

FASHIONS; SUGGESTIONS.

Highly curious would be a Picturesque History of Costume; and there are more materials for such a work than may be supposed, but they must be sought for in the early time in stone, in effigies and carvings, afterwards in paintings, and, let us add, most modernly in caricatures, the exaggerations of which help us to a perception of the reality not the least lively. 'Punch,' for example, is an excellent picture-gallery of the monstrosities of fashion in the last quarter of the century.

So far as female costume can be traced it would appear that up to the time of Henry VIII. there was always some grace in it, whatever might be the variations; but with Elizabeth ugliness came in, and held its uninterrupted sway up to the age of the Georges.

It seems to us that there is always some affinity between the male and female fashions. When men wore wide stiffened skirts to their coats, ladies wore hoops; and male wigs and cocked hats were rivalled in hideousness and inconvenience by towers on the heads of women. When men wore tight pantaloons women wore skimpy petticoats. It was at this time that the French Lord Ogleby in a farce giving his tailor an order for pantaloons to fit closer than his skin, ends with this warning, 'Mind that if I can get them on, I shall not take them.' Towards the end of the last century the French Revolution shook with all other things the empire of dress. It gave liberty to the limbs of men. It emancipated them from tight clothing, hair powder, and pig-tails. It banished breeches and buckles, and introduced trousers. Pantaloons lingered for a time, but the steady tendency of the age was as much to looser clothing as to more liberal ideas. Indeed the two went together, and the trouser was for some time adopted, or opposed and reprobated as an outward and visible sign of political opinion. Cyril Jackson, the Dean of Christchurch, exerted all his authority and influence in his College to put down trousers, regarding them as symbols of revolution; and his success in enforcing the tight apparel brought upon him an expression of regret that the Dean had contracted the loose habits of the age.

At this period the female fashion was behind the male in ease. The petticoat was so narrow that it was difficult to walk in it. It was, in fact, a pantaloone of one leg for the two legs. The waist was just under the armpits. This thralldom was broken by the Peninsular war, which introduced what was called the Spanish dress, very pretty, indeed, but only the Spanish of the stage. As if to indemnify themselves for their long restraint in the narrow clothing, the ladies then shortened their petticoats very liberally, and ankles were no mystery. But emancipation was yet partial and imperfect, the parallel to the trouser being still wanting; but it came with a vengeance with the crinoline. The crinoline is the peg-top trouser exaggerated, and turned the opposite way, the peg at the waist, the wide end downwards. Women now live in tents, under canvass as it were. They expatiate within their airy enclosures. They delight in the free and easy. All their ways are unconfined. They walk up and down within their premises. They have succeeded in the encroachment which would be described by Blackstone as making a larger estate than they are by law entitled to. They have enormously aggrandized themselves. They are topographically thrice what they used to be in circumference.

The crinoline is another word for liberty; and it is not a liberty the less sweet because it is a liberty, like some others, encroaching and trespassing on the rights of others.

How many a gentleman's dining-table estate has been curtailed, reduced by a half or much more, by the crinoline. Where before he could place three belles, he can now only give room to one. No one in a house, such as mortal houses now are, could entertain the Muses in their crinolines. He must banquet them in the building of the International Exhibition. As ships are measured by their displacement of water, so ladies in their crinolines may be measured by their displacement of other bodies—Many a fragile delicate girl measures more than a ton in her skirts. We have seen very awkward embarrassments at a dinner table from the host's not having calculated within many scores of cubic feet of the truth, the displacements of his crinolined guests. Ladies invited to dinner ought to be requested not only to send answers, but also their measurement for seats. It is always well, indeed, to be prepared for the worst.

But the encroachment on the dinner-table is not the greatest grievance. None but people who go about in omnibuses know

the overbearing ways of crinolines, and of what extremities they are capable. It is a dirty day, a lady is about to enter an omnibus. The first difficulty commences at the door, where the petticoat-compelling conductor has to reduce her bulk to the dimensions of the entrance. *Hoc labor, hoc opus est.* But it is achieved. What next happiness is like the tidal phenomenon called a bore. A huge wave of crinoline comes surging in, sweeping over the laps of all the passengers, right and left, and flooding them with the mud the lady has been industriously sweeping up in her walk. All hands are turned to coerce the petticoats, and keep them within the bounds at least of the gangway; but the crinoline rebels elastically against any restraint, and it wrestles with you, and shows what it is made of, and that it is not to be put down, saying as clearly as it can speak, 'The less you meddle and make with me the better for you.'

To expect women to abandon their crinolines on account of any nuisance they may cause would be idle indeed, seeing how they cleave to them notwithstanding their proved danger to themselves; but surely we may ask them to adopt some easy contrivance to diminish their inconvenience, and to bring them into harmony with that principle of equity which directs us to use our own so as not to hurt others. And this may be easily done.

