

Foley, Caroline A.

Fashion

*The Economic Journal. The Journal of the British Economic Association, edited by F. Y. Edgeworth, Vol. III
London and New York 1893, 458-474*

458

FASHION.

THE study of the consumer, which is once more occupying the attention of economic science in England, is more disinterested and genuine than it was in the past. It is a study of the consumer as such. Two centuries ago and less he was appraised through the spectacles of trade and from the standpoint of national defence. His tastes were prone to go wavering over sea after strange gods. As the Athenian's lust for the East and the Teuton's craving for Italy, so was the Briton's hankering after the products, 'guises' and fashions of his Celto-Latin neighbours. It is the subject of comment, warning and rebuke from the days of the Plantagenets, that our countrymen 'haunted so much unto the folly of strangers' (1). Strangers meant mostly the French. When French supremacy arose on the decay of that of Spain, the seductiveness of French example and taste became doubly dangerous, and to yield to it became unpatriotic as well as improvident. Economists and social reformers took up the burden of the encyclopaedic chronicler and preacher. 'Tis better for England', wrote Defoe, 'that we should drink all Turnip-wine, or any wine, than that we should drink the best wine in Europe and go back to France for it. At present the Gust to French wines is laid by and the gross Draght of the whole Nation is upon Portugal wines. These the Portuguese sell us for our Manufactures ... all that ready Money we us'd to pay the French for their Wine, Brandy and Vinegar is sav'd in our Pockets' ... (*A Review of the Affairs of France*, No 86, 1704.) (2). ... Readers of economic history know that there are few writers, from Bacon (3) down to the days of Adam Smith, who do not discourse after this sort when on the subject of foreign trade. There was not only the expansion of commerce tempting young democracy to take what it fancied and not perhaps what, econom-

(1) John of Glastonbury, cf. *The Book of Costume*, London 1817, p. 55.

(2) Cf. also Defoe's *Weavers' Riots against Calicoes* and *An Humble Proposal to the People of England for the increase of their Trade, &c.*, in W. Lee's *Daniel Defoe*. Also Berkeley, *Querist*, 141, 144.

(3) *Letter to Villiers*.

ically and politically, it ought, so that as early as the days of Elizabeth 'from the towne to Westminster alonge, every Strete' was full of French and 'Millen' shops displaying 'goods able to make any temperate man to gase on them and to buy somewhat, though it serve to no purpose necessarie' (1). There was besides at the other end of the balance a dexterous State policy exploiting this British weakness and using its own creative and purveying skill to ends of aggrandisement (2). Hence in early economic theory the dynamic of wants and tastes, even when belief in paternal State functions waned, was not likely to be neglected.

Peace, steam and factory, proletariat and means of subsistence, diverted attention to production and population. But the working man has been for some time asserting that he is not a machine, but has tastes and likes to be in the fashion, even though fashion may turn and rend him as it abandons his employer's business (3). He too is a consumer 'temperate' it may be, yet apt 'to gase and to buy somewhat', and influence the fluctuations in demand. There is no further excuse for neglecting a thoroughgoing examination of those fluctuations.

Nevertheless that factor in these movements, which, if it is not the most potent, is at least the most characteristic and typical of all, inasmuch as it is the expression of the very spirit and instinct of variability itself, receives never more than a sentence or a paragraph of consideration in modern economic treatises. Mill, Cairnes and Fawcett do not condescend to the economics of fashion; and yet the last was of opinion that 'in political economy, as in many other sciences, the causes which produce disturbing fluctuations require a more careful investigation than those causes whose action is more constant and more undeviating' (4). Cournot believed that all human societies were tending towards a final, stable, persisting order, and that the effectual regulating of every demand was to hasten the blessed time when history should be no more, because we should all live according to scientific laws (5); but it does not appear that he coped with the regulation of fashion. Thorold Rogers only alluded to the 'unintelligible fickleness' of fashion to groan and pass by (6). Of living

(1) *A Compendious or Brief Examination of certain ordinary complaints*, by W. S. 1581, pt. 2, cf. *Britannia Languens*, § viii.

(2) Cf. Joshua Gee, *The Trade and Navigation of Great Britain considered*, p. 22, and Samuel Fortrey, *England's Interest and Improvement*. Also *Britannia Languens*, § xii. Cf. too Thorold Rogers, *Industrial and Commercial History of England*, en Colbert's policy, p. 180.

(3) Cf. Report of Industrial Remuneration Conference, 1885, pp. 242, 176.

(4) *Manual*, p. 84.

(5) *Théorie des Richesses*, 1863, p. 52.

(6) *Pol. Econ.* p. 78.

economists General Walker and Professors Sidgwick and Marshall graze the fearful subject with hasty comment, the Cambridge scholars viewing it from the standpoint of Production and Consumption respectively. Professor Menger examines the phenomenon of Inconstant Demand, but selects, for special mention only domestic arrangements against fire, and, for country dwellers, the Family Medicine-chest (1). Dr. Roscher (2), however, and Hermann (3) inquire and classify with a more curious regard; and in England Professor Foxwell, in his valuable inquiry into the causes of trade and labour fluctuations, has ranged fashion amongst the third of his three dual groups of change-elements, namely, as a special cause of price movement peculiar to each particular commodity (4). It is true that he too, seeing in fashion a mere matter of bonnets, associates the mental procedure beneath them with that of 'earthquakes and such inscrutable dispensations of nature'. Yet seismology advances, and so has his faith in the pervasion of law. Economic historians may some day heed Edmond About's warning that the history of modern industry, under the penalty of serious omission, will have to consecrate a chapter to the influence of caprice over labour (5). Meanwhile the results of a rough analysis, and of a few first-hand inquiries, presented in a very condensed form, may be of interest.

