

*Wednesday, January 7, 1863.*

Frederick W. Fairholt, Esq., F.S.A., in the Chair.

John Franklin, Esq., read the following interesting paper on the costume of the 17th and 18th centuries:—"I have been asked to say a few words to you this evening about the habits of our grandmothers; and although, to some, it may seem a very trivial subject, and one unworthy of occupying the time of such a society as ours, it may perhaps afford us amusement if not instruction. It strikes me that there is much significancy in dress, and an intimate connection between the habits and manners of an age, and that it would be most interesting to trace the vagaries of fashion from the simple and yet graceful dress of the classic Greeks to that of our own time, and to mark the effect of civilization and morals upon costume; though that would involve much time and deep research, and far more learning and industry than falls to my share. I therefore shall content myself with giving a slight sketch of the principal changes which have taken place since the year 1660, bringing before your notice those habits of our grandmothers most striking for their grace and beauty, as well as those for their absurdity—for I regret to say that our grandmothers were no more exempt from absurdity and extravagance in dress than are their granddaughters or their great-great-granddaughters. To me it is amusing to look back to the monstrous, inconvenient, and unbecoming habits that, from time to time, have swayed the fashionable world, each being thought beautiful when in vogue; and also strange that, when once a fit and becoming costume was attained, it should so speedily give place to that which was cumbrous or inelegant; but all sublunary things are mutable, and so even well cannot be let alone. According to Burke, 'fitness is beauty;' and I do not think a better definition has been given since his time. Alas, then, how hideously ugly most of our grandmamas' habits have been! You are all aware that with the Merry Monarch came in French tastes, French manners, and French fashions, and that the graceful and becoming dress of the first Charles's reign was cut and bedizened with gold and ribands, and overlaid with

redundant ornaments, so called,—and that the modest habits of the ladies gave place to flaunting gaudiness, or semi-nudity, as seen in ‘Kneller’s Court Beauties,’ and other of his works. The flowing hair of the loyal and chivalrous cavalier was cropped shorter than any sour Puritan’s, and monstrous and misshapen wigs usurped its place—an enormity of folly that has never been equalled in male costume, and is about on a par with the hoops of the gentler sex. But in the latter part of this reign fashion was much sobered down; no doubt the troubles and the terrible visitations of the Plague and the Great Fire had their influence. In the vexed and disastrous reign of James but little alteration in dress is observable; the hair of the ladies still fell in graceful curls on the shoulders. But in that of William and Mary it was strained back from the forehead, and piled up, tier upon tier, in an unsightly tower, jocosely called a commode, crowned with voluminous garnishments of ribands and lace, with long lappets or pinnets of the same, falling almost to the waist, which was worn long, and confined in stiff stays; the bosom, formerly so much exposed, was covered; the gown, composed of richly-embroidered satin or brocade, was open in front, and turned back at the sides, falling in a train behind, displaying a quilted petticoat and lace apron; the sleeves were short, scarce reaching to the elbow, with large cuffs, resembling those worn by the men, under which were seen deep lace ruffles; the shoes were short-quartered, with extremely high heels and pointed toes. The fan, in its present form, was first introduced, superseding that much handsomer one composed of feathers, of previous reigns. The accession of Anne affected dress but slightly; ringlets were again worn, and that nasty fashion of powdering the hair was introduced, but the Queen did not use it; and those hideous enormities, hoops, appeared again—not the old farthingale represented by the annexed cut, copied from a figure on the monument in Cranford Church, of Sir Roger Aston and his two wives, who died in the early part of the 17th century, but a whalebone excrecence, which spread out the gown on either side to most preposterous dimensions; hoods were worn of many colours; scarlet stockings were in vogue; and one of the worst of our grandmamas’ habits became general with the fashionable belles, namely, snuff-taking; they also affected the male costume when riding, wearing a short coat and waistcoat laced with gold or silver, and a jauntily-cocked beaver

hat and feather. This fashion also prevailed in the reign of Charles II. Pepys, in his 'Diary,' mentions that the Court ladies wore riding-dresses like the men's, also periwigs and hats; and says, that but for their long petticoats no one would take them for women. With the Hanoverian dynasty the costume was slightly Germanised; coats became more ample, and wigs less so; the hoop still held its ground, but in various forms; the gowns were worn shorter; and a new garment, called a 'saque,' was introduced. It was a loose gown, unconfined at



the waist, falling in ample folds from the shoulders; but you must all be familiar with the dress of this time from the inimitable pictures of our great moral painter, Hogarth. Although fashion fluctuated much, no very material change took place until the latter part of George III.'s reign. The head-dresses of the ladies rose and fell like the stocks; now arranged in stiff buckles, surmounted by a small lace cap, stiffened with pomatum and powder; puffed out with pads of wool, and covered with riband-bows, lace, and feathers; in fact, all