The crinoline is a contrivance for spreading muslin or silk, or whatever the fabric may be, as the masts and spars of a ship are for spreading canvas. All the purposes of a crinoline might, indeed, be as well, or better, effected by a bowsprit afore, studding-sail yards on the sides, and, to complete all, a spanker or driver boom. And with this rig there might be brails to gather the spread up when occasion required, or reef tackle to reduce its expanse. For example, when a lady was about to sit down to dinner, what is nautically termed a jigger might be applied to her petticoat to gather it in and tie it up without points—not point lace, but reef points, or nettles as they are called by seamen not too fond of handling them. We do not, however, mean to insist on any particular plan, all that we contend for is some contrivance for the adjustment of crinolines to the brief spaces of human life. As the lady begs the Precieuses of Moliere to humanize their discourse, so we beg our fair countrywomen to humanize their crinolines. We only ask them to collect themselves. Iron itself contracts as well as expands, and so surely may the metal most attractive. And, indeed, in point of effect, it would be fine to see the transitions from the full blow of dress back to the bud, or from the bud to the full blow of beauty. Let the lady be like her fan, spread out in the drawing-room and gathered in when descending to the dining-room, and again afterwards, with a flirt which is always good, recovering her pristine amplitude. Nothing can be easier than the mechanical arrangement for contraction and expansion. It is as simple as the management of a curtain, or a blind. The free and easy style once enjoyed will never be relinquished, that we know, but when the business is to sit at a dinner-table or in an omnibus, aye, or in a brougham, the convenience for walking most at large may surely be foregone. What we propose is, that a lady shall adapt herself to circumstances as her parasol does, or, to express ourselves less prosaically, as her delicate plants do, that have their hours for opening and their hours for closing.

E O L A .

BY CRIPNEY GREY.

(CONTINUED.)

Your carriage, forsooth! was the sarcastic reply. 'By what good fortune did you become the possessor of one? I suppose it's some old fool's bounty.'

A blush of shame and mortification swept over the gipsy's pale complexion. But summoning up all her presence of mind, she replied, in a measured tone, 'You are mistaken, sir. I am unknown to you.'

'Now, you're not going to cut me, surely? This is coming the lady a little too strong, considering the pains I used to take to throw the bouquets exactly at your darling little toes, and the number of gloves I've spoilt in applauding you.'

Zerneen endeavoured to look amazed and bewildered.

'Sir!' she exclaimed with marked emphasis, and at the same time assuming an air of injured innocence.

'I must say, you act the prude admirably! persisted her tormentor. 'If it were not so devilish annoying to one's feelings, I should like it amazingly. But, to be cut in Regent

street, in broad day light, when a fellow is trying to do the amiable, too—it's worse than uncomfortable.'

'Will you allow me to pass, sir? or, must I call assistance to remove you?' said the outraged girl, in a voice husky with suppressed anger.

'Remove me!' reiterated the youth, indignantly. 'Confound your impudence! it would take something to remove me from any place I choose to—'

His boast was nipped in the bud by a sharp push from the delicate hand of the fair girl, that nearly upset his equilibrium altogether; and when he had recovered from the surprise it gave him, she was safely seated in her brougham.

But Zerneen's annoyances were not yet at an end: she had yet another, and even more unfortunate one, to encounter.

Her carriage was just passing Hyde Park corner, when a stoppage occurred, occasioned by a splendid equipage, the magnificence of which attracted her attention to it, and then to its occupants. But who were they, that Zerneen should start with a look of such surprise and pain? One was a young and charming girl, with Grecian features and wavy auburn hair. Her beautiful hazel eyes were raised (with a look whose meaning was but too plainly evidenced) to the face of her companion, turned toward her in earnest conversation. His profile was all the gipsy girl could see, but that profile was too well known to her to leave a doubt respecting its owner, who was no other than the faithless Percy.

A shriek sprang to the lips of the deceived victim; but it was suppressed by a violent effort; and, with a bursting heart and teardimmed eyes, she watched the carriage out of sight; then addressing her coachman—

'Do you know whose chariot that was that stopped the way?' she inquired, with an indignant air, which quite effected its purpose of blinding the servant, who fancied at first that she had recognised his master, and anticipated a jealous explosion.

'The Earl of Alvingham's, ma'am,' he replied.

'Did I not see a lady in it? Who is she?' faltered Zerneen, in a half-stifled tone, which she strove in vain to render calm and clear.

'His daughter, ma'am, Lady Isabella Sackville' returned the coachman, wondering that the eyes which were sharp enough to remark the lady, had not displayed the same acuteness with reference to the gentleman. 'However,' thought he, it's a precious good job she didn't notice him. I only saw his side-face, certainly; but one might know that scamp by the very cut of his little finger.'

Zerneen leaned back in the carriage, and closed her eyes. She tried to reflect calmly on what had passed, and to find excuses, if possible, for Percy's unexpected appearance with the beautiful Lady Sackville.