It may not be wholly superfluous to distinguish fashion forthwith from custom, usage, or taste. Tastes, whether concerned with the what or the how of our wants, convey more or less the implication of an aesthetically sufficient reason: custom or usage may be based on comfort or morality. But when anything is wanted on the ground that it is fashionable a rational basis seems farther to seek. An errant instinct obtruding into the lines of motivated conduct is not unnaturally judged to be irrational, and the philosophy that identified the irrational with the shifting and impermanent has not died out since the day when it was put into the mouth of Nature attacking Fashion. 'Vous affectez si fort le changement, dont la sagesse est ennemi capitale ... la raison est toujours uniforme et invariable' (6). This implication of a more or less incessant tendency to change best characterises fashion when viewed together with taste and usage as modes in which a society is satisfying its various wants, and is recognised and

(1) *Grundsätze*, p. 37

(2) *Pol. Econ.* § cviii, &c.

(3) *Staatwissenschaftliche Untersuchungen*, pp. 98-100.

(4) *Irregularity of Employment and Fluctuations of Prices*, pp. 36, 37, 67.

(5) *La Vieille Roche*, pt. II., cp. ii.

(6) *Dialogue entre la Mode et la Nature*, Paris, 1656.

emphasised by French definitions of 'mode' (1). For the English language fashion is current usage; for the French *l'usage n'est qu'une longue mode*. Mode is *le goût mobile, usage passager*. Fashion cannot claim to express such changes in habits and modes of life as are due to fresh discoveries and to improvements in taste and comfort as such, nor from those consequent on change in physical or social environment. They may all involve corresponding changes in fashion, but when eliminated they will leave a residuum of variableness in wants not accounted for, yet which, together with the complementary fact of a *general* conformity to that variableness, make up the phenomenon of fashion properly so-called.

Inquiry into the data requisite to explain an economic phenomenon would be out of place here. It must suffice merely to assert them. The cosmic law of rhythm, which seems to affect consumption generally (2) and manifests itself in the individual through the law of variety in wants; and a nexus of social factors: — love of distinction, imitation, and the effort after equalisation, together with the unconscious effort to express the spirit of the age, in proportion as it impresses itself more deeply now in one, now in another, centre of civilisation,—these being granted, we have man actuated by what Fourier called picturesquely *la passion pipeline* (3), or as Montaigne defined him, 'vain, diverse and undulating' (Essays, I.). The 'flitting' from one mode to another of the influential few becomes impressive and prevailing when multiplied into the 'sequaciousness' of the many, or when, if larger periods be considered, the selections made in mode and material are discerned as making for some expression of social consciousness.

Further, the increasing systematisation in fashion, *i.e.* the order of its changes and their diffusion in European and other centres of civilisation, is the outcome of several special conditions, some positive, *e.g.* a high development of commercial and social intercourse between nations having relatively identical ideals of culture (4), together with advanced productive skill and practical arts; some negative, *e.g.* the absence of political and social barriers to the general adoption of the now modes.

(1) Les modes changent, les mœurs ne changent point. *Le Théophraste moderne*. Anon. Paris, 1700.

(2) Cf. Mr. Spencer's *First Principles*, § 87; and *Principles of Sociology*, ii. pt. iv. cp. xi

(3) *Le Nouveau Monde Industriel*, § I. 1 and 2.

(4) 'Fashion is the costume of European culture'. J. von Falke, *Costümgeschichte*, Introd.

Thus conditioned fashion, or any given fashion, comes to be both for consumer and purveyor an element on the one hand of complication, on the other of simplification. The field for the selective play of the consumer's choice is so great, that purveyance is rendered very speculative. On the other hand, where his choice settles, demand is certain to be both prompt and extensive.

Fashion in Consumption: — From this standpoint, for purposes both of historic and present day inquiry, it might prove useful to define fashion somewhat more specifically, by ranking it not so much as a class of wants under such heads as necessities, comforts, or luxuries, but as rather a co-efficient of any of these, so that it appears as a want in wants. It may enter even into necessities; in comforts and still more, perhaps, in luxuries it becomes a co-efficient of a higher power. There is of course less scope for change in primary and definite needs, nevertheless there is no one commodity, unless pure air and pure water be considered as relative exceptions, which admits of being produced in one *mode* only. Hence the love of variety and its social liabilities, as sketched above, finds even in necessities its opportunity, e.g. in the form and flour of loaves or in the shape of a boot (1).

When nature ceases to be peremptory in her requirements, choice is ampler and fashion more influential. Experience incites to fresh experiments in forms of utility, and though there are regulative forces limiting selection, fashion often traverses these triumphantly or else, as their co-efficient, exploits them, so to speak, and may even convert them into excesses of taste depriving them of their purity and dignity (2). At this higher power fashion has been ranked as one of the four principles of luxury (3), and as the expression of refined sensuality, opinion or caprice, creating unreal wants (4).