sorts of appliances were resorted to to distort, disfigure, and mar the glossy honours of the ladies' heads. And here I might dilate on the loathsomeness of this fashion, but I dare not tell its results to ears polite, they are better imagined than described. It is sufficient to say, that so complex was the arrangement of their *coiffures*, that they were not undone for weeks, nay, months, perhaps. It was not an unusual thing for a lady to be obliged to sleep for two or three nights propped up in an easy chair, watched by her maid, in order to be able to appear at the drawing-rooms and court balls, there not being barbers enough in London to execute this more than barbarous operation in one day. The personal ornaments were necklaces composed of many rows of pearls, gems, or beads, according to the rank or wealth of the wearer, arranged in festoons upon the bosom, and called, I think, a *negligée*. Chatelaines were worn at the waist, from which were suspended scent-bottles, scissors, and other useful articles. This fashion was revived in our time, but instead of the elegant form worn by our grandmothers, they were long, inconvenient, glittering steel appendages, reaching three feet below the girdle.

“The next great change in dress took place during the time of that greatest blot on the page of the world's history—the French Revolution—when Satan seemed to have been unbound, and treason triumphed over—not us, thank God, but our Gallic neighbours. All was then ‘confusion worse confounded;’ right and wrong changed places, in the seething cauldron of politics the scum rose to the surface, and the demons of the Republic aped the manners and dress of the ancient Romans. Look at the female adaptation of the classic costume, and behold such a wretched caricature! A figure forced into a garment a world too narrow for it, the girdle placed immediately under the shoulders, and the hair cropped short. In order to display their figures, the ladies wore petticoats, called *Receamier*, after the inventor. They were composed of worsted web, which clung so tightly to the person as to define the limbs beneath. And now having come to that time when the very worst taste in dress, in manners, in furniture, in fact, in everything, prevailed, I will leave the subject, as, according to the old proverb, ‘when things come to the worst they must mend;’ and we all know that there has been a change for the better, so that we have a prospect of attaining to something that will be at once convenient and becoming; and when



we arrive at so devoutly-to-be-wished a consummation, let us trust that it may be steadfastly retained."

The Chairman exhibited a large and valuable series of prints illustrative of the subject, and observed that it might be well to say a few words explanatory of the entire collection which hung upon the walls, and had been brought by himself and others. He commenced, chronologically, with the female figures engraved by Hollar in 1641, typifying the four Seasons, which well display the conscientious accuracy of that artist in the minute engraving of the details, such as lace, fur, &c., forming part of the costume. A similar series illustrative of the Elements and Senses, engraved by William Marshall, gave valuable points of female costume about the same time.

The Queen of England being at this time a Frenchwoman, the fashions of Paris regulated those of England in a great degree. Some of the works of the engraver A. Bosse, (highly spoken of by Evelyn), were next referred to, particularly those depicting the ceremony observed at Fontainebleau in 1645, on occasion of the contract of marriage between Vladislaus III. of Poland and the Princess of Mantua; and another representing the milliners' and mercers' shops in the gallery of the Palais Royal; the latter remarkable for the well-defined and curious minor articles of costume delineated. A series of female dresses executed by St. Jean and Bonnart (1678) exhibited the formal but highly enriched habits worn by the ladies of the Court of Louis-le-Grand. One striking peculiarity marked the fashion in France and England at the close of this century, and the early part of the succeeding one; this was the high head-dress of ribbons and lace, piled tier over tier, known as the *Fontange*, *tower*, and *commode*. It originated in a caprice of fashion resulting from an accident in hunting which happened to Mademoiselle Fontange, by

which she lost her head-dress, and got her hair in disorder ; she remedied the accident by using the ribands of her sleeves to tie up her hair, in a sort of pile above her forehead. The king was so much pleased with the good effect of this unstudied arrangement that it ended in the invention of this extremely formal head-dress, which continued the fashion in England until the accession of George I. The very simple costume which characterised the gentry of the court of George II. may be seen in the prints after H. Gravelot, F. Hayman, &c. About 1770 we meet with quaint and outré inventions, but they are chiefly confined to the head-dress, which about 1777 assumed a portentous size. A caricature of that year represents a beau seated behind a stout lady at the opera, using one of the large curls at the side of her head as an opera glass, and peeping through it towards the stage. Numerous were the caricatures levelled against this preposterous fashion, but most of the prints now exhibited were serious representations of a style of head-dress that was in itself a caricature. The curious print known as "the Park Shower," showing the Mall crowded with fashionable company, was exhibited as a picture of life in London at the close of last century ; and Desrais' "Promenade du Boulevard Italien (Avril 1797)" as that of life in Paris during the stormy days of the Revolution. The series concluded with a view of the Parade at Bath "crowded with fashionables ;" the whole being further illustrated by a series of portraits valuable for the details of costume they exhibited.

