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H.P. Cannon 70

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Fashion.

On occasions like this, as it is customary for the youthful orator to begin with the birth of Adam and end with the death of the Devil, you will be ready to harden me, if I locate the first realm of Fashion in the garden of Eden; and attempt to show that Croesus, the Lydian Cæsar, spoke truly, so far as it concerns Fashion, when according to Herodotus, he informed Cyrus that "the affairs of mankind move in a circle".

When Father Adam and Mother Eve first entered life in fair Eden, how simple the style of their living: no extravagance in food or dress, both simple, natural and light. The first encroachment of sin upon their happy existence, marked the first epoch of Fashion. The style of dress adopted, as the product of the cunning and ingenuity of the first woman, was highly figurative. Her it was that woman established her prestige as leader of the fashions; which man, poor fool, then and ever after meekly yielded to her.

It appears however after being driven from the garden, that the scattering of mankind over the face of the earth and their increase gave rise to a corresponding increase in the number of pieces sent out to wash; for we are told that at the end of the first great washing on earth, the Elephant was seen carrying a ~~mountain~~ on his head.

Tradition does not inform me as to the size and contents of this trunk. Fashion-plates were not yet extant. But as there were giants in those days, and so large an animal was employed in this, the first recorded visit to a watering place, we may infer that this was no pocket-bag but at least a "Saratoga". It is quite likely however that not yet trained to harvest God's original designs, and as Greece was not, the Grecian hand was reserved for a more enlightened generation.

Except by analogies such as these, we are utterly at a loss to institute comparisons between our ante-deluvian forefathers and the present sublime reign of the Empress Eugenie, Madame Demorest and his Satanic Majesty; when boys, scarcely freed from the nursery, sport a cravat and a literary collar called "The Shakespeare", much for the same reason that fat-ut medicines are called by Greek names, "Syzygium", for instance.

In our day, the realm of Fashion is an absolute despotism, whose scepter is swayed over the whole world. In the wild woods of Africa, it drags its strong subjects to the ground with a huge tower of unblasted, densely inhabited hair, while its civil-ized votaries show their allegiance by no less lofty aspirations, though not so fondly, minus the sword and the numerous soliloquy. The uncivilized inhabitants of Africa's jungle, and their half-faced imitators, alike confess themselves to be victims of the hair, and speak when they

follow some spirit, and that spirit is Fashion. 'Tis
it that gives value although it may be less than our
rational quantities.

Fashion seems to say, as she sees helpless mortals
left dead before following her bidding, "I did not bid
them uncheck me to death; I did but guard the pave-
ment with the sword pointed towards them, and they walked
upon it."

By her command, even waterfalls, Niagara included,
become infested with rats. The Muse of poetry is for-
bidden longer to sing, "Music hath charms to soothe
the savage breast", but the euphony of her strain must
give place to the sentiment, "Music hath no charms
to soothe the purring patent-beaver". The law of Fashion,
while it is prohibitory, is also mauditory. It reads, "None
said, Thou shalt not make unto thyself golden calves,
thou shalt not bow down thyself nor worship them",
but I say unto thee, make unto thyself calves, and wor-
ship, and I say unto thee, bow down thyself and worship —
sawdust and rags.

It has been truly said that Doctors live by the
folly and ignorance of mankind. How truly! See, at
Fashion's last bidding, the body stooped forward to get
the ridiculous hind, called the Grecian — another mis-
tation of a classical term used much as the negro
is, generally called Pompey or Augustus Caesar.

The body is hobbled along in this way, a pluming
spectacle to all the quack Doctors who see with regret,
that at no distant day, practice will be made for

lumbago in the back, et cetera. I should not be surprised, if, in accordance with the development theory, Fashion should ordain that from off the burden the body should go on all fours. Then for every one who strays the ordinance, the appropriate costume will be the hide of that quadruped, whose music is called a tray, and whose ears are his principal feature.

As the cycles roll round, of fancy Fashion will cut shorter the dresses, uncover the heads, and dismiss with the service of hags who now follow on the trail. The prospect looks up of fashions as worn at the earliest date, when fig-leaves will suffice for all kinds of apparel, and only Neptune's clean structure will hang out their washing. I am also led to infer from the short English coat and the cut of the hants, that they will continue to grow more like the tight which the acrobats put on to play disson in the air; and at last the lords of creation will look more like monkeys, less like men, and progress backwards, until, according to Prof. Huxley, they will reach a lower link in animal's existence; all because they will have suffered themselves to be bound hand and foot by the chains forged in Fashion's blazing furnace.

Would you know where this furnace is, and who the fabricators are? Look in Paris: see a few shrouded, chattering, gossiping old women, like the three Furies, confidently issuing their mandates to the world. Above their door, you see written in flaming characters, This iron rule:

Use unto Those
Who us oppose.

If they order the stove-pipe hat to be an inch higher or lower, full-crowned or segau-loaf, it must be so; and if they say the top of the hat shall be an eighth of an inch broader or narrower, square-tied or round, the fashion changes the same instant. If they command the ladies to wear a regular sky-scraper for a bonnet, or a something they call a bonnet, but mathematically expressed a mere geometrical line, the decree is obeyed; or if they decide the buttons on the back of our coats shall be a sixteenth of an inch elevated or depressed, buttons rise or fall, and the only response their votaries make is, it must be so, Auntie, or reason well; or whence this gratifying hope, this dotting desire, this hankering after a new Fashion. Oh! fickle Fashion! Who and what art thou? Are the puppet shows our see at vanity fair only thy semblance or a reality? When death, the healer, shall have touched our eyes with moist clay of the grave, then we shall see the truth as we have never yet beheld it. If you would know what, in solemn reality it is, ask, what is Fashion, of the shroud.