On the other hand, and by writers of the same nationality, fashion has been frankly and warmly defended. It has not only checked sloth and slovenliness (5), and fostered refinement, but also stimulated imagination, fire and facility in the adaptation of

(1) According to Mr. Giffen it influences an important 'conventional necessary', viz., currency, v. *The Case against Bimetallism*, p. 220.

(2) 'It is a universal law that whatever pursuit, whatever doctrine, becomes fashionable, shall lose a portion of that dignity which it had possessed while it was confined to a small but earnest majority and was loved for its own sake alone'. - Macaulay, *History of England*, i. 3.

(3) Baudrillart, *Histoire du Luxe* 1878, i. p. 7 *et seq.*

(4) J. B. Say, *Traité d' Economie politique*, 1841, iii. 4.

(5) *Les Lois de la Galanterie*, in Quicherat, *Histoire du Costume*. (Fashionable persons were required to wash their hands every day and their face nearly as often.)

matter to use (*à bien tourner les choses.*) (1) Its essential element, love of change and mobility of taste, is the great incentive and *primum mobile* of all progress (2), breaking the bonds of custom by creating fresh needs or modes of need, and if judiciously cultivated through its periodic manifestations in the individual, as it makes itself felt moderately every hour, and keenly every second hour, might banish what is the curse of civilisation—excess both of work and play, and *ennui* (3).

Viewed thus as a potent co-efficient in demand, fashion has (1.) a history to be traced and (2.) present manifestations to be investigated.

1. In the former connection, Dr. Schäffle sees a course of evolution, by which ‘custom in wants, locally homogeneous and temporarily stable, has become fashion distributed in space and transient in time’ (4). This does not, or should not, mean that in the transition new psychological or sociological factors have been combined with the older co-efficient custom. Where customs are stable, the innovatory instinct is latent or extremely circumscribed by rigid external conditions and by undeveloped, or, it may be, diverted imagination. A barbarian and a West European man may dress with equal uniformity. The former has in his raiment a very definite set of social symbols, and a limited range of skill in production. The latter has mainly stripped his vesture of symbolism and is circumscribed as to its variability by an active life of wear, tear, and hurry. The dress of a ‘lady’, in Europe and America, is still expressive of her more leisured life and less diverted imagination. But now she also has girded up her loins to work, and is to that extent gravitating towards a more appropriate and relatively stable ‘costume’.

But however the economic historian views the phenomenon of fashion, he will find that, rooted as it is in elemental soil, it is absent from no society or social epoch (5). ‘Every epoch’, as M. Havard has said, ‘has colours and contours which it prefers, forms which it affects, symbols which it venerates’ (6). Every epoch, too, has ebullitions of sentiment, whims and fantasies to indulge in, is emulous within each caste, or class, or smaller group, is prone to follow and apt to produce leaders.

(1) *Dialogue entre la Mode et la Nature.*

(2) Baudrillart, op. cit. I., p. 10.

(3) Fourier, *Le Nouveau Monde*, loc. cit. Cf. also Berkeley, *The Querist*, 20.

(4) *Das gesellschaftliche System der menschlichen Wirthschaft*, 1873, III., iii., 343.

(5) Cf. Darwin, *Descent of Man*, II., 383; Westermarck, *History of Human Marriage*, p. 274; pp. 165-86.

(6) *L'art a travers les Moeurs*, 1884.

Every nation has its own geographical position, social temperament, and political development to express. Every individual, assimilating his own social medium, tends to modify it according to his own individuality, circumstances, and the direction of his activities. And vibrations in social consciousness naturally find most facile expression in such human products as constitute the most intimate adjuncts of life and best lend themselves to mobility of taste.

The association of stability with all ancient customs is to some extent based on the scantiness of such contemporary records as have been till recently accessible. Epochs which have long stood out from the obscurity of the past have been treated too much as 'rigid unities' of relatively unchanging manners (1). De Laveleye found in the taste for change the distinctive scourge of this epoch, because, forsooth, Greek vases before, and catacombs after, A. D. 1, show figures clad alike (2). But it is impossible to read of Terence's fashionable mothers (3), and of Plautus's enumeration of annual change in smart stuffs and colours, or of the attendant troop of dunning tradesmen (4), and retain the belief in the modernness of fashion (5). Dr. Roscher judges that fashion was very constant in the days of Charlemagne, because clothing was dear (6). Julius Lessing, however, points to that monarch's sumptuary laws passed to check the rage for Italian fashions (7). Before the end of the fourteenth century change in tastes had become frequent and extensive (8). The frequent denunciations of contemporary writers, who saw all class distinctions waning in the imitative scramble after new modes of dress, point to permanence and stability as rather the ideals of the few than the habit and tendency of the many (9), and reveal also the influence of

(1) Fr. Studniczka, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der altgriechischen Tracht*, Vienna, 1880. Hermann Weiss, *Kostümkunde*, pt. ii. Moyr, *Ancient Greek Female Costume*

(2) *Le Luxe*, p. 26

(3) *Eunuchus*, ii.4.

