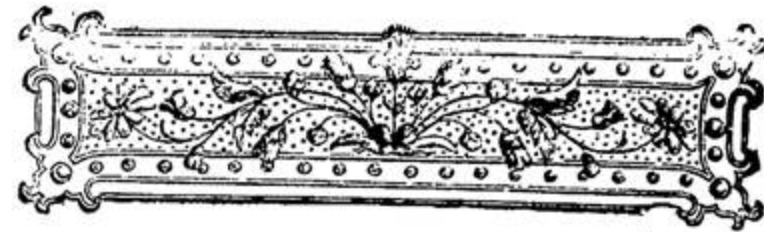
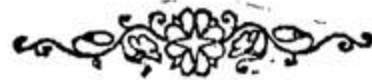


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# THE ART OF DRESSING.

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.—ON DRESS.

Pre-Adamite man—Adam's dress—The Picts—The Cad—The Snob—Swells—Gentlemen's style—Club men—Bishops—Priests—Parsons—University men—Officers—The Valet.

**W**HETHER pre-Adamite man was ever clothed, and in his right mind, we wot not. Geological research throws no light on the question. Philosophy is silent on the matter, and history on this subject, of course, does not exist. However, one thing is certain

that since the day our progenitor Adam adopted the fig-leaf as full-dress regulation for his garden party in Mesopotamia, the necessity for costume ever after became a fixed fact; and whether it be in Asimbanaboo, where spectacles and a cocked hat are exacted by an over-prudish society for *fêtes champêtres*, down to the shady side of Piccadilly, where existing police regulations, and the changing varieties of our clime, demand somewhat more diffuse covering, the adoption of garments of some sort is now universal. How the Picts of yore managed to pull through without contracting pleuro-pneumonia may well astonish the speculative mind. I am no judge of painting, so cannot estimate the comfort of their costume, but imagine the worst-cut garment of this day would have competed on good terms, with something in hand to spare, with the most brilliant coat of woad erst worn by them. Whatever hues the males may have adopted—among the ladies of that day what variety of colours and diversity of tints must have existed, numerous, no doubt, as the prismatic effects of the rainbow; yet it may be questioned, picturesque as they must have looked, whether the style which obtains with the fair sex of the period is

not superior for hygeian purposes to that of days gone by. Fortunately, the ladies of the nineteenth century use no paint! Now that Madame Rachel has been improved off our stage, the art of being "beautiful for ever" has fallen into desuetude, and rouge and Rock of Sahara are neither known nor called for.

It might prove entertaining and instructive to trace the different steps and stages in the development of dress, from the pristine fig-leaf down to the registered Ulster of our time, and applying to the subject the Darwinian theory of selection, demonstrate how the fashion for leaves faded, while knickerbockers survived in the struggle for existence.

This little manual, however, aims only at being a practical guide to dress—not an æsthetic work on costume; so we must forego the pleasure of pursuing this subject further, and content ourselves by observing that, although the primary objects of dress appear to have been utility and warmth, these quickly gave way to finery and ornamentation. So we find in tropical climes, where clothing is not a vital necessity, the aborigines have, according to their unpublished *Follet*, set fashions for wearing their anklets,

bracelets, rings, and beads, and the laws of their fashions are, no doubt, as inexorable with them as they are with us.

To come *per saltum* from the Garden of Eden to Middlesex—from Paradise to Pall Mall—we are struck by one important and melancholy fact: Adam, the initiator of dress, had no tailor's bill to pay, but has entailed on us the curse of either running an account for ours, else—there is no alternative—of paying cash on delivery for our clothes! Dress thus proven *de rigueur* all the world over,—

“From Greenland's icy mountain,  
To India's coral strand”—

the question naturally arises, How shall we dress, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? The answer I give is, Let us dress like gentlemen; and the object of this *brochure* is not only to teach how this may be done, but how it may be effected with economy.

Now, “cheap and nasty” being terms seldom possible to dissociate, you will bear in mind, dear reader, I by no means propose to turn you out “a howling swell” for next to nothing, but simply to show you how, in dress, you best, for

money, may get your money's worth. So our subject is to be considered under two heads:

1. *How to dress as a Gentleman.*
2. *How to do so with Economy.*

As to the first. Simply wearing good clothes will not constitute dressing as a gentleman; for the cad, the snob, and pretentious swell may all be superfinely clad, but the garb of a gentleman is not known to them.

In my youth I remember a book of dietetics, entitled, “What to Eat, Drink, and Avoid.” Concisely it told you to take the best of everything, and to shun carefully all inferior food. The advice no doubt was good, and I shall apply the idea by showing some styles of costume which must most studiously be eschewed.

Let me try a pen-and-ink sketch of the three types above mentioned.

The cad comes first. He is, in Mr. Bright's favourite language, the *residuum* of third-class counter-jumpers; he blossoms freely on Sundays and other holidays, and makes the streets hideous by his presence. His outward and visible signs are as under: shiny black frock coat and black pants—the former buttoned awry, the latter short, with legs of uneven length; hat related to

the fretful porcupine; embroidered shirt unregenerate; green satin scarf, stabbed with mock pin of coloured glass set in brass; gloves of startling hue, with an unexplored territory toward the finger-tips.

