

and become cold, the cloth, or yarn must be put into it, and suffered to remain well covered for *twelve* hours, and then dried in the *shade*; after which, to divest it of smell, or any other impurity, it may be washed in cold water, and dried for use."

G.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON FASHIONS IN FEMALE DRESS.

MUCH obliquy, much sneer and unbounded severity of remark, have from time to time, been employed, in endeavouring to reduce female fashions to some rational standard, but hitherto without producing the desired effect. Perhaps we may be more successful than our predecessors by adopting a candour on the subject, which they have uniformly neglected, and by fairly laying before our readers (particularly the fair part of them) the advantages and inconveniences resulting from an indiscriminate and ardent pursuit of this variously coloured goddess.

It is unjust to insinuate that the fickleness of fashion, hath been of modern growth. Human nature has been at all times, under similar circumstances, perfectly uniform in her propensities; where variety could be obtained she has enjoyed it; where natural or accidental restraints may have been interposed, she submits to the restriction. The luxurious Roman, who had his summer and winter rings, must have been actuated in his tastes for variety of dress by the same principle which operates at this day, and perhaps, had not Heliogabulus exhausted the public treasury, his fickleness, in point of dress, would have passed without a comment.

The state of climate, or poverty, have at all times induced a sameness in the external appearance of a nation. During the winter season nothing can induce the Russian to exchange his *sable dress* for the *ventus textilis*, the woven wind, that floats on a British loom; and while Asia shall be visited by sultry summers, the turban will uniformly deck the heads of its voluptuous inhabitants.

It is only in climates like ours, which are subject to all the vicissitudes of cold and heat, that fashion is seen to

vary the appearance, the costume, and the opinion of a nation at large: here every breeze that blows, every flower that blooms periodically, and every, the most trivial variation of the season, changes the fold of the drapery, varies the form of a curl, or a ringlet, and draws out or curtails the extent of the female dress. It is entertaining to one, like me, who is uninfected by the general taste for variety, to behold the rapid succession of fashions which spread over the face of the country with the rapidity of wild-fire. Some years ago, the females of this island, were delighted with assuming a zig-zag external; a profusion of inflated gauze, decorated the bosom, which was very prudently preponderated by a quantity of cork in another quarter. The cork suddenly disappeared, the inflated gauze was necessarily removed, and the whole sex in a moment seemed as if by common consent, reduced to skeletons; like the vain frog in the fable, who suffered from his temerity, in endeavouring to approach the magnitude of the ox.

The long and taper waist still rested on the female hips, but at length, by a sudden and unaccountable revolution, it vanished and was superseded by an immoderate sweep of train, which commenced at the *scapula*, and terminated indefinitely. The ornament of the head too, was suffering from the same train of vicissitudes, at one time, it was plentifully thickened with grease and flower, which, like the mantle of winter,

....." Makes white with other snows,

Than those of age."

No sooner was it relieved from this nauseous and greasy composition, than it began to be twisted and twined round the head, and tortured into ringlets resembling those of Medusa, as if it were deemed a deformity to allow it to obey the gravitating law of nature. This however was only a prelude to a new and more extravagant innovation, for another edict from fashion cut it sheer off from the neck, and now every female we meet, exhibits a profusion of hair in front, and the spare and glossy locks of an infant in the rere. Perhaps (the taste for invasion has been so prevalent latterly) this may be only the fore-runner of some new fashion; and perhaps ere long we shall see their

countenances covered with flowing locks, while the hinder part of the head shall be ornamented with a thousand sprouting *curls* disposed in artful variety.

There are two leading causes of the prevalence of fashion: the first is (marvel not good reader) a certain disrelish which we entertain for our own society. And, strange as it may appear, though we are exceedingly fond of ourselves, yet we in general had rather be in any body's company than our own. We soon become weary of beholding ourselves in the same dress, how splendid soever it may be, and to this it is owing, that we so frequently apply to the tailor, the friseur, the milliner, the mantua-maker, who are so well qualified by their skill, to conceal us from ourselves, and our neighbours. Happy the mortal in the fashionable world, who is enabled to bid adieu to himself once a month. If that unpleasant monitor, the glass, begins to exhibit symptoms of old age, it must be of infinite advantage to us, by the help of the aforesaid manufacturers of youth, to be able in some measure, to persuade ourselves, that it is only *another self* who is sinking into the grave, and as it were to be empowered to destroy our identity of person, when by a fifty or sixty years of close familiarity with us, it begins to be troublesome by its remarks, and impertinent in its insinuations.

The second cause, I apprehend to be a certain servility which influences most of the actions and opinions of men, to be *disguised* in such or such a dress, because introduced, or worn, by such an one, whom we would be thought to copy, and whose manners and reputation, we hold in estimation, is not very uncommon cause of the generality of a fashion. Should a young prince, for example, exhibit a specimen of genius for ruling over a great and mighty nation, by devising some tasteful improvement in the shape of a collar, or the lapelle of a coat, who of his admirers would be uncourtly enough to adhere to the exploded fashion, in preference to his? A Newmarket nobleman is equipt in a frock, cap, and buck-skin breeches, in compliment to those worthies of the turf, his jockey and groom, and in hopes

of thus ingratiating himself in the good graces of the fraternity, and obtaining, to him, the enviable character of a *knowing one*.

The classical scholar will readily call to mind the circumstances which gave rise to the dress which prevails even at this day amongst the Persians.

He will also remember the fashion, which prevailed for a short time in the court of Alexander, of holding the heads awry, in compliment to that monarch; as also, by what a dexterous *coup-de-main*, he restored them to their perpendicular position.

The uncouth limbs of Erichonius, stimulated his genius to the production of a conveyance, which acted at once as a substitute for feet, and a means of concealing his deformity; are we to suppose that the courtiers who surrounded his throne, would, after a sight of his machine, dare to walk on foot, at the expense of his favour?

What Lucian relates of the dreadful effects which followed the plague, which at one time desolated Athens, seems to operate continually with us, in the article of dress. The whole body of females appears at one time, affecting the bulkiness and rotundity of milk-maids; anon, they dwindle away to the slender and delicate form of a Corinthian column; one moment they are all seen huddled up in the warmest drapery, and immediately after they shake off this incumbrance of dress, for one of so light and transparent a texture, that even Eve herself, in her primitive state of innocence, might assume it, without appearing to have forfeited the early privilege attached to her original purity of conduct.

Now this, according to all the rules of fair reasoning, ought to be considered as a kind of epidemic plague, which sometimes makes those who are affected by it, exhibit an uniform kind of external appearance, for it is not to be supposed that those who are for rigidly following all the changes of the fashions, can possibly consider the mere object of covering their bodies, and protecting themselves from the inclemency of the weather, as the real intention of investing themselves; otherwise we should not see so many almost naked and shivering beauties in the midst of

snows, "*coughing their own knell*." Dress was intended primarily as a defence to the body: variety was introduced for the reasons already mentioned, but that there should at all times exist such an incongruity between the prevailing fashions and the seasons, and that this incongruity should prevail so universally, can not be attributed to any other source than some species of lunatic affection.

As I am not for totally decrying or abolishing a taste for variety, I would only beg leave to exhibit such inconveniences and advantages as are liable to result from adopting the laws of fashion without limitation, and leave it to the discretion of my fair reader, to reject or abide by the statement.

I have already noticed the power a fashionable person enjoys of escaping periodically from him or her self by the aid of the tailor, or mantua-maker. The male sex can, however, reap an additional benefit from this circumstance, which, from their being in general liable to the debts contracted by the other sex, they are justly entitled to; by continually shifting their dress, and altering their appearance they are enabled to evade the importunate visits of the bailiff, and the more ardently they pursue the Protean spirit of fashion, the greater is their chance of deceiving this unwelcome visitor.

The heaviness of time is a constant complaint with the generality of mankind, and such of us as have not the means of relieving ourselves from this intolerable burthen in any other manner, are under the necessity of reading and improving our minds, which requires the labour of thinking; how much more simple and less laborious is the method adopted by people of fashion. A well dressed person can employ at least eight or ten hours out of the twenty-four, in the occupation of adorning herself, in which she can be aided in the laborious and slavish part of *thinking* by a maid servant, hired for that purpose, and other *menial* offices; this, with cards, sleep, and now and then a squabble with the husband forms an impenetrable testudo against the assaults of ennui.

As age increases, this employment becomes more complicated, and therefore more interesting. In youth little

more is required than stripping and unstripping six or seven times a day, but as years increase, there are teeth to be taken out and inserted in the gums every day, plasters to be laid over the cheeks, face and neck, to fill up all *ruts* and *cavities* made by a long course of time in the visage of an antiquated fashionable; such hairs as have grown grey in her service, to be carefully weeded out, &c. all these operations consume so much time, that an aged fashionable has seldom time enough on hands to reflect that she may soon occupy a seat in the venerable assembly of ghostland.