(4) *Epidicus*, ii. 2.: *Aulularia*, iii. 10

(5) Cf. G. Duplessis, *Costumes Historiques*, Introduction.

(6) *Pol. Econ.* § ccxxv

(7) *Der Modeteufel*, Berlin, 1884.

(8) Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire du Mobilier Français*, I., p. 357, f.n. Chaucer *The Persone's Tale*. John of Glastonbury, *loc. cit.* H. de Knyghton (Twysden, 2729), A.D. 1388, 'unusquisque imitabatur alium et nitebatur inducere noviorems gysam', &c. 'The Knights of the Tower', (A.D. 1371) Harl. Lib. No. 1764. More, *Utopia*, bk. i. Jost Amman, *Gynaeceum*, 1586. Rohrbach, *Trachten der Völker*, pp. 187-90. Louandre, *Hist. du Costume*, i. 173. The 'jointed baby', 'Mademoiselle', or fashion-doll of the *Spectator* (No. 277), seems to have been in vogue in the fourteenth century, if not earlier. Challamel, *Histoire de la Mode en France*. Robida, *Ten Centuries of Toilette*.

(9) Cf. Occlif, *Dialogus inter Occliff et Mendicum*, MS. Harl. Lib. 4,826. 'Allas where is this worldlys stabilnesse? et seq.

changing taste on the conditions of production. 'At this time', says the Limburg chronicler in 1380, 'the fashion in raiment was so changed, that he who last year was a master-tailor, became in a twelvemonth a labourer' (1). The comments in the second half of the sixteenth century on swift changes of fashion, culminating in Montaigne, Shakespeare, and Jonson, multiply too greatly to need mention. The idea of a periodical recurrence in specific tastes had already been put forward (2). The organisation of dress and manners in the seventeenth century by Louis XIV. (3), and the relatively unsuccessful attempt in the same direction by Charles II. (4), throw light on the inception of fashions, though to what extent the example of the courts were followed throughout each of the two countries is not so clear. In France the launching of a taste has devolved mainly on to the stage (5) and uncrowned leaders of society: in this country the example of Royalty is followed only within a very narrow circle.

2. The examination of present economic conditions has to estimate Fashion in its modern developments as in various ways influencing consumption and therewith the personal and national budget. It may tell, *e.g.* (a) on the quality, or kinds, of wealth consumed, (b) on the relative quantities of the same, (c) on the rapidity of consumption.

(a) Inasmuch as in fashion both change, as such, and social distinctions are aimed at, demand is likely to vary in the direction of *contrast*. Changes in the substance and shape of clothing and adornment abound with illustrations of this tendency, but the law also holds good in every kind of taste, pursuit, and cult.

Through the resisting influence of habit, however, the change may be of the nature of a development—in other words, a variation along the same line of choice. And this, as will be shown,

(1) *Limburger Chronik*, Marburg, 1828.

(2) Drant, *A Medicinall Morall*, 1566.

'Fashions in all our gesterings

fashions in our attyre,

Which (as the wyse have thoughte) do cum,

and goe in circled gyre'.

(3) Two centuries earlier, Charles VII. had been petitioned to create a ministry of fashion. Quicherat, *op. cit.* Cf. Ary Renan, *Le Costume en France*, p. 127.

(4) Cf. Evelyn, *Tyrannus, or the Mode*; 'a trifle in which Evelyn advocated a particular kind of costume, the like of which the King adopted some few years afterwards at his court' (Diary, ed. 1879, p. xli.). See also *Miscellaneous Writings*, ed. 1825, p. xiii., and Pepys' Diary for October 8, 13, 15, and November 22, 1666.

(5) Cf. Lessing, *op. cit.* Challamel, *Histoire de la Mode en France*, p. 5 (1875). Illustrated by the case last autumn at Paris of Mme. Rodriguez v. Mlle. Brack *modiste* versus *danseuse*.

may make all the difference to the producer, for the new supply may be effected by adaptation of the same productive apparatus.

Further, as an expression of the effort after equalisation, fashion, in diffusing itself outwards and downwards, involves deterioration in quality through adulteration, reproduction in coarser material, and coarser methods of production. When every woman wishes to wear silk, cotton admixture is lavishly used even in a proportion of 9 to 1 (1).

Again, as expressing the drift of some social impulse, fashion selects some class of materials, forms and colours in preference to others. Dress, *e.g.*, it has been pointed out (2), has to subserve three objects, viz., practical, aesthetic, and symbolical. The last, in the savage, is compassed by tattoo marks, war paint, feathers, scalps, &c, as well as the distinctive dress of the sexes, and tends to change with the 'spiritual currents' (*geistige Strömungen*) and 'world-moving ideas' of the *Zeitgeist*. This view is best illustrated by historic contemplation, such as was afforded by the collection of hats at the Vienna Exhibition, 1873, ranging over 200 years, from the formal Spanish hat of the sixteenth century to the swashing plumed sombrero of the Thirty Years' War, when the military type became normal, and again from the succeeding courtly peruke and cocked hat of French supremacy to the French Revolution, when Franklin's black-lacquered Dutch 'matelot' hat from New York (3), and the British *redingote, couleur de suie des cheminées de Londres* (4) were adopted as emblems of constitutional liberty in France, and of political expansion or Wertherism in Germany.

