

and bullets are in question; but when the arrows are ideas, and the shot consists of words, they only who deserve are shootable, the rest are as bullet-proof as a knight in chain armour, or giant-slaying Jack in his coat of invincible green. In these "hap-hazard hits" I do not intend to indulge in reckless archery; but now and then, here and there, on this and that, as occasion serves, to pull the string with the view of lodging arrows of truth in heart and conscience, winging cheery messages to the drooping and perplexed, and dealing death-wounds to whatever hampers and hinders in the struggle after goodness and truth. I readily promise to choose my targets cautiously; and then, why, if I can, I will hit the bull's-eye with whatever force I may, ay, even to the blinding of that optic into the very "noon of night." Virtue shall not even hear the whizz of the arrow, much less feel the sting of the barb; but vice and vanity shall have it as "hot" as my muscle and means can give it, so let them have a care. My bow is cut from the wood that Moses cast into the brackish waters of Marah, and has mainly a "sweetening" mission; my string is twisted of the scarlet thread that Rahab suspended from her window, which means to spare even in the heat of battle; my arrows, every one of them, shall be feathered with good humour and dipped in love; and though I propose to make the point as sharp and the barb as keen as in my power lies, they are all twigs from the *arbor vite*, and only "wound to heal."

#### "FINE FEATHERS."

"*Bette, be out of the world than out of the fashion.*" Well, that's a very venerable old proverb; it is wonderfully popular, and rolls very readily from the lips that utter it. But, for my part, I don't believe a word of it. I am quite of opinion that there are folks about who had better have left the world long since than be what they are and what fashion has made them. To my thinking, it is a good deal better to be out of fashion than out of credit; to be out of the world than out of character, and sure I am that a stupid anxiety to be in the fashion has robbed many a poor simpleton both of the one and the other.

It may do for the Goldfinches, who have a big balance at the bankers, to be "first fashion," though it won't save them a single headache; but when it comes to the Struggletons, who owe a good balance to their butcher, which they can't pay, they have no more to do with first fashion than they have with a trip to the Zambesi's first rapids, or a balloon voyage to Saturn's first ring. *Show* in the one case becomes *sham* in the other; the first is no virtue, the last is all vice. Some people are bound to ride who can barely pay for shoe-leather, because it is not "the thing" to walk, and so they themselves get ridden in turn by Black Care, that cruel horseman whose weight is heavy, whose whip is knotted, and whose spurs are keen. Others must dress in velvet and broadcloth, to vie with their fashionable neighbours, whose cash and credit call for comely calico and corduroy; so beneath their "treble-pleated" and "double-milled," they carry hearts that ache with worry, hearts that might throb right blithely if they could but be content with hoddin grey. To be in the fashion is a poor compensation for being in debt and difficulty, and never a negro in Cuban canebrakes or Carolina cotton-fields ever grovelled in so sad a slavery as they do who are "living for appearances." A shilling in the purse with all debts paid is a long way better than a diamond on the finger and a sheriff's officer at the door. Fashion is sadly familiar with I. O. U.'s, so familiar, indeed, as its hapless creditors are with the chronic U. O. I.'s which they ungrammatically represent. "The latest fashion" is usually the latest folly, contrived in the interests of those whose chief dependence is on "fools and their money," and the proverbially quick divorce between the two.

"Fine feathers make fine birds," is another sadly too well-worn proverb containing a questionable moral, and an unquestionable untruth:—

"What! is the jay more precious than the lark,  
Because his feathers are more beautiful?"