Such is the cad—caddy.

The snob, on the other hand, wears clothes elaborately cut and of novel design. There is much "drawing," as artists say, about his dress. He takes for model the stock music hall so-called comic vocalist, and affects thunder-and-lightning trousers, pegtoppy, or in the other extreme of horsiness; slap-bang coat, broadly lapelled, buttoning at the umbilical region. His hat may be new, but savours of Stratford-atte-Bow—not of the *ateliers* of Bond Street.

If on good terms with his laundress, he puts forth his linen shirt-front and cuffs *en evidence*, else covers up the one with a vast expanse of satin scarf, donning "reversibles" to do duty for the other.

Such is the snob. Copy him not.

The swells may be divided into two classes: the swell proper (or English *gandin*), who tries to dress well and succeeds; and the pretentious swell, who tries to dress well and don't. His is

a style carefully to be eschewed. It is not easy to describe its peculiarities; but would you see it, to take not for an example, but as a fearful warning, visit the *buffets* of some fashionable City restaurants, and observe the loudly-dressed young men flirting with sensation barmaids who serve therein, and you may study the type to (im)perfection.

The swell proper is faultless in his attire, so far as cut, fit, make-up, and material go; but unfortunately leaves the impression that he was made for his clothes, and not his clothes for him. Nor does he wear his dress with ease: he appears afraid of wrinkling his coat when he moves, and of knee-ing his pants when he sits, and too frequently *poses*, that the crowd may see he has taken toil and trouble to produce an effect.

Dressing thus is dressing as an artist to illustrate costume, but decidedly not dressing as a gentleman. In fact, no one should aim at looking like a dressed block in a ready-made tailor's window, nor appear as if melted into the clothes upon him.

Dr. Johnson, Shakespeare, or Nicodemus—I forget which—alluding to a man as being the best-dressed of his acquaintance, was asked why.

Answer was because no one could remember nor describe any article of dress he wore. Whoever made this remark was an undoubted authority on the art of dress, and one with whom I would gladly confer, were it possible, on the subject matter under discussion. Search through the number of your own acquaintance for a well-dressed man, and having found your *beau idéal* (or real) of the same—on examination, it will turn out that the most perfect type is remarkable for an absence of "loudness," both in colour and in style; and as a person with passable features is said to be able to go through a crowd without frightening any one, so a well-dressed man may be seen daily without eliciting criticism one way or the other on his costume. Herein lies the secret of success; and if you understand how to do it, it will be unnecessary for you to read these pages further. *Ars est artem celare*, and this knack of dressing is essentially an art: to a certain extent it is innate; and if you have it not naturally, it is not easily to be acquired. But, *à propos* of Johnson, as we have introduced his name, would he not have said, "Sir, let us take a walk down Fleet Street"?

Well, Temple Bar being in a rotten state and

my life not insured, suppose we change the venue—or avenue, if you prefer it—and let us have a stroll in Clubland, where we shall see some of the best-dressed men, if not in Europe, at least in London.

I do not assert well-dressed men are indigenous to the West-end, to the exclusion of other parts of town, nor claim for Pall Mall and Piccadilly a monopoly in fashion. Men in the unmistakeable garb of gentlemen may be seen in all parts of London, all over England, and elsewhere. What I contend is that in the world of Clubland you find concentrated a set of men of some social position, who mix freely in society, in *salons*, among the *élite* of rank and fashion. If their dress will pass muster in the places they frequent, it ought surely be good enough for us to copy and take a lesson from.

Along Pall Mall we walk, and observe those going in and out of its palatial halls. First we pass the OLD MAN CLUB, and perhaps you may not be struck by any great display of dress by those who frequent it, for remember, this asylum is only eligible to those of F.O. rank, who, having passed their *première jeunesse*, may be supposed to have renounced the pomps and vanities of

attire. Yet note the neatness and precision of nearly all—from their well-brushed hats down to their glossy boots, which, though often roomy for the gouty, are polished so that on emergency you might shave yourself therein. And here we may learn our first lesson in the art of dressing, namely, military cleanliness. The majority of members of this club have been swells in their day, and many of them may have led the fashions in their youth; and now in the evening of life, even in the sere and yellow leaf, they retain the habit of precision and neatness—bearing out the old saying: "What's young learnt is never old forgotten."

THE MINERVA CLUB opposite will not afford us much insight into the object of our research. Its *clientèle* are too deeply engrossed with Greek roots, fossil remains, and Professor Huxley's theories, to spend much time over the cut of a paletôt, or the flowing lines of sixteen-shilling Sydenham trousers. But if you wanted an historical essay on the *tunica* or *toga* of the ancient Romans, with notes critical and exegetical thereon, pointing out the length and material of the former, and the varieties and significations of the latter—many of its learned members would be

found competent authorities on these matters. With classic acumen they could descant on the *gens togata* or *togati*, accurately distinguishing between the cut and finish of the *toga prætexta* and the *toga virilis*. The trimmings of the purple worn by the conquering hero on his triumphal entry would be within their ken; while you and I, I fear, know nothing whatever about these matters, except that from this word *toga* we derive the slang terms "togs" and "togger."