Besides, a fashionable dress is evident to the meanest capacity, and requires no great mental exertion in the acquirement; whereas, the wretched substitute, adopted by the poorer ranks, the improvement of the mind, demands a toil and a perseverance, which might very reasonably be supposed calculated to drive a fashionable personage to downright desperation; a plain and undeniable proof that study and the improvement of the mind is an *unnatural* succedaneum for fashionable attire.

Madame Woolstonecroft, I think, has pronounced shame to be a proof of a knowledge of guilt; I must confess this to be a signal proof of that good lady's skill in the unsound parts of human nature, as we read in a little book, which I believe she never had recourse to, that a distant female relation of hers and her husband were once upon a time naked, and were ashamed. From this it appears, what the learned authoress would insinuate, that shame and guilt are contemporary. If this be true, viz. that shame is a proof of guilt, it must be equally true that (changing only the *materia* of the proposition) want of shame *alias*, *shamelessness*, is a proof of the absence of guilt.

Now this circumstance must in after ages afford a strong presumptive proof of the innocence of the manners of the present day. When it shall be recorded that the females have been *quam proxime* naked without exhibiting the least symptoms of shame, and by consequence of guilt, in this respect I consider the present fashionable mode of dressing as an invaluable possession,

and in fact (to use a *strong expression*) this *nakedness of dress* must (provided Madam W's reasoning be right) form an impenetrable *cloak* against the detection of the vices of the present day.

I must, however, warn my fair readers of one unpleasant consequence resulting from the present fashions: our climate is almost proverbially unsteady, which may frequently make the dress suitable for the meridian heat, a source of disease and death, when continued to be adopted without alteration, during the whole twenty-four hours of revelry and dissipation; a source of inconvenience and disappointment this, which is to be seriously regretted by every true fashionable. How many delightful opportunities of giving a husband an additional title, to distinguish him from the common *herd* of society, have been lost by the unlucky interference of a severe *twinge* of the rheumatism! How many charming *Dejeunés* have been given up to the imperious commands of the tooth-ache and flannel, and how frequently has a feverish cold carried off our fair friends just at the commencement of a new fashion! how provoking! how vexatious!!

I own that the system of painting certain parts of the body, so generally adopted at present, in some measure remedies the ill-effects arising from the nakedness of those parts. It stops up the pores so effectually as to prevent (like the centinel of a besieged town) any thing from going out or coming in, and indeed I would most seriously advise my fair countrywomen either to lay on more clothes, or more paints. Something of the kind must be resorted to, unless the fair martyrs wish the coroner's inquest to return the verdict of *lunacy* in the event of their demises.

It is usual at the sale of slaves in the West Indies and America, to expose the unfortunate victims in a complete state of nakedness, in order that they may be thoroughly examined respecting the state of their health, the soundness of their limbs, &c. Thus every body has a fair chance of suiting his fancy or his wants, and if a purchaser shall have overlooked any defect, he may afterwards notice in his purchase, he can have nobody to blame but him-

self, as at the sale he was permitted to *handle* and *examine* in every direction.

The system seems to be coming into pretty general practice in these countries, on what principle I know not, unless it may have been considered absolutely necessary for the preservation of society that it should be adhered to, and as the abolition of the slave-trade has threatened to do away the *naked examinations* in the *new world*, we of the old, with a laudable violation of common decency, are determined to perpetuate the practice in our own persons; and, indeed, whenever I see a fair *exposée* tripping it gaily along some of the public walks, I cannot help suspecting her of intending to exhibit herself for examination in the *slave-market* to those who may choose to purchase. W.

Newry, 10th Oct. 1808.

To the Editor of the Belfast Magazine.

SIR,
THE experiments made by Count Rumford, in order to ascertain whether Caloric was possessed of any gravity, and which have been alluded to, in your last number, under the article Caloric, seem to me by no means so conclusive, as to leave the matter perfectly free from being questionable. The Count, if I remember right, dwelt much on the exceeding accuracy of the balance he used on the occasion, and without intending to imply a doubt as to the care he took in procuring a very delicate instrument, determining the exact equilibrium of the bottles, &c. I do not feel fully satisfied that it was possible for him to be able to decide upon a case of so very delicate a nature, with the help of the very best instruments that could be formed by the ingenuity of man.

The gravity of light, has been attempted to be proved, by a Mr. Winter of Whitby, by the help of a very simple analogy; taking it for granted, that (as in the case of *air*, or *water*) the densities of different fluids, are as their resistances *reciprocally*, and that in the same manner their undulations, or velocities, are to each other, as their specific gravities; thus he found that the weight of solar light, was to that of air nearly in the ratio of 400,000, to 1, and