(b) This is too patent a fact to need dwelling on. Typical of many other products is such evidence as the following:—The English demand for silks had certainly fallen off. Why? 'Because for the moment the fashion for wear is against silks' (5).

(c) Under this head reference may be made to the now forgotten lectures of Storch, who distinguished, besides nature and use as causes of the consumption of wealth, opinion, which destroys the value of wealth independently of matter (6). Shakespeare had already expressed the truth more picturesquely: 'The fashion wears out more apparel than the man'. J. B. Say was also epigrammatic, if not picturesque, in asserting that fashion, by

(1) Report on Depression of Trade, 1886, 7507.

(2) Kleinwächter, *Zur Philosophie der Mode*, 1880. J. von Falke, *Zur Cultur und Kunst (Costüm und Mode)*, 1878

(3) Also the English *Chapeau Jockai*.

(4) *Magasin des Modes nouvelles françaises et anglaises*, 1786-7.

(5) Report on Depression of Trade, 1886, 7350-51.

(6) Storch, *Cours d'Économie politique*, IV., vii. 1.

condemning what is still not only fresh, but perhaps also pretty and comfortable as well, impoverishes the state both in what it consumes and in what it does not consume. Through the distribution and prolonged consumption of whilom fashionable goods in other classes of society, as well as in the colonies, by means of the second-hand trade, the truth of this epigram is limited in application to the budget of the individual fashionable consumer (1). It is none the less true that fashion throws for the 'sequacious' consumer a glamour over the product in vogue often irrespective of beauty, convenience, or fitness, and which as it fades causes the same product to be the more hastily superseded in proportion as those qualities are absent.

Fashion, as affecting consumption in quality, quantity, and rapidity, finds limitations (2) to its power in such forces as beauty, convenience, fitness, the efficacy of which varies according to social temperament and culture. If the inconstancy of modes shortens the term of consumption of certain articles, the taste of the beautiful in the arts prolongs that of some others (3). So, according to Junghanns (4), does the love of comfort in Germany. A perception of fitness in adapting consumption to circumstances of life and means will further restrict the range of variability. And custom, as shown in costume, uniform or livery, may withstand the seduction of change even for centuries (5). Hygienic principles, again, may proscribe what is actually or potentially the fashion. And philanthropy and patriotism, morality and religion, let alone economy, have

(1) In the last century fashionable people largely purchased decorative china with discarded smart clothing. v. Addison, *The Lover*. At the present day the house-to-house flower-trade has to some extent superseded the china.

(2) So long, observe, as fashion has influence on the manufacture of plate so long, you can't have the goldsmith's art in this country'. Ruskin, *The Political Economy of Art*, pp. 60 *et seq.* 'It may be stated generally that the principles of such eminent purveyors as Mme. Elise and Messrs. Worth and Poole are hostile to those of the artist. In the Aesthetic Republic ... they ... would starve'. P. Fitzgerald, *Art Journal*, 187, p. 293; *The Art of Dressing and of being Dressed*. Cf. also Falke, *Art in the House*, on the monotonous prevalence, once fashionable, of *red* in English dining-rooms. The revival of the need and sense of beauty in dress and other adjuncts has fared hardly through the vagaries of its 'aesthetic' foster-parents, nevertheless the resultant economic effect affords a reply to the charge made by fellow-subject and foreigner against the English, of being the most artificial and conventional of nations, viz.:—that it was only in London, till quite recently, that a woman could purchase for daily wear artistic clothing, made independently of fashion, at the very centre of fashion's dispensary.

(3) Storch, *op. cit.* (4) *Der Fortschritt des Zollvereins*, 1848, pp. 27, 28, 50, 51.

(5) Hearn, *Plutology*, p. 450-1. Cf. Storch, *op. et loc. cit.* on the Japanese attributing a different nationality to Russian travellers, at different periods, owing to the altered mode of wearing the hair.

all been brought to bear as regulative principles of careless innovation or excess in tastes and manners. Fashion, on the other hand, has often rendered such principles yeoman's service by developing them as *their* co-efficient, so that it may become equally fashionable to frequent evangelical revival meetings as to buy Irish laces (1).

Viewed in its effect upon expenditure, fashion, by increasing some values and lowering others, has been held as self-equating with respect to the national budget (2), although, as was pointed out first, this opinion was not held in the so-called mercantile phase of political economy. In private expenditure, on the other hand, fashion favours economy or extravagance according as the consumer is concerned to lead, or simply follow, in fashionable departures, or again, to cultivate an independence of taste. Modern production, on the 'mass'-pattern and ready-made system renders it cheaper to buy not what is coming, but what is just come, into fashion. For the individual to anticipate mass-production, or else to demand, careless of the drift of fashionable tendencies and consulting only his own taste, involves a greater outlay. A price prohibitive for the million, and often out of proportion to the cost of production, is still in most cases the main guarantee of the fashion-leader's brief monopoly: as it was when Locke wrote: 'Things of fashion will be had ... whatever rates they cost, and the rather because they are dear'(3).