John Hunter, Esq., exhibited a number of prints, &c., illustrating dress in the reign of Charles II., and made some observations upon the little change that has been effected in the costume worn by the royal household and that used on state occasions.

Thomas Wills, Esq., exhibited a richly-worked ornamental jacket as a specimen of costume of the same period. It is of fine white linen, every part embroidered with fancy flowers and leaves, the outlines being formed of gold twist, the filling in with blue silk, the intermediate spaces are powdered with little silver spangles, producing a rich, delicate, and splendid effect. This jacket has long sleeves, is without a collar, but made to fit close round the neck. It fastens down the front with silver hooks and eyes. It is short, and can scarcely have reached the hips. No satisfactory history of this specimen can now be given : it is known to have been treasured up at Fordingbridge in Hampshire, and there are circumstances connected with it which support the idea that it is part of the wardrobe of

either the Prince of Wales or Duke of York—the sons of Charles the First. Its pedigree is however broken, and no means are now left by which the lost links can be restored. That it did belong to some youth of exalted rank will scarcely admit of doubt, and there is nothing improbable in the notion that it is in truth a relic of the fallen house of Stuart.

Mr. Wills also contributed for exhibition a collar of SS, of about the reign of James I., said to have been discovered some years since during repairs at Holyrood Palace, and an example of the *étui* in use in the seventeenth century, formerly in the Fonthill collection. The cases in this specimen are rather flat in form; the fronts and backs are of mother-of-pearl, with gilt metal edges. The whole is elegantly engraved, and suspended by five fine chains from a little plaque, linked to the girdle-hook, the front of which is inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The larger *étui* in the centre contained the scissors, the narrow cases on either side (one is lost) held the tweezers and knife, while the box-like cases depending from the shorter chains were destined for the thimble and seal. Also a pair of drab silk ladies' shoes, of the latter part of the sixteenth century; a small pair worn by the Duke of Gloucester, brother of George III.; and a pair used by Sarah, first Duchess of Marlborough, possessed by the Galway family since the reign of Queen Anne.

An extensive series of shoes, of the reigns of Richard II. and Edward III., were exhibited, by the kindness of Thomas Point, Esq., of the City Gasworks. They were found, a few years since, with numerous other relics, at a depth of from twelve to sixteen feet, while excavating for a new gasometer in Whitefriars. Some have buckles and straps across the instep, while others contain cork soles. One specimen, a long, pointed shoe, may be specially referred to; it still contains the stuffing of hay or moss with which, from their extreme length, it was customary to fill the points of the cumbersome shoes of these reigns.

Numerous prints and drawings, dresses, ornaments for the hair, shoes, chatelaines, and a variety of other objects of interest connected with the subject, were kindly contributed for exhibition, by J. W. Butterworth, F.S.A., Mr. Henry W. Sass, Mr. W. H. Overall, Mr. Charles S. Haines, Mr. S. H. Angier, and Mr. John E. Price.



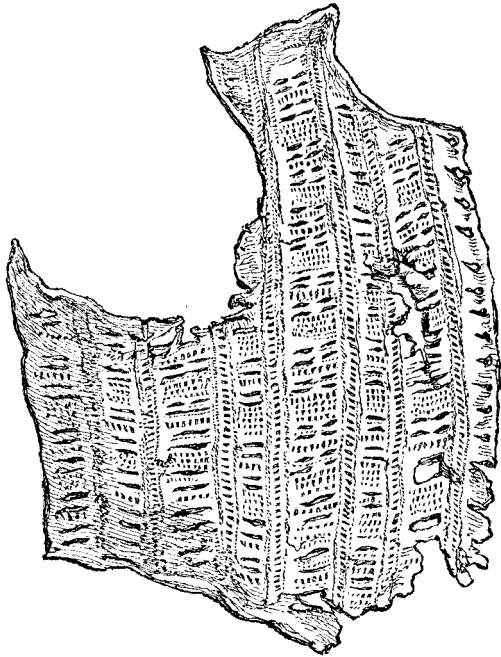
FIG. 1.





