

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers I*, 1885 – 1886 Oct 3, '85 to May 29, '86) The original is very badly faded.

Dress Reform

Not a common, maudlin, everyday reform, but a logical and revolutionary idea.

Here we of the male persuasion are sitting, and have sat for years, allowing the seductive female to rob us, day after day, of our comforts, and prerogatives and reverse the order of nature. Bah! I have no patience with him who sits and tenderly allows himself to be deprived one by one, of the rights and conveniences without a struggle.

Owing to the absence of statistics, I shall have to show by logical deductions from the existing order of things that we have been, for lo these many years, most bitterly imposed upon; and from a quarter where we should least expect it, – by her whom we guard, honor, trust and love. Why, Mr. Editor; it is almost beyond belief. But to the facts: let us take

Precedent

Take the peaceful stallion running wild on our South-western plains; – the lordly lion with his cruel beauty and his wealth of mane. The gorgeous birds of tropical forests, with their wealth and variety of plumage and of voice, and what have we found? Invariably the male more showily attired, more fascinating, and more brilliant and more dashing than the gentler sex; and they make such use of their attractions as their creator intended. We catch, imprison and domesticate them but in a large majority of cases, we fail to civilize them. The horse, however, from long association with and brutal initiation at the hands of man, is the first to resign all attributes of freedom, and falling in with the hobby of his master to accept the civilization. No amount of training and bulldozing can induce the game cock to renounce his dignified strut, or his gaudy plumage. – What does precedence teach? That the duty of the male is to array himself in gorgeous colors, and relegate the sombers to the female.

Comfort

Why was the Roman Toga discarded? Ask Farney, who invented breeches?

Some woman who lacked the pluck to wear them, or had a cruel husband who took them for himself because of their novelty. Their invention was all right, but their application is all wrong.

How graceful, as well is comfortable, the male would be in a gown. Spindle shanks and bandy legs could then disport themselves on equal terms with perfection. The Dude would be an impossibility. How much easier, and with what dignity could we move. No torturing stiff collar, no ungainly swallow-tail, no damnable tight boots. But why continue the painful story.

Under the head of comfort, consider the Indian, the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Turk. They, like the animals are not civilized, therefore are they comfortable. Your Turk teaches you were the breeches belong. Women should wear them, her health, shape, and comfort demand them. Let us consider the matter

Anatomically

Men can gird the waist while wearing the gown and do so with impunity, because there is no reason anatomically, why he should not, not so with woman. Woman could wear the trousers, because suspension from the shoulders would remove constriction from the waist; and because there is no anatomical impediment to conflict with her wearing them. The reverse of the latter proposition obtains with man.

Man would not dare put his feet on the mantel if he wore the gown, while woman could not put hers in their, even though she wore the breeches. Men should use a side saddle, for reasons already given. Women should ride astraddle, because the position is adapted to her anatomical requirements. Woman should have the coat and vest, because she needs the pockets. Men can get along without them and many would be glad to do so.

Look at the absurdities of present male attire: – How would John the Baptist, or Paul of Tarsus look in trousers! What a spectacle would King Lear, Hamlet, and others of their kind present thus attired! How much dignity would we find in the old Roman Senate if they sat with feet in air and hands in pockets! And yet to such extent are our tastes vitiated, that the figures of Washington in knee breeches, and Webster and Clay in a non-descript garment, excites no comment.

What will become of our classics! If they lay the dead ruler away in his royal robes, shall we say: –

They laid him to rest

In his royal vest etc.

Of the reverend brother who steps out of the beaten track we must say “He is a disgrace to his pants!” Or when a Judge delivers an opinion contrary to the dictum of a righteous press how the Editors would delight in these days of advanced journalism, to make the natural substitution in the present mild suggestive that he had soiled his ermine!

But why multiply incidents. Torn buttonholes, lost buttons, and temper, shirts split up the back (after Literary Club meetings) etc., call for no comment here. I fear all this argument is futile unless some of our worthy, wealthy and retired gentlemen, in want of a hobby, should establish a bureau for the advancement of this idea.

Yet perchance some chivalric [] will lead the van by donning such garments as befit the sex, by every law, natural and divine. I would say in parting:

Strike for your toga; tis a crown,
Strike for your freedom and your gown,
Right, and your native state.
Down with the breeches, coat, and vest;
Down with colors and cuffs hard prest;
You'd then be truly great.

Lawrence Carr

Budget
Hinman Editor
January 30, 1886