Fashion in Production and Distribution. —The anxious purveyor to fashionable needs has been shown to be as ancient a figure in history as fashion itself. Nor is rapidity of change a new difficulty he has to contend with. Annual and even more frequent changes are alluded to by mediaeval writers, and though the conditions of modern production, commerce, and diffusion of knowledge tend possibly to make the changes 'more frequent and rapid of late years' (4), the producer's 'fashion-difficulty' is

(1) D. Nisard says somewhere, 'La mode dans les choses de la littérature n'est souvent que l'excès d'une disposition vraie'. Cf. Mr. Strachey's Report on the German tariff reform of 1879, (C. 4530.1884-5, lxxxi. p. 28): - that the demand for the various articles which compose the wardrobe of the '50,000 fanatics', of 'Jaeger's system, has been sufficient to give a stimulus to the spinning of carded yarns, in compensation to the increasing demand for combed, mixed, and mungo yarns. Again, Paris orders for German fancy leather goods have been cancelled after outbursts of French patriotism, p. 57.

(2) Roscher, *Principles of Political Economy*. New York, 1878, sec. ccviii.

(3) *Some Considerations of the Lowering of Interest*, 1692, pp. 93, 94. For a contrasted emulation to secure cheapness, cf. Junghanns, *op. cit.* pp. 57, 58. Cf. also H. S. Foxwell, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

(4) Report on Depression of Trade, 6343. Article by Ada Heather Bigg, *Nineteenth Century*, February 7, 1893.

intensified rather by division of labour and specialisation of machinery, international competition and the wage-question, than by any feverish acceleration of pace in *la papillonne*. A century ago, when the first fashion journal was started fortnightly in Paris, the editors defied German pirated editions, because they could not be brought out till three weeks after the genuine issue, by which time the fashions depicted would have varied again (1)!

As affecting trade and industry to-day, fashion is assigned a place (if a small one) by modern economics, under the head of trade risks, fluctuations of industry, or variations in production. Mobility and fancy have permeated the whole field of demand, so that principles, once governing the production of articles of luxury only, apply now to the majority of forms and many of the materials in supply. Makers and purveyors, some more, some less, have now, at an unprecedented degree of rivalry, national and international, to study both how to supply what people want, and to win them to want what they supply (2). As in the struggle for life and wealth generally, so in coping with fashion, provision, with prompt adaptation to, and modification of, the fluctuating conditions, in which they must sink or swim, are the main elements of success. Fashion, as involving changes often hard to foresee and of uncertain duration, tends to aggravate 'the incessant small vibrations of industry' (3); fashion as involving far-reaching conformity, together with a highly centralised process of inception and radiation, simplifies the work of supply and reduces the cost of production (4). The problem of the supplier is to transform the intensified element of risk from a possible cause of disaster into a stepping-stone to success. When fluctuation and impermanence are not thoroughly accepted as the normal state of modern trade, a relatively durable fashion may lead to maladjustment (5). Anything introducing rigidity into production enhances the jeopard-

(1) *Magasin des Modes nouvelles francaises et anglaises* cahier 4, Dec. 20 1786. Cf. also Montesquieu's, *Lettres Persanes*, xcix., and Purchas, *Microcosmus* (1627), cp. xxv.

(2) Mr. Graham Wallas sends me a note from the MSS. of Francis Place, to the effect that in a strike in the leather breeches trade, 1793, the masters prevailed on their customers to wear stuff breeches, to make which they substituted other tailors in place of the strikers. At an earlier date legislation would have been resorted to to assist an industry; cf. the case of 'illegally covered buttons' in the eighteenth century. v. *The Warehouseman and Draper*, March, 11th 1893; also W. Lee, *Daniel Defoe's Life, &c.*, iii. p. 57. For a strike of consumers, cf. W. Lee, *op. cit.* ii. pp. 132-142, *Women's Complaint against the Weavers*. (3) Walker, *Wages Question*, p. 179

(4) Hermann, *op. cit.* p. 100; Roscher, *op. cit.* Schäffle, *op. cit.*

(5) Cf. the manufacture of steel for crinolines, Thorold Rogers, *A Manual of Political Economy*, viii. p. 78. Also the case of the stay-makers, when women 'thought proper to throw off their bodice'. *Essay on the Political Circumstances of Ireland [Fortsetzung von Seite 470]* 1798, pp. 89-90; of the buckle-makers, &c, Malthus, *Essay*, Bk. iii. cp. xiii., and the hair-powder trade *Ann. Reg.* 1795, p. 179.

ising power of fashion. Adaptability and versatility, both mental and manual (1), have to cope with high specialisation of machinery and skill, as well as with the necessity for mass-production in order to the realisation of profit (2).

Owners and cultivators of land are not exempt from this species of risk, though to a relatively small extent, fashion affecting the mode of the product to a much greater extent than the substance. Viticulture, sericulture, horticulture in its more refined products, and the management of ostrich farms, are liable to be affected by changes in fashion (3). Teraminta's dismissal of an admirer because he did not drink claret (4) points to a taste once, and since, favouring French viticulture. Again the ostrich feathers imported into this country had declined between 1880 and 1889 in the proportion of 5: 2; the weight in that of 25: 2 (5). The fashion of going up to London to learn the fashions' and of absenteeism generally, in so far as it is due to fashion, has been considered prejudicial to rural prosperity. The fancy of a poet foresaw that the introduction of coaches would ruin England in leather, ash trees, and young horses (6).

