

changing scenes of trouble and of joy, the feeling of patriotism—of devotion to the nation—is strongly displayed by the Prophets, Priests and Kings of the Hebrew race. It may appear an odd thing to say, but because it is *true* I fear not to say it, that the old Jewish law, as laid down in the Books of Moses, and as carried into effect by successive generations of the Jewish people, is in substance the most extreme example of National Protection and National Policy of which we have any historical record.

One great lesson from Scripture history may here be recalled. Joseph was Pharaoh's Finance Minister: the name that I venture to use should not frighten us from seeing that the thing signified is not thereby misrepresented, or the *reality* done violence to. Under Divine direction Joseph stopped freedom of trade, and preserved, for a great public necessity yet to come, the immense surplus of the fruitful years. True, corn was afterwards sold out of Egypt to Jacob and his sons; but, had the much-bepraised rule of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest been followed during the seven good years, without regard to what we may (as truly for that time as for the present) call "national policy," there would have been no corn in Egypt to sell when the years of famine came. Let it not be said that this reference to events recorded in the Book of Genesis is out of place in our present disputes. In our own day and generation—aye, within a year or two back—a policy essentially similar to that of Joseph's has been advocated for India, and has been opposed by men of Mr. Bright's school on the ground that it would be an interference with the infallible laws of Free Trade! Let a whole people perish, say the Free Trade fanatics, rather than infringe upon the principle which they idolatrously worship.

I do not claim to have fully answered "Eusebius," and the limitations of newspaper space compel me to leave unsaid at this time much that might be said on the subject of Scripture teaching as to national morality. But I have at least said enough to show that he has not Scripture so overwhelmingly on his side as he appears to have imagined, and if permitted I may return again to this matter. More recently another writer has charged that in this new National Policy of ours we are striking at the hand that has fed us, meaning Great Britain; and this accusation also I propose to answer.

Argus.

ON DRESS,

AS VIEWED IN THE CONCENTRATED LIGHT OF BACHELORDOM.

There are some subjects so vast, so absorbing, and yet so speculative and visionary, that the timid mind almost shrinks even from an *essay* to solve them. Among these must be ranked the important topic of Ladies' Dress. Of course we men "know nothing at all about it." We are also so "stupid" that we lack even the capacity to learn.

Yet there are philanthropists among us who, not daring to centre our fossilized affections on any *one* of the opposite sex, still harbour the tenderest affection towards womanhood in complex. We study her collective eccentricities with the gentle longing to lecture her—all for her good. We aspire to give her the benefit of our wisdom and experience—the added light which even an "ignorant" man may throw on her path by the very freshness, not to say greenness, of our views on so sacred a subject as "dress."

Some of your poor masculine readers may fancy that this high-flown apology will disarm all hostile criticism. But you deceive yourselves. We shall catch it before we get through; and "what a soft old ass it is" will be the very mildest of the expressions used. Still, Truth has strong attractions for the sex whose very being is Love. There is no garment so craved by love as absolute truth, for nothing so appropriately sets off her charms.

So we shall essay to speak the truth in love, although we are *not* in love with the present fashions at all.

Possessing but little faith in the *literal* interpretation of the first eleven chapters of Genesis, we feel at a loss to know what woman has done of evil more than man that she should condemn herself to continual penance by wearing a style of apparel which fetters, to the verge of torture, her every freedom of movement. Were corsets invented as a punishment for her sins? Were alternate crinolines and pull-backs inflicted to give a crushing anxiety to a mind perturbed forever lest they should get out of gear? Is the torture of the boot, two sizes too small, fearfully pinched at the toes, and elevated by high heels supported from the centre of the foot beneath the instep, just at the soft part which Nature never intended to bear the weight of even the most sylph-like girlish form, a relic of the Dark Ages, to which science and religion are alike powerless to grant relief? These are the most prominent tortures of the present age, and we mention them exactly in the order of the relative degree of suffering they inflict, and that suffering is followed by actual deformity. How often must we men repeat the oft-told tale that pinched waists are not beauty—that exaggerations of form are hollow and unlovely, and deceive no *man*, whatever may be their effect on the beardless hobbledohoy. Nay, must we descend so low as to quote scientific fact, confirmed by *Punch* not very long ago, and assert recklessly that the strain of high heels in walking actually *deforms* the ankle.