But vainly she ransacked her brains in endeavoring to exculpate her idol from a baseness her reason to justly accused him of, though her love strove against the belief.

The bare fact was there—irrefutable.

At length a thought crossed her mind that tended greatly to alleviate its suffering.—'Percy said that Sackville was among the friends invited to dinner. May he not have called at Lord Sackville's, and been compelled, out of courtesy, in some way, to accompany the sister for a drive? Ah! that is feasible, truly: I am almost sure it will prove to be the case. But then—that look—ah! The gipsy heaved a sigh—a bitter one. Her sophistry was not equal to the case, in many points.

The dinner-hour arrived, yet Eswald failed to present himself at the villa, and Zerneen, vexed and unhappy at his prolonged absence, went through the painful ceremony of her solitary meal, alone. But her vexation increased, when hour after hour passed away, and evening waned into night, yet still he came not. She would have given worlds, had she possessed them, for the presence of one human being, to whom she might unburthen her wretchedness. What would she not have given now, for the affectionate companionship of the poor outcast, Eola, whom in the first flush of prosperous love she had scorned?

But that one pure, friendly heart was far away; and alone, in bitterness, too deep for rest or oblivion, the deceived one passed the dismal night. She tried to think of the approaching dinner party, and so extract some trifling solace from the abundance of her vexations; but even here, there was a mystery that all her efforts were unable to elucidate. How could Percy possibly introduce her to so many of his friends, and still

keep their marriage secret? In her first rapturous glee, she had forgotten to ask him this, and now the thought haunted her mind.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The night was far advanced before Eswald's singular guests took their departure. At length all were gone with the exception of his confidential friend, Sackville.

The last carriage had, rolled from the door, and the two noblemen stood on the hearth-rug by the library fire alone.

Both were rather far gone towards intoxication, and were commenting pretty freely on the events of the evening, canvassing in unreserved terms the real character of the lady guests, and joking each other on their relative positions with regard to the masculine portion of the party. At length the conversation turned on Zerneen, and the probable results to the poor deluded girl from the recent disclosures which both felt certain she must have heard.

Eswald's eyes followed the direction of his friend's outstretched hands, as the latter, with trembling limbs and quivering features pointed to the extremity of the apartment, where, in the shadow of an open door-way, appeared a slight female form, draped in a long white garment, and holding back her long black hair with one hand, while she gazed with an expressionless stare on the two men.

Quite two minutes elapsed before they recovered from their alarm sufficiently to investigate the cause.

Alas, poor Zerneen! She had heard all.

No need now of circumlocution in order to acquaint her gradually with her real position! No need now of all the trashy sophistry invented for the occasion? Oh no! There was no longer occasion to gloss over to the poor girl the cruel artifice of which she had been the dupe. She knew all.

What strange fatality led her to that scene of base disclosures—what indefinite fantasy urged her on to the premature destruction of her whole fabric of happiness, it would be impossible to say; it is sufficient that the veil was torn from her eyes, that she at last understood the harrowing crisis to which, alas! vanity and folly had indiscreetly led her.

CHAPTER XXXII.

On the same night that witnessed the sad circumstances so cruelly depriving Zerneen of even the paltry semblance of love that had for a few short months buoyed up her heart, and in one fell swoop wrested from her hope, happiness, and reason, an event occurred at the Abbey of totally different tendencies, which served to augment, in a very powerful manner, the interest the pretty page had already awakened in Elwyn's breast.

The former was sitting late in the evening at the window of her own little room, meditating, as she often did, on the many singular phases of her past life, and dwelling with childish delight on the memory of some trifling incidents which had lately marked her acquaintance with Elwyn, when she perceived a man running towards the mansion shouting 'Fire!' and gesticulating violently for help. She snatched up her cap and rushed to the library, where Elwyn was engaged in looking over some accounts.

'Oh, sir! there's a fire,' she cried, bursting into the apartment; such a dreadful fire, the man says. He has come here for assistance.'

'Where is it?' exclaimed Elwyn, rising and tearing aside the window-hangings.

'Oh, I see,' he added on perceiving a bright fiery glow rising from a spot not far from the Abbey, and occupied by one of Eswald's tenants. 'It is poor old Smith's farmhouse. Run, Ulric, and tell them to get the Abbey engine ready, and then come with me; you may be of service.'

The page obeyed immediately, and the pair, accompanied by some men-servants and a few of the neighboring tenants, were soon on their way to the scene of the conflagration. It was an old farmhouse situated about a quarter of a mile from the mansion, and tenanted by an elderly man, his daughter, son-in-law, and two children.

On reaching it, they found the lower part half enveloped in fire. The old man was running to and fro wringing his hands, and helplessly regarding the only portion yet free from flames—the portico in front of the house, through which, however, dense columns of smoke issuing at intervals proclaimed its fate was imminent.

A young woman, evidently about to become a mother was lying at a little distance in the arms of a neighbour, in a fainting fit.