FIG. 2.

shoes of periods ranging from the reign of Henry VIII., to James I. many being decorated and slashed according to the then prevailing styles. Through the kindness of Mr. John Franklin, engravings are here given of two of the jerkins, as well as portraits, one of Don John of Austria, 1576 (Fig. 2.), the other, Mathias, Archduke of Austria, 1578 (fig. 1), as illustrating the costume of the period at which they were mostly worn. In the 16th century such



jerkins were used as coverings for the quilted armour of the time, and were intended to project somewhat in front; after the manner indicated by the dress of our modern Punchinello. In the examples selected for engraving the slashing may be plainly seen, the apertures were for the purpose of exhibiting the under coat beneath. An interesting series of sheaths for daggers and girdle knives were exhibited, and many notable varieties of the ink-horn; some of these latter articles are pierced for suspension in conjunction with the penner to the girdle; also shoe and girdle buckles, and buttons or studs, bearing the effigies of Anne, George I., and George Prince of Wales. Of knives a few in this remarkable collection may be referred to: one still remaining in its sheath has a metal collar and ring for suspension, another has on one side engraved the initials G. W. and on the other what appears to be a shield, charged with three piles meeting in point, with a stag springing forward for crest, the haft terminating with an acorn; the bone handle of a third represents a female, and is suggestive of the features and costume of

Catherine De' Medici. Penknives of different shapes, and a portion of a large blade, which bears this inscription—LEAVE TO DELYTE IN ME; a flagon, supported by a hand, and on the reverse, THE DRUNKEN NEED AND WANT CREDYT—Anno 1581. A quadrangular steel, with disc at top for suspension. An interesting specimen of Bellarmine, curious from its bearing the words —MAIDE BY R. G. A large collection of pipes, ranging from the period coeval with the introduction of tobacco down to the reigns of the Georges.

Mr. John E. Price exhibited a series of tradesmen's tokens from the same locality; of these the following is mentioned as being an unpublished example. Ob.—DUDLEY MEARES IN—A bell. Rev. CHARTER HOVSE LANE, M.D.L. Also tobacco-stoppers, one a figure representing the Pierrot, or clown of the old French stage. A number of Abbey counters, dated 1553, &c. A large number of knives of similar character to those in the museum of Mr. Gunston. Among them is one which, from its ornamentation and the peculiarity of its make, is probably one of a series which, in the time of James I., comprised the *trousse de chasse* of a gentleman hunter. In that reign it was considered a matter of etiquette for the gentleman to cut up the deer himself, for which purpose he carried a set of such knives about him. Similar specimens are engraved and described in Mr. Fairholt's Introductory Essay to the late Lord Londesborough's *Miscellanea Graphica*. Two others may be referred to, the first having a handle tastefully decorated with inlaid slips of brass, and bearing the initials S. H. on the blade; the second with a handle of wood, carved into the form of a female head attired in the costume of the time, and probably of Dutch or Flemish work. The whole of the knives are formed of fine steel and are capable of being ground to the sharpest edge.

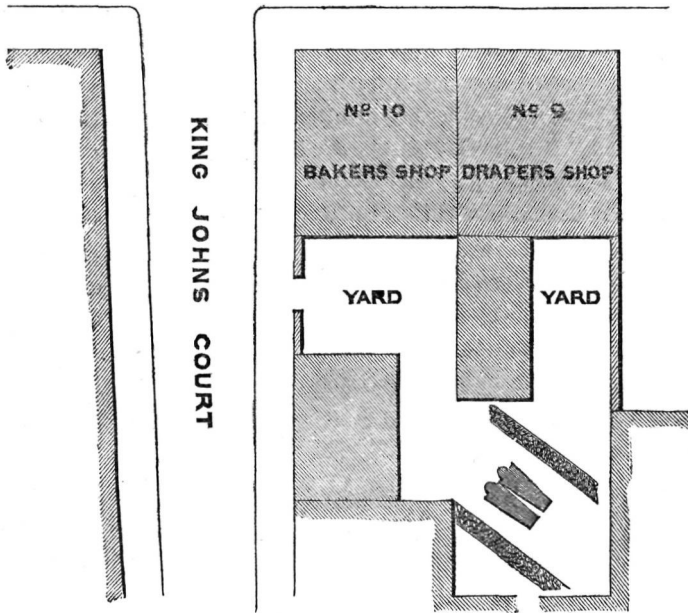
Mr. John E. Price made the following communication on the recent discovery of two leaden coffins in Shoreditch.

“We are indebted to our member, Mr. Joseph Wilkinson, for affording prompt notice of the finding of two leaden coffins containing skeletons, in the course of the excavations for that portion of the Middle Level Sewer now being constructed in Shoreditch. The site whence they have been exhumed adjoins King John's Court, between Holywell Lane and New Inn Yard, and their position when found is accurately shown by the annexed woodcut, which has been copied from a plan prepared by Mr.