In the tactics of the manufacturer the symptoms (1.) of a vacillation in demand raise the problem—What can I 'bring out' to attract it? (2.) of a favourable turn — What can I do to get or keep ahead in the race? (3.) of a recoil — Can I turn out what is now in demand with such plant, machinery and hands as I have? Favour at flood tide involves the further question, How long will

(1) Cf. Mr. Strachey's Report (C. 4530, 1884-5, lxxxii.), pp. 27, 30: - 'Our manufacturers will not emerge from a certain traditional groove of hardness, heaviness, and durability ... Roubaix manufacturers adapt themselves much more quickly than English makers to any change of fashion'. But Crefeld and Elberfeld are now quicker than the French; v. p. 42. The German is better educated and more enterprising.

(2) A Birmingham engineer writes: - 'In the face of the present keen competition, to enable a manufacturer to produce an article at a price at which he can sell he is obliged to make a quantity of one article at a time... A change in fashion will often prevent his finding a market for the goods, and he more often than not has to sell at much less than cost. Take, e.g., the trade in standard lamps you mention. This branch of trade has found work in the past year for a number of hands, but there are not nearly so many sold now, and a manufacturer is glad to dispose of his stock at a low price to get rid of them'.

(3) The fur-trapper's fortunes are not exempt. Decline in demand for finer furs often reduces the Hudson Bay Company's dividends, cf. Report for 1890.

(4) *Spectator*, No. 277.

(5) Mulhall, *Dictionary of Statistics*. Through the German Consul at Port Elizabeth I am informed that the price of a pair of good ostriches has fallen in ten years from £250 to £25.

(6) Taylor the water poet, '*The world runs on wheel*', 1623.

it last? Can it be sustained by devising developments? Ebb tide brings the uncertainty as to whether the recoil be transient or practically permanent. In some such attitude he has to confront demand with its coefficient of fashion, and, armed with 'money, wits, and perseverance', compass the capture of the lucky *conjuncture* (1). 'Wits' he partly embodies in superiority of machinery, of designing, *i.e.* in the faculty of taking a lead in designs which 'sell', of dyeing and finishing, and finally in that fine, commercial *flair*, which leads to 'hits' rather than to 'misses'. By this quasi-instinct he lays his hand upon the pulse of taste, and, interpreting its movements, is able in some degree to 'reduce the play of chance' in his business arena (2). Unless fashion be seriously held to be above, or beneath, law, the importance of such far-seeing augury to the *entrepreneur* is obvious, and indeed is admitted by some (3). British manufacturers of silk and other articles of female dress are content to follow in the wake of France, a course which is fraught with no less danger than that of the French creator (4), though it is not impossible, by close observation of the inception of a taste, and estimation of the average rate of diffusion both in time and space, to anticipate its final stage, as a want of the million, and reap a rich harvest of profit (5).

Exact estimate of the effect of fashion on the fortunes of an industrial centre or firm is complicated by the intermixture of other causes. Of nineteen merchants and manufacturers among those who gave evidence before the Commission of Inquiry into the Depression of Trade in 1886—an inquiry which negatively absolved fashion as a cause of that specific depression—all, while not professing to distinguish between the causes of change in taste, admitted that such changes were one of the greatest difficulties they had to contend with

(1) Cf. Leroy Beaulieu. *Repartition des Richesses*, p. 299.

(2) Leroy Beaulieu, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

(3) As a Lyonnese manufacturer said:—'That something, which in the world of fashion is only an indefinite sentiment, in fact a mere predisposition, we endeavour to render palpable, to give it a strongly pronounced character and assign it a name. Therefore it is that with us fashion is so paramount: the objects of industry, the commencement of a season, exactly chime in with, and anticipate the predispositions of society'. (Mr. Dyce's Report to the Board of Trade of Schools of Design, and *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 90, p. 481.)

(4) Cf. Report on Depression of Trade, 7279-7284.

(5) A letter in my possession describes a successful career of this kind, in which a north country manufacturer cultivated the friendship of a great French modiste, and by fresh machinery anticipated the diffusion of a fashion among the million, which took place in the third year after its inception, by producing the article at a cheap price in advance of other competitors on the same plane.

though some (woollen manufacturers) contended that adaptation to demand without radical change of machinery was often possible, and also that by avoidance of large stocks, danger was frequently to be averted (1). The silk and lace manufacturers were naturally more emphatic as to the powerful influence of fashion (2). Injury through absence of prevision and enterprise was admitted by one of the latter (3). By another the fruits of Lister's marvellous inventive skill and adaptation were attributed to exceptional luck (4). Bradford, Paisley and Coventry in Great Britain, and St. Etienne (5) and Lyons in France, are instances of centres which have suffered economic fluctuations, aggravated, if not wholly created, by fashion. Taken collectively, such movements in textile industry are molecular and self-compensating, but this is not productive of consolation for some molecules (6). A centre may often adapt itself to a new industry. Till about 1850 one-third of the population of Paisley was engaged in manufacturing pseudo-Indian shawls; now thread, starch, engineering, and shipbuilding have sprung up instead of that defunct industry, and trade, being on a broader basis, is less liable to severe fluctuations. Coventry has ceased to concentrate itself on anything so 'chancy' (7) as ribbons, and has realised locally unprecedented fortunes in cycles, besides developing other trades. 'Lister's' spin thread when plush and velvet are 'sluggish'.