THE VOYAGERS adjacent is also of that ilk—a cross between the Old Man and the Minerva—no scandal meant anent the goddess!

The next club to it may, perhaps, claim the credit of having inaugurated, as the slang term goes, "REFORM IN TAILORS' BILLS;" and, although microscopic research might detect a percentage of well-dressed men within its walls, better remain yet to see.

Now come we to the stately TORY CLUB and its younger brother opposite—THE JUNIOR TORY. We dismiss them in a word by saying their members are more noted for their strong political proclivities than for any organized attempt to impart *ton* to the world of fashion.

THE OXBRIDGE AND CAMFORD, next on the

list, teems with the parson element; shovel hats and aprons abound, and make one wonder what the *raison d'être* of the latter garb may be. "How much prettier," said a lady to me the other day, on meeting a real live bishop, "it would look if the dear man had it *ruched*, or wore it full kilt-plaited in the front." Talking about the clerical tribe, I have often wondered why the garb of holiness should be black; for as this hue is commonly associated by us with his Satanic Majesty, it might not be unreasonable to expect the celestial uniform to be of quite another tint. Church dignitaries would be more consistent and more complimentary to their calling were they to turn out like angels, in colours "ever bright and fair," instead of draping their reverend frames in materials "black as the —!" But this, however, is more a question for Convocation, and really is not any affair of mine.

At that little symposium, sacred to the officers of Her Majesty's Brigade of Guards, are many well-dressed men; and at the well-known RAG may be seen, *me judice*, the best-dressed men all round in town. Going farther afield in Clubland we may fare worse; but continue our walk up aristocratic St. James's Street, and get a notion

of 'VARISITY style at the CLUB so-called. Then cross the street, and peradventure you may see, in the bay-window of NOODLE'S, some rare old fossil of a Noodleite, carefully preserved, tawney and crusted—dressed in the style fashionable fifty years ago. Few remain now; yet you may come in for the sight. Yes! by Jove! there goes old Lord X—in tightly-buttoned bright blue coat and brass buttons; coat-collar about a fathom deep; cravat knotted in a manner that Beau Brummel might have approved; he is be-wigged and be-dyed, puffed, powered, padded, and would sadly miss stays if he left them off. Although a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, I do not counsel you to imitate his mode of dress.

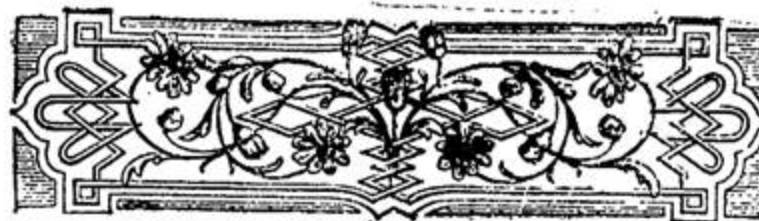
A saunter round St. James's Square brings us back to the RAG, and allow me to reiterate, that here the best-dressed men do congregate.

Officers in the service may easily dress well—they have many facilities for so doing. They go to good tailors to begin with—although I do not consider, as a rule, that the best military tailors make the best mufti. Their profession necessitates frequent change of their clothes throughout the day, and uniform bears the brunt of the wear—the most damaging to good clothes—sitting at

meals, with an occasional shampoo of gravy, and lounging cross-legged after dinner. Last, and certainly not least, officers all possess that most inestimable benefit in the way of valet—the soldier-servant, who cleans, dusts, damps, brushes, and folds their clothes as soon as taken off, carefully putting them away until further wanted.

What cannot a regimental servant do with regulation pipeclay? In his hands it is omnipotent over cloth. He can charm stains and grease-spots thereout, even as an Indian juggler charms snakes; and what sleight-of-hand he exercises over your garments generally! The coat, grimed and mud-bespattered, is beaten with switch or cane, and, when folded away, comes out as from a press. Trousers, baggy at knees as the historical parachute of dear old Mrs. Gamp, are manipulated into their former shape. Compared to the private valet, always expensive and frequently mutinous, he is a pearl of great price. His cost is a dole; and, thanks to that excellent institution the regimental guard-room, he can always be kept within control.

Having shown you the dress of gentlemen by example rather than by precept (for there is no sealed pattern of it), we pass on to our second head.



## CHAPTER II.

### HOW TO DRESS WITH ECONOMY.

Economy—Credit—Ready money—West-end tailors—Economic tailors—Cut—Fit—Make-up—Keeping clothes in shape—Repairs—Price list.

**T**HIS subject of economy is a wide one, and might be treated to the  $n^{\text{th}}$  power of  $x$  in diffuseness. So, to avoid prolixity, and yet do justice, as I intend, to the question, I shall divide it into four heads (like that un-disestablished infliction, the Sunday sermon of the day), and after discussing each, shall make some practical remarks, which I trust may go home to the hearts of, and prove a lasting blessing to, my readers.

They are as under: