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Vertentem sese frustra sectabere canthum,
Cum rota posterior curras et in axe secundo. - Pers.

GREAT Masters in Painting never care for drawing People in the Fashion; as very well knowing that the Headdress, or Periwig, that now prevails, and gives a Grace to their Portraitures at present, will make a very odd Figure, and perhaps look monstrous in the Eyes of Posterity. For this Reason they often represent an illustrious Person in a *Roman* Habit, or in some other Dress that never varies. I could wish, for the sake of my Country Friends, that there was such a kind of *everlasting Drapery* to be made use of by all who live at a certain distance from the Town, and that they would agree upon such Fashions as should never be liable to Changes and Innovations. For want of this *standing Dress*, a Man takes a Journey into the Country is as much surprised, as one walks in a Gallery of old Family Pictures; and finds as great a Variety of Garbs and Habits in the Persons he converses with. Did they keep to one constant Dress they would sometimes be in the Fashion, which they never are as Matters are managed at present. If instead of running after the Mode, they would continue fixed in one certain Habit, the Mode would some time or other overtake them, as a Clock that stands still is sure to point right once in twelve Hours: In this Case therefore I would advise them, as a Gentleman did his Friend who was hunting about the whole Town after a rambling Fellow, If you follow him you will never find him, but if you plant your self at the Corner of any one Street, I'll engage it will not be long before you see him.

I have already touched upon this Subject in a Speculation shews how cruelly the Country are led astray in following the Town; and equipped in a ridiculous Habit, when they fancy themselves in the Height of the Mode. Since that Speculation I have received a Letter (which I there hinted at) from a Gentleman who is now in the Western Circuit.

Mr. SPECTATOR,

“Being a Lawyer of the *Middle-Temple*, *Cornishman* by Birth, I generally ride the Western Circuit for my health, and as I am not interrupted with Clients, have leisure to make many Observations that escape the Notice of my Fellow-Travellers.

One of the most fashionable Women I met with in all the Circuit was my Landlady at *Stains*, where I chanced to be on a Holiday. Her Commode was not half a Foot high, and her Petticoat within some Yards of a modish Circumference. In the same Place I observed a young Fellow with a tolerable Periwig, had it not been covered with a Hat that was shaped in the *Ramillie* Cock. As I proceeded in my Journey I observed the Petticoat grew scantier and scantier, and about threescore Miles from *London* was so very unfashionable, that a Woman might walk in it without any manner of Inconvenience.

Not far from *Salisbury* I took notice of a Justice of Peace's Lady was at least ten Years behindhand in her Dress, but at the same time as fine as Hands could make her. She was flounced and furbelowed from Head to Foot; every Ribbon was wrinkled, and every Part of her Garments in Curl, so that she looked like one of those Animals which in the Country we call a *Friezeland* Hen.

Not many Miles beyond this Place I was informed that one of the last Year's little Muffs had by some means or other straggled into those Parts, and that all Women of Fashion were cutting their old Muffs in two, or retrenching them, according to the little Model was got among them. I cannot believe the Report they have there, that it was sent down frank'd by a Parliament-man in a little Packet; but probably by next Winter this Fashion will be at the Height in the Country, when it is quite out at *London*.

The greatest Beau at our next Country Sessions was dressed in a most monstrous Flaxen Periwig, that was made in King *Williams* Reign. The Wearer of it goes, it seems, in his own Hair, when he is at home, and lets his Wig lie in Buckle for a whole half Year, that he may put it on upon Occasions to meet the Judges in it.

I must not here omit an Adventure happened to us in a Country Church upon the Frontiers of *Cornwall*. As we were in the midst of the Service, a Lady who is the chief Woman of the Place, and had passed the Winter at *London* with her Husband, entered the Congregation in a little Headdress, and at hoop'd Petticoat. The People, who were wonderfully startled at such a Sight, all of them rose up. Some stared at the prodigious Bottom, and some at the little Top of this strange Dress. In the mean time the Lady of the Manor filled the (area) of the Church, and walked up to her Pew with an unspeakable Satisfaction, amidst the Whispers, Conjectures, and Astonishments of the whole Congregation.

Upon our Way from hence we saw a young Fellow riding towards us full Gallop, with a Bob Wig and at black Silken Bag tied to it. He stopt short at the

Coach, to ask us how far the Judges were behind us. His Stay was so very short, that we had only time to observe his new silk Waistcoat, was unbutton'd in several Places to let us see that he had a clean Shirt on, which was ruffled down to his middle.

From this Place, during our Progress through the most Western Parts of the Kingdom, we fancied ourselves in King *Charles* the Second's Reign, the People having made very little Variations in their Dress since that time. The smartest of the Country Squires appear still in the *Monmouth*-Cock, and when they go a wooing (whether they have any Post in the Militia or not) they generally put on a

red Coat. We were, indeed, very much surprized, at the Place we lay at last Night, to meet with a Gentleman that had accoutered himself in a. Night-Cap Wig, a Coat with long Pockets, and slit Sleeves, and a pair of Shoes with high Scollop Tops; but we soon found by his Conversation that he was a Person who laughed at the Ignorance and Rusticity of the Country People, and was resolved to live and die in the Mode.

Sir, If you think this Account of my Travels may be of any Advantage to the Publick, I will next Year trouble you with such Occurrences as I shall meet with in other Parts of *England*. For I am informed there are greater Curiosities in the Northern Circuit than in the Western; and that a Fashion makes its Progress much slower into *Cumberland* than into *Cornwall*. I have heard in particular, that the Steenkirk arrived but two Months ago at *Newcastle*, and that there are several Commodities in those Parts which are worth taking a Journey thither to see.”

C.