Procedure in adjustment to, and creation of, new demand is in keeping with the development of modern democracy. Dress, *e.g.*, seems at one time to have been imposed, and then suggested, from above, speaking socially. Now the sovereign people's tastes are besieged simultaneously and *en bloc* by shop windows, advertisement, fashion paper, and pattern. Louis XIV., when he

(1) Insisted on especially by a German from South Scotland, 5376 *et seq.* Another manufacturer, of the same opinion, made an exception in the case of the great swerve of fashion from wollen goods to worsteds, 4,880-91.

(2) Cf. an account of Webster and Co.'s hat manufactory in a publication entitled *Leicester in 1891*. 'The smallest alteration in shape (of silk hats) means an extensive outlay in blocks, it being necessary to obtain new sets for each fashion that comes up, and a shape once discarded, seldom, or never, comes before the public again in precisely the name form'.

(3) Appendix A., 10.

(4) 7292-93.

(5) Cf. Edmond About, *La Vieille Roche*, *op. et lac. cit.*

(6) A Yorkshire millowner writes: - 'In the crinoline days Bradford dross goods from English wools were in great demand. When ladies preferred clinging fabrics (cashmeres, &c.) the advantage went to the soft goods of France (which are now largely made in Bradford). When mohairs and alpacas were in fashion, Bradford by its yarns got the advantage. When braids are fashionable, Bradford benefits. When calico prints were much in fashion, Bradford suffered; on the other hand it obtained advantage from the demand for *mousseline de laine*'.

(7) Mrs. Tulliver: 'Crowns are so chancy' (*i.e.* of bonnets).

determined in 1655 that perukes should be worn, in one day named forty-eight court perruquiers and founded a guild of 200 wig-makers. To reinstate the waning taste, wig-makers solicited George III. not to wear only his own hair (1). The *marchand des modes* was a, recent specialisation in trade when the *Encyclopédie* was appearing (1705) (2) — a purveyor to the wealthy and elegant minority. Now the *Grands Magasins* may go with their own developments to the public direct, and cater for them from head to foot (3). And so long as elasticity is compassed by the purchase of lighter stock and shorter quantities, mobility of taste is to the purveyor as desirable as mobility of the price of stock to the broker and jobber. This has been rendered patent to the laity by the census of the retail drapery trade effected during the last two winters by the weekly organ, *The Wholesale Draper*, in which the absence of a more or less radical change in the shape of mantle or dress is very generally reported as of disastrous effect (4).

As affected by fashion the interests of the wage-earner are *solidaire* with those of the employer in so far as the former is an adaptable machine. Rigidity, whether through bad generalship, over-specialised skill, want of technical versatility, or any accidents of combination, is fraught with intimate peril for rank and file. The vicissitudes of Spitalfields and Coventry silk-weavers are historical, and the latter, inadequate to take to cycle-making, fell into destitution or emigrated (5). Nevertheless fashion was only one factor in these fluctuations. It was more responsible for distress occasioned by the decay of the Irish cottage industry of hand-embroidered muslin (6). Versatility, on the other hand, appears in the habit of St. Etienne men, as reported by M. de Lanessan, of getting taken on in other local industries when the ribbon-trade is slack. Interesting insight into the effects of fashion on woman's work in the East of London, *e.g.*, in ostrich feather trimming (7), other trimmings, such as fringe (8), fur-sewing, and artificial flower-

(1) *Ann. Register*, 1765. (2) v. Vol. X. *Mode*.

(3) Cf. J. Lessing, *Der Modeteufel*, of the pushing in this way of Mülhausen printed cottons at Paris.

(4) To this interest is due the intermittent revival of the argument that fashion is good for trade, witnessed in last winter's press, and prominently urged at many an earlier date, *e.g.*, *Magasin des Modes nouvelles*, November, 1786.

(5) Mr. Shufflebotham, of Coventry, informs me that some found employment in the elastic web trade.

(6) *Journ. Statist. Soc.* xxiv., 515-17.

(7) 'Changes in fashion have thrown the feather-curlers out of work or reduced them to work on half time'. P. 444.

(8) 'Fringe is out of fashion, and fringe-makers suffer accordingly, if they have no alternative occupation'. P. 417, also pp. 423, 454.

making, is afforded by Miss Collet's contribution to *Life and Labour in London*, vol. i. Sudden cessation of employment is not alone disastrous; a slowly waning taste may involve degradation in skill and wages.

The worker whose skill is, or borders on, that of artistic handicraft is affected by fashion in proportion as he ministers to a want which is substantially inconstant. A skilled West End tailoress will profit by every new departure, adapting her skill better than the old Limburg tailors. The Christmas card painter, on the other hand, has suffered severely.

Instances might no doubt be multiplied *ad infinitum*. I have attempted only a brief economic digest of a very wide subject; and, mindful of Bacon's exhortation, that 'it is not good to look too long upon these turning wheels of vicissitudes, lest we become giddy', desist.

CAROLINE A. FOLEY