then something of character about it. But a good hat is good for nothing; it is simply the most unpicturesque of manufactured or created things; an artist would sooner paint a pancake.

What is the reason that the scene of so many of our romantic plays and melo-dramas are laid a couple of centuries back? Why, on account of the dress, to be sure. The troublous state of the times enters not materially into the composition of one play out of five, but the advantages of becoming costume is calculated upon in all. How gracefully does the looped beaver and drooping feather set off a love scene! What chivalrous effect does it impart to a rescue! and when pulled darkly and desperately over the brows, what a fine shadowy gloom does it give to an assassination! What possible pleasure would there be in seeing a murder committed by a fellow in a narrow-brimmed hat? What a mean, despicable, pick-pocket, petty-larceny appearance would he have. He would not look like a murderer! No wonder assassination is on the decline.

And yet, to the scandal of the taste of the earth: be it spoken, these shapelessly-shaped things have nearly displaced all other sorts of head-covering. Peasants, priests, knights, lords, kings and princes, all wear the everlasting, monotonous hat. Had this been so in the olden time how much would we have lost. Suppose Richard the Third treading the stage with a white "tile on his head!" or the prince of Denmark—"the glass of fashion"—in a modern water-proof! It would be the ghost's turn to exclaim—

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us!"

And when we shall have become the past, and yet unborn playwrights begin to ransack our records for dramatic materials, what will be the principal obstacle to our great men being resuscitated, and again "strutting their hour upon the stage" for the amusement and edification of posterity? The hat, to be sure—the hat.

Napoleon had an eye to futurity—he wore a cocked hat.

Invidious reflections upon particular bodies or classes of men are, doubtless, to be despised and avoided, but really—hatters! An amiable feeling may be carried too far, yet we refrain further than to ask—"Was there ever a hatter that evinced a taste for poetry, a love of nature, or, indeed, showed any signs of possessing a perception of the beautiful in any of its varied forms and manifestations?" If so, that man was not born to be a hatter; circumstances have thrown him into a wrong sphere of action; he will probably fail in business. But as for a genuine hatter possessing any of those capabilities, "we hold the thing to be impossible." Look where he spends his days—surrounded by hats! Must not his taste of necessity become perverted, his eye gradually lose all correct notions of harmony and proportion? And if this be not so, so much the worse, for how does he pass his time? In endeavouring to persuade people that the things among which he is stationed are "handsome," "becoming," etc. In this case it must be prejudicial to his morals; his mind must get a twist.

We said that a hat was unlike anything else in nature or art. An anecdote we have lately read shows the assertion to be incorrect—art has produced its parallel.

An English gentleman, who lately travelled in the East, entered one beautiful summer's evening a remote Persian village. The sensation his appearance created was immense: troops of boys ran shouting after him, men stared upon him with intense curiosity, and veils were partially withdrawn with such precipitation and indiscretion, that the Englishman saw more Persian female eyes than generally falls to the lot of travellers. The gentleman accounted for the extraordinary fervor of his reception by supposing that, as the village, though of some extent, was far removed from the common track, it had not, probably, within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, been before visited by a European; and this was in reality the case. On he went, but the crowd continued to increase to such a degree as he advanced up the main street, that he was

obliged to take refuge in a coffee-shop in order to relieve himself from the noise and pressure. Ascending to the roof of the house, which, after the Eastern fashion, was flat and covered with fragrant shrubs, he sat himself quietly down to contemplate the rich sunset and enjoy the cool breeze of evening. His attention, however, was speedily called to other matters. As soon as he again became visible to the mob below, a tremendous yell rent the sky, and sent alarm to the traveller's bosom. The concourse of people was now very large, and one and all of them seemed to be labouring under the greatest excitement. Sticks, spears, guns, or whatever they happened to have in their hand, were pointed in the direction of the traveller's head, and this proceeding was accompanied by the most violent gesticulation and uproar. Though a brave man, the traveller became somewhat tremulous. He began to doubt his good taste in leaving his native country—thought of his wife and children, his home comforts and his sins—and of the horror of perishing in a far, foreign land by the hands of semi-barbarians, with no one to bear a token to those he held dear, or give a hint of his untimely fate. In fact, he was getting decidedly pathetic, when a violent knocking was heard at the street-door, which the mob seemed very much disposed to beat in. At last the landlord appeared, expressed a fervent hope that the traveller's "shadow might never be less;" but at the same time earnestly implored him to descend and satisfy the people, or they would pull his (the landlord's) house down about his ears. The poor traveller gave up all for lost, but not wishing to be the cause of mischief to others in his last moments,

"He looked to sun and stream and plain,
As things he ne'er might see again,"

and then descended to meet his fate like a man.

As soon as he crossed the threshold about a dozen eager individuals attempted to lay hold of him by the head. Not relishing such unceremonious behaviour, he set his back against the door, drew two pocket pistols, and straightway the eager individuals fell back with some precipitation. Upon this, a venerable man (the sage of the village) stepped forward, and by signs and words gave the traveller to understand no harm was intended toward him—that it was not his head they wanted, but what he had on it. Much relieved in mind, the gentleman wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and courteously handed them his hat. Exclamations of surprise and wonder immediately burst from every lip as they passed it hurriedly one to another. "It is a pot!" cried they—"a soft pot! God is great, and Mahomet is his prophet!—a soft pot!"

Here lay the mystery. It appeared that the traveller's hat, both in form and colour, strikingly resembled a pot or cooking utensil in common use among those people, and therefore when he appeared in their streets, wearing what they considered a pot as an article of clothing, it naturally struck them as a curious proceeding, and created a prodigious sensation. The village gathered together on the instant, and warm disputes immediately arose as to whether it was a pot or not. The minority, or sceptical party, scouted the bare idea of a man's wearing a pot upon his head, particularly in a hot climate, as altogether preposterous; but the great majority contended that this sort of reasoning was all very well if applied to true believers, but that in this instance the man was a Giaour—a Frank, and therefore "less than a dog"—that "Mahomet was not his prophet," and Allah only knew what he might choose to wear! Hence the mighty hubbub.

When, however, they had all carefully inspected the hat, the sceptical minority reluctantly gave in! They allowed that it was really and truly a pot, only formed of very inferior materials to their own pots, whereupon the popular party gave a great shout and became more convinced than ever of the infallibility of a majority; and in that lone village, to this hour, "earth's proudest isle"—the land of Shakspeare and Milton, Locke, Bacon, and Newton, is only known as "THE COUNTRY OF THE POT-HEADS!"

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF ERROR.—It is almost as difficult to make a man unlearn his errors as his knowledge. Mal-information is more hopeless than non-information; for error is always more busy than ignorance. Ignorance is a black sheet, on which we may write; but error is a scribbled one, on which we must first erase. Ignorance is contented to stand still with her back to the truth; but error is more presumptuous, and proceeds in the same direction. Ignorance has no light, but error follows a false one. The consequence is, that error, when she retraces her foot steps, has further to go, before she can arrive at the truth, than ignorance.

BATTLE DURING AN ECLIPSE.—It is mentioned by Herodotus, that in the time of Cyaxares, king of the Medes, an engagement between his army and the Lydian forces was broken off by the sudden indications of an eclipse of the solar planet. Its coming had been foretold by Thales, the Milesian, but the contending armies, not aware of the fact, suddenly found themselves involved in utter darkness, so that foe could not recognise foe. Awed by the solemnity of the event, the parties rested from the fight, and listened to mutual negotiations for peace. A treaty ensued, and fierce war, which had continued six years, was terminated.