

## THE PATENT-PROTECTED MAN.



HE "outer rind of man," of which Francis Quarles wrote words of wisdom, has come to be almost a fixed quantity in life. The curl or curve of a hat, or the length in skirt of a coat, are still movable factors by which the man of fashion may be proved and found cor-

rect, but these things are now so unimportant that they may be disregarded with impunity. A man's a man "for a' that, and a' that," and the dress of man in general is now nearly changeless, and always commendably simple. Coat, hat, and trousers may not be beautiful; they are far from satisfying high artistic tastes; but when a dissatisfied theorist would have us adopt the toga, the sombrero, or knee-breeches, it is soon evident that we are too busy in these days to be bothered with incumbrances, and too much in earnest to be troubled about trimmings or gay colours. This being so, it might have been thought that man's dress would not offer many opportunities to the inventor and patentee.

Where would there be room for "improvements" in a costume which hardly fluctuates at all, and in which, so far as clothes are concerned, there need be no difference between a duke and a dustman? Not so, says the inventor; the less complicated a costume the greater must be the scope for improvement. He and his kind have set to work, undeterred by almost continuous failure, on every part of man's garb, thinking, evidently, to reap fortunes from it, as one would pick blackberries from a bush, so that the Patent Records, instead of being dry and dismal reading, are really — at intervals — quite interesting. But it is still difficult to realise how men, however sanguine, and presumably sane, could have believed or hoped that the public would adopt and wear things such as they have gone to the trouble of devising and to the expense of protecting by patent. The fine imagination of Swift or Rabelais could not contemplate a world under more extraordinary aspects than this, in which we move and have our being, must have appeared to the anticipations of some patentees; and, when other sources of inspiration fail, the writers of comic operas and extravaganzas may turn to the Patent Records with the certainty of finding, with a little patience, some entirely new ideas.

It is not so very long ago that a lively discussion was carried on in the newspapers as to the merits of Hips *versus* Braces. This had been anticipated many years before by patents for making breeches and, later, trousers self-supporting by the insertion at the back of metal springs; and, subsequently, after the introduction of india-rubber, of elastic catches into the waistband, sometimes both at back and sides. One would have the trousers fastened to the shirt by

means of buttons and little linen straps. Another, perhaps having in view Douglas Jerrold's humorous attempt in the "Clovernook Papers" to prove that men were ruled and led through their buttons, brought forward an arrangement of hooks and studs, by which those dangerous enemies to the peace of the one sex, and means of supremacy in the other, might be entirely dispensed with.

One of the inevitable extremes in male apparel, to which it is as periodically subject as the recurrence of the seasons, is to have clothing very close-fitting — what in the opposite sex has been styled the eel-skin mode. Thus it was that men were said to have special trousers for different purposes — these for walking, those for riding — or were believed to bring their pocket-necessaries to a minimum, for fear that the bare figure outline should be unkindly broken by too much handkerchief or a cigar-case. Such garments, and trousers in particular, provoked many witticisms. This man was seen to drop a walking-stick in the street, and had to wait until a passer-by would pick it up for him. A fashionable tailor was told by a customer ordering a pair of breeches that if he could get them on he would not have them; and another was represented as finding himself, with a new pair of trousers, in the dilemma that no matter in what order he started to dress, he could not finish the task, for, with his trousers on first, he could not get his boots on, and putting boots on first, he could not get his trousers on. To obviate difficulties of this kind, and yet permit those who would be dandies to be dandies indeed, there were perfected trousers, which, by the insertion of elastic pieces in the seams, either at back or sides, would have the property of so much expansion as was necessary, and no more, so that, in spite of his trousers, the wearer could ride, row, play cricket, or otherwise amuse himself. Considering that it was at this time necessary to have trousers ironed every time they were worn, to remove wrinkles in them, the plan ought to have been sure of success. But it was seen by another thoughtful inventor that these skin garments must be unhealthy by checking perspiration. Forthwith ventilating trousers appear, invisibly perforated, and these were followed by others having a ventilated gusset, or angular piece, inserted in them. Speaking of skin garments, one early patent would have had us hark back to the very first principles of dress, and clothe ourselves in the skins of animals, but in an entirely new and patentable manner. Before caoutchouc entered into commerce, men bold enough to acknowledge themselves afraid of getting wet had garments of painted cloth or oiled silk, such as the first umbrellas were made of. These were to be superseded by the method of our patentee, which was to take "the peritoneal coat, membrane, or covering of the cæcum or other intestines," taken preferably

immediately after the slaughtering of an animal, and placing them edge to edge, stretch them on a lay figure of the required size, when, it was said, they would be welded into a perfect-fitting and entirely waterproof garment.