H. J. Cannon.

Junior Prize Contest Oration of Henry P. Cannon, Class of 1870
Transcribed by Tristan Deveney, May 2008

Fashion

On occasions like this, as it is customary for the youthful orator to begin with the birth of Adam and end with the death of the Devil, you will be ready to pardon me, if I locate the first realms of Fashion in the garden of Eden; and the attempt to show² that Croesus, the Lydian Captive, spoke truly so far as it concerns Fashion, when according to Heroditus, he informed Cyrus that "The affairs of mankind move in a circle."

When Father Adam and Mother Eve lived a sinless life in fair Eden, how simple the style of their living: no extravagance in food or dress, both simple, natural and light. The first encroachment of sin upon their happy existence; marked the first epoch of Fashion. The style of dress adopted, as the product of the cunning and ingenuity of the first woman, was highly figurative. Here it was that woman established her prestige as leader of the fashions which man, poor fool, then and ever after meekly yielded to her.

It appears, however, after being driven from the garden, that the scattering of mankind over The face of the earth and their increase gave rise to a corresponding increase in the number of pieces [one word illegible- huces? hieces?] out to wash; for we are told that at the end of the first great washing on earth, the Elephant was seen carrying a trunk on his head.

Tradition does not inform us as to the size and contents of this trunk. Fashion plate were not yet [one word illegible]. But as there were giants in those days, and so large an [one word illegible] was employed in this, the first recorded visit to a watering place, we may infer that this was no carpet bag but at least a "Saratoga". It is quite likely woman had not yet learned to pervert God's original design ; and as Greece was not, the Grecian bend was reserved for a more enlightened generation.

Except by analogies such as These, we are utterly at a loss to institute comparisons between our antediluvian forefathers and the present supreme reign of the Empress Eugene, Madame Demorest and his Satanic majesty: when boys, scarcely freed from the nursery, sport a beaver and a literary collar called "The Shakespeare", much for the same reason that patent medicines are called by Greek names, "Sojodont", for instance.

In our day, the realm of Fashion is an absolute despotism, whose scepter is swayed over the whole world. In the wild woods of Africa, it drags its ebony subjects to the ground with a huge [one word illegible] of mud-plastered, densely-inhabited hair, while its said-to-be civilized rotaries show their allegiance by no less lofty aspirations, though, let it be fondly hoped, mixes the mud and the numerous population. The uncivilized inhabitants of Africa's jungle, and their pale-faced immitators, alike confess themselves to be nothing but [sapphires?], valueless, except when They

follow some unit, and that unit is Fashion. "Tis it that gives value although it may be less than any assignable quantity.

Fashion seems to say, as she sees helpless mortals fall dead from following her bidding, “I did not put those wretched ones to death; I did but guard the passage with the sword pointed towards them, and they rushed upon it.”

By her command, even waterfalls, Niagara included, become infested with rats. The muse of Poetry is forbidden longer to sing, “Music hath charms to soothe the savage beast”, but the euphony of her strain must give place to the sentiment, music hath no charms to soothe the swelling “patent-heaver”. The law of Fashion, while it is prohibitory, is also mandatory. It reads, “Moses said, ‘Thou shalt not make unto thyself golden calves, thou shalt not bow down thyself nor worship them’, but I say unto thee make unto thyself calves, and verily I say unto thee, bow down Thyself and worship – sawdust and rags.

It has been truly said that Doctors live by the folly and ignorance of mankind. How truly! See, at Fashion’s last bidding, the body stooped forward to get the ridiculous bend called the Grecian – another prostitution of a classical term used much as the negro is, generally called Pompey or Augustus Caesar.

The body is hobbled along in this way, a pleasing Spectacle to all the quack Doctors, who see with delight, that at no distant day, practice will be good for

lumbagos the back, et cetera. I should not be surprised, if, in accordance with the development theory, Fashion should ordain that from off the bender the body should go on all fours. Then for every one who obeys the ordinance, the appropriate costume will be the hide of that quadruped, whose music is called a bray, and whose ears are his principal feature.

As the cycles roll round, I fancy Fashion will cut shorter the dresses, uncover the head, and dispense with the service of pages who now follow on the trail. The prospect looms up of fashion as worn at the earliest date, when fig-leaves will suffice for all kinds of apparel, and only Neptune’s clear starches will hang out their washing. I am also led to infer from the short English coat and the cut of the parts, that they will continue to grow more like the tights which the acrobats put on to play didols in the air; and at last the lords of creation will look more like monkeys, less like men, and progress backwards, until according to Prof. Huxley, they will reach a lower link in animal existence; all because they will have suffered themselves to be bound hand and foot by The chains forged in Fashion’s brazen furnace.

Would you know where this furnace is, and who the fabricators are? Look in Paris: see a few shriveled, chattering, gossiping old women, like the three Parcae, confidently issuing their mandates to the world. Above their door, you see written in flaming characters, This new rule:

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H. P. Cannon.