J. W. Butler, manager of the works, to which gentleman are our thanks due, both for his kindness in contributing the drawing, and for his readiness in affording every information connected with the discovery. The coffins were observed at a depth of about fifteen feet from the surface of the ground, which is doubtless considerably above its former level. They were lying side by side upon the clay, enclosed by walls of chalk, and from the undisturbed nature of their contents, were evidently occupying their original tomb, one in fact was successfully brought to the surface, without any displacement of the bones, which fell to pieces on the slightest touch. They are of curious but not unusual form, the lead being bent in at the neck to distinguish the head and shoulders, a mode of burial much practised in the sixteenth century, and resembling the



### NEW INN YARD



stone coffins of earlier times. They differ somewhat in size; and from the general appearance of the skeletons, it may be inferred that they are those of some illustrious lady and her lord. The dimensions of the largest of the coffins, in which the bones are entire, in good preservation and evidently those of a full grown man, are 5 feet long, width across the shoulders, 19 inches, at the feet, 9 inches. The other measures 4 feet 9 inches long, 18 inches wide, and 10 inches at the feet. The depth of each 9 inches. No inscription or ornamentation can be detected, nor is there any appearance of relics or other objects having been deposited with the deceased. From the situation of these remains, there can be no hesitation in assigning them to the Ancient Priory of Haliwell or Holywell, which flourished in Shoreditch from the twelfth century to the general suppression of the monasteries by Henry VIII., and it is probable, from the costly form of burial selected, the special care with which it seems to have been conducted, and the enclosure of the coffins by walls of chalk, that they are those of important personages formerly connected with the establishment; therefore peculiarly interesting will it be to learn, if possible, something of their history—who these individuals were, what position they occupied, and when they lived and died. Owing to the entire absence of date or inscription, this, to some extent, must be conjectured; but there are circumstances, presently to be referred to, that go far to prove that the tomb now destroyed was no other than that of Sir Thomas Lovel, Knight of the Garter, and Privy Councillor to Henry VII. Sir Thomas was a great benefactor to the Priory. He died at Enfield, 25th May, 1524, and was buried in a chapel, erected at his own expense, within the Priory walls. His wife is said to have been interred with him. She was the sister and co-heir of Edmund Lord Roos, who died without issue, in the year 1508.

Haliwell Priory, founded about the year 1100, derived its name from the existence of one of those "certain sweet, wholesome, and clear fountains or wells,"\* which, from their supposed miraculous powers, were so frequently denominated "holy." This well and the "field and moor whereon it rose," was given before 1127 to some religious women, by Robert Fitz-Gelran, Canon of St. Paul's; and a Priory was there built to the honour of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and John the Baptist, for Nuns

\* Tanner's "Notitia;" Ellis's "History and Antiquities of Shoreditch," &c.; &c.

of the Benedictine Order. In 1189, Richard I., by charter, confirmed to the Prioress and Nuns the spot of ground whereon the Priory stood, with other possessions in land, &c., that had been granted to them in previous times. It is recorded by Stow that one Richard de Balneis, Bishop of London *circ.* 1118, was the original founder of the house, but this is considered erroneous by subsequent historians; the fact being that he was but a benefactor, having at his death added a large amount of ground to the Foundation. The names of the various Prioresses are given in the old records, but Sibilla Nudigate seems to have been the last, for it was she who surrendered the Priory at the general dissolution. She afterwards enjoyed a pension of £50 per annum, probably granted to her at that time. The value of the house at the time of suppression, is said by Stow to have been £293; but Weever and others value it at different sums. Its site and appurtenances thereto were granted to one Henry Webb, Esq., Letters Patent, Aug. 5., 36 Henry VIII. There is no record of any interment, save that of Sir Thomas Lovel and his lady, and it may be fairly assumed that theirs are the remains contained in the coffins now discovered. Sir Thomas was the noblest benefactor the Priory ever had; indeed, by some he is said to have rebuilt it, and added to its endowment. In his commemoration, masses were daily said, and the following lines inscribed upon the Priory wall:—

“Now all the nunnes of Haliwell,  
Pray ye both day and night  
For the soul of Sir Thomas Lovel,  
Whom Harry the Seventh made Knight.”

There are no indications of the buildings now existing, save a piece of old wall near the site of the present discovery. In “Camden” mention is made of a gateway; this was destroyed about 1785; and in Maitland’s time a few fragments of walls, &c., were then visible. Among the houses now standing few signs of antiquity can be traced, and, excepting the nomenclature of the district, all evidences of its past history have long since disappeared.