We find one common motive of inventions, the principle of combining two or more purposes in one article, often worked out (theoretically) in clothing. Here is a double-fronted shirt, two fronts (the upper one to be detached) to every shirt, and the laundress set at defiance, with the additional advantage of the insertion of slips of crinoline steel, or other yielding metallic substance, to prevent the "rucking up" to which such things are subject. There are combined collars and neckties; reversible coats, with differing surfaces, so that either side might be worn outward at will, and trousers made after a similar fashion; also double-fronted coats; a paletot which might, by artful flaps and appendages, be made into a short coat, a great coat, a dress coat, or a hunting coat; and coats which, being dress or "claw-hammered" coats in the first place, had skirts that could be detached or folded back out of sight when not wanted. Here are trousers, partly lined with waterproof materials, and so contrived that "the lower part of the legs thereof can be turned up and buttoned round the body for riding, or in wet and muddy weather, and turned down or buttoned round the leg in fine weather or for walking." For similar emergencies there were hoods and capes of thin materials concealed, in patent ways, under coat-collars; or wings attached underneath coat-skirts, which could be brought out to cover the legs in a shower; or mud-shields which might, could, would, or should be fastened to the heels of boots, to keep the trousers from being spattered.

Other economical multifold methods provide reversible collars, or double wristbands; and for the preservation of hat-brims, edges of collars, or other articles of dress liable to fray, there was a plan of fixing to them a beading of "china clay," or other substantial and readily renewed material. Weak-chested people were armed with chest protector and braces in combination; weak-throated people with stock and respirator in one, or with collars so lined with woollen, or other soft, warm, and washable materials, as would, according to the kind intentions of the designer, "give the wearer the protection of a muffler without its sickly appearance." For people who were nervously solicitous about their sight, one Samuel Stocker took out an elaborate patent, comprising a hood that might envelop the head, having a gauze-covered aperture to see through. He also invented a veil furnished with openings, and screens for the eyes, nose, and mouth, which could be rolled or turned up round the lower part of the cap to which it was fixed when not in use. Furthermore, he perfected a hollow air-tight band, which might, when fastened to the brim of a hat, be inflated, when desired, to serve as a pillow, and two other wonderful novelties in hats, to which anything but a full official description would fail to do justice:—

"A head covering intended to protect the eyes. It

is formed as a hat or cap of any desired shape, with one or two apertures in front just above the brim, and fitted with screens of glass, wire-gauze, or other suitable material. An elastic band may be attached to draw down over the apertures and hide them, when the hat is worn in an ordinary position.

"A head-covering for the same purpose. It consists of a hat having the body made in two parts. The upper part rests upon the head, the lower part (which carries the brim) slides over or within the upper; it is provided with apertures or screens as before mentioned. An elastic water-tight band connects the parts, and the upper part is supported on the head by a strap, or by drawing in the lining."

How mercifully have we been spared the spectacle of our streets haunted by hooded and goggle-eyed figures—as unsightly as a diver in his business suit!

For economy and ease together, a model garment was to combine coat and trousers; another was to attach a false white waistcoat to the shirt. A coat has been censured as a garment without a front, and the waistcoat as another without a back. An inventor anticipated the witticism by patenting a design which united the two in one. Another would have under-clothing for men, for the sake of comfort and several other considerations, made in one piece; and these principles were carried to an extreme by uniting a jacket or coat with the trousers at the waist, and with a hood attached to the neck-band of the coat, which should form a cap. The desire to alter shirts so that they might be more easily put on has been so often manifested as to suggest that mankind must often be in a hurry in dressing; one would have shirts open at the side, and another would open them down the entire front, so that they could be put on like a coat.

For better endurance of travelling there are numerous contrivances: a morning gown which could be converted into a railway rug; a combined stretch-bed, cushion, and wrapper; or an air-proof bag or cushion to be fixed in the back of paletots, jackets, or coats, which might be inflated to form a soft seat, a small tube being carried from the bag to a side pocket, so that the inflation might be effected without taking off the garment. Cloaks which could be in some way or another converted into tents are common enough, and, not to prolong an enumeration which has threatened entire transformation, in this or that particular, of the entire clothing of men, we need notice nothing more but efforts to provide universal-fitting clothes.

The mysterious dispensation which Mr. Alfred Jingle noticed, whereby all the long postmen were allotted short coats, and all the short postmen long ones, would soon have been remedied if some inventors had been successful in smaller articles. The man who could, as one did, devise leggings which by means of concealed machinery would fit legs of any size or shape, would have been quite equal to a greater emergency, while he could in any difficulty that occurred have entered into consultation with another who matured some gloves which, with elastic bands inserted in the seams, "should closely fit the fingers and hands of different persons, although varying in circumference."

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