But when we rise from the practical to the æsthetic, and questions assail us of bonnets so immense and so gorgeous in their adornment, that the face is almost lost sight of in the bewilderment that strikes the beholder at the marvellous array of enormous and quite abnormal imitation flowers that adorn it (?)—when one saddened eye dwells on the framework of tinted satin which forms the tilted brim of the modern hat, forcing us to regard the face within, when viewed from one side, as "No. 1010 portrait, unknown," and on the other side presents to us the reverse of the frame, relieved a little in its natural ugliness by ribbons, feathers, or flowers, and the pearly whiteness of about *one inch* of chin—our taste revolts utterly; and we begin to ask, is woman only framework after all, or a poor imitation of a painting—no reality—no living, moving beauty in her own sweet face, apart from bonnets?

Of course there is also the exaggeratedly small hat which tilts up behind and down in front, so as to hide all appearance of intellect, and show only eyes, nose and mouth as the soil from which grow up leaves and flowers. This is called the imitation flower-pot style; and bachelors *don't* like it.

Then, too, there is a beauty of form which no possible ingenuity of mechanical contrivances can possibly imitate. Even the ordinary mortal, who has not studied anatomy, the laws of art, and the proportions of one part of the human frame to another, can tell at once from a single glance at the hand, head, or neck, within an inch or so just how much of the figure he sees is real, and how much false. No one is deceived; unless indeed it be the deceiver.

To criticise *all* the present freaks of fashion would be a task too enormous. Still we might be allowed just one more observation. It does seem a useless fancy to so extend the skirt of a dress into a sort of tied-back wobbly mermaid's fan-tail, that it has to be tied with a string to one of the fins, in order to permit it to waggle gracefully at each step. If these fan-tails go on extending themselves abnormally, Dundreary's conundrum will be realized in life, and the fan-tail will wag the lady ere long.

Of course to insist on this right to censure is to face the natural result, a demand to suggest improvement. It is just here that the vastness of our enterprise is felt in its fullest force. For successful men-milliners are born, not made; and no mere newspaper man could hope to aspire so high. To expect us to suggest attractive novelties in dress is quite too much. Lovingly, reverently, humbly to remind the sovereign sex of first principles, as well known to them as to us, is all we dare attempt.

Just as the will to communicate thought finds clothing in words, so the will to demonstrate the beauty we cherish within finds expression in appropriate attire. And just as an individual love of a certain train of ideas seems almost to force to originality of expression, so individual longing for an ideal beauty *ought* to force to an individuality of expression of it, in outward appearance or dress. Just as there is no freshness and no beauty in a feeble copy of the expression of thought of another, so is there no *real* beauty or attractiveness in a dress the idea of which is copied entirely from another. The original expression of thought may have been to the original or natural and expressive—the original "fashion" may have been to its wearer no "*fashion*" in the ordinary sense, but the very fashion which the ideal of beauty naturally assumed. Yet neither in the case of words or dress can it be so to any *other* human being; for so infinite is the immeasurable Providence of our Creator that no human soul is by nature and *conformation* an exact copy of another. If the creature wills to become so, he or she must force or torture himself or herself to accomplish it; and even then fail in the attempt, except as regards outward semblance.

Here we have, then, the true rule for dress. Heaven forbid we men—with our sombre, straight cut, *mathematically* proportioned apparel, as angular and unvariedly monotonous as are our ideas of truth embodied in our creed formulae—should desire to limit the love element in woman for grace and beauty from seeking variety and *elegance* in expression. Let them range the whole realm of Nature for material wherewith to express outwardly their highest ideal—only, let it be their individual ideal, not that of another individual or class. Let it be that form and colour, that amplitude or scantiness, which shall seem to each best to fill out and heighten the individual charms within, or render individual defects less prominent. Let it be adapted to individual beauty, or defect of beauty, so as to perfect the ideal loved by the individual. If the ideal loved be the beauty of truth, of course *shams* will be avoided. There is a strict line of demarcation between concealing defects and substituting shams, which the fair sex know better than we do.

Do we then advocate selfishness in the matter of dress? It would seem so. We certainly urge dressing to please one's self. Yet it is simply dressing according to what the individual deems right, best, and most appropriate, in contradistinction to dressing to please the notions of others so that we may attract *to self* their admiration or attention. Which is the more really selfish?—to carry out one's sense of the "fitness of things" into the matter of dress because it is right to do so, or to struggle to attain power and praise for self by pandering to the tastes or desires of others, which are *not* truth as we see it. The one is freedom, for truth always makes free. The other is slavery to fashion; and the power so aimed at, even were it attainable, just because it