Still, the proverb may be true enough when the feathers grow naturally, but peacocks' feathers on a jackdaw, for instance, are anything but handsome. You may thatch a goose with all the plumes of an ostrich; still she will be nothing more than a gander's wife. No artist ever decks his angels with borrowed plumes or glittering trinkets; that is an honour kept chiefly for Indian squaws and negro princesses. There is no comparison between a peony and a pansy, and the humblest violet in the valley far surpasses the gayest sunflower in the garden. I am sorry to think that in the hollow

times we live in the canker of ostentation and the hankering after finery is eating into society downwards as well as upwards. The family of the small tradesman and the salaried clerk, the swart artisan and the servant-maid are all smitten with a passion for making a snow, and dressing "with the best"; as though "the best" was determined by the tailor, and the milliner was the standard referee on female excellence!

Depend upon it that ribbons and rectitude have no necessary connection with each other; that a good conscience within a fustian vest, or a bodice of blue baft, is a treasure that fashion cannot furnish, and with which finery cannot vie. You may cover a sack with crimson velvet, embroider it with lace, blazon it with heraldry, and hang as many golden tassels to it as there are on a laburnum tree in June; but, after all, nothing will come out of it but what was in it, whether it be coals, potatoes, or guano. On the other hand, a leathern purse, a calico pouch, or a canvas bag may hold a royal dowry of diamonds or a gleaming galaxy of gems:—

"Worth makes the man, the want of it the fellow,  
The rest is nought but leather and prunella."

A plain setting sets off a precious jewel to advantage, and hides the want of value of the less costly gem; so human beauty in face and form is always loveliest when framed in neat and modest garb, and frills, furbelows and flounces proclaim defective form and feature as loudly as the bell of a town crier. Pinchbeck is always gaudy either in men or metal; sterling value is apparent, not by glitter, but by weight. Modesty has matchless merit both in mistress and in maid. Millinery indulged in to excess, may lose them both, the merit and leave the latter "matchless" into the bargain. Character is of all others the jewel of existence, and is independent either of robes or riches. Herein the costermonger may be kingly and the prince a pauper. This peerless gem shines with equal lustre by cottage hearths and in lordly halls, and is admired and honoured everywhere. Goodness, kindness, integrity, and truth, with all their kindred virtues, like the various facets of a well-cut diamond, will catch the light and flash amid any surroundings, and are not one whit the brighter for any amount of garniture and gilding.

Quintus Quaries would fain persuade his readers to give "fashion" the go-by. It is a pickpocket that you can't prosecute, a harlequin whose profession it is to play the fool and to induce others to follow its example. It begins with singularity which all well-bred people avoid. It ends with vulgarity which all good taste condemns; and in the middle it is a kaleidoscope mixture of the two which all people of good sense despise. It is a greenhouse where greenhorns are forced into fops and flighty maidens into firts, and where pride, vanity, and extravagance are the most thriving plants. Fashionable society, as it is called, lives chiefly on trifles and syllabubs productive of a minimum of mental tissue and moral backbone. Its favourite pursuits are a merry-go-round which begins by making people giddy, and then silly, and then sick. Usually the sickness supervenes when healthy tonics are too late.

Fashion and finery are robbers of God as well as man; not only in prostituted time and thought and energies, but in altar-gifts and charity. They who worship at the shrine of fashion lay small oblations on the shrine more sacred. The proportion is usually "pounds for pride and pence for pardon"; guineas for grandeur and nods for the needy.

In conclusion, let me urge on one and all the prime wisdom and importance of obtaining the "white raiment" which the Saviour "counsels" us to buy. He who is clad in His "robe of righteousness," whose heaven-spun garment is the "beauty of holiness," is the possessor of the fairest fashion, and even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. The brightest pearl for everybody's wear is the Pearl of Great Price. The chiefest ornament for all, from prince to peasant, is the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Let us seek by grace divine to wear on earth the "linen ephod" of a spotless and consecrated life—so shall we win the esteem and love of all whose approval is worth the winning; and then, one day, the bridal robe, the wedding garment, shall be donned, the one prevailing and perennial fashion in the world where goodness will be for ever wedded to glory, and beauty will be kept unfading in the bowers of immortal bliss!

He who would be angry and not sin, must be angry at nothing but sin.