

FANCIES, FASHIONS, AND FAD



MAN OF THE PAST  
A REVIEW OF  
LONDON THROUGH THE

# FANCIES FASHIONS AND FADS

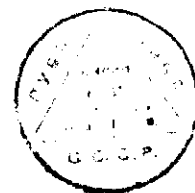
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WITH A FRONTISPIECE



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## FANCIES, FASHIONS, AND FADS

### I

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### SOCIETY

**N**OTHING in this world is entirely new: the generations of men as they glide along like the waves of a rapid stream resemble each other far more than is generally conceived. Making allowances for the different conditions of various epochs, the sum total of vice and virtue, joy and sorrow, remains about the same.

Of late we have been surfeited with complaints as to the sins and shortcomings of the wealthier classes and the frivolity of London Society. In all probability it is not a bit worse or better than in the past: its sense of dignity, however, has completely disappeared.

"The two chief characteristics of London Society are its simplicity and heartlessness. It is amused with marvellous ease. The smallest of practical jokes is enough to set it in a roar. The slightest eccentricity of demeanour plunges it in a paroxysm of laughter. Gossip that is perfectly puerile delights it. Any trivial scandal, the tale of which is told with-

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out point, epigram, or even antithesis, is welcomed as the best thing in the world. In Paris a certain flavour of wit or humour is expected. There is no necessity of anything of the kind in London. These grown-up men and women, who laugh at the recital of imbecilities and ineptitudes, are as easily entertained as children. Like children, too, they love to parade their own vices, and to make themselves out a thousand times more wicked than they are. No society could exist if it was half as corrupt as the members of London Society, to judge from their casual talk, or from the significance which their comments and illusions are intended to convey. But it is talk only—the lax garrulity of a race which is still laboriously endeavouring to emancipate itself from the fetters of Puritanism."

This view of Society, it should be added, was not written yesterday, but in 1885; and the people criticized are those who now deplore the frivolity of the present generation. If the critic had pointed out how the Upper Classes were letting their traditional power slip from their grasp, he would have been doing them a greater service, for, though at the date in question, "Society," in the old meaning of the word, was already well on the down-grade, it still played a very considerable part in ruling England. Many of its members, it is true, were unthinking and frivolous, but there were quite a number of serious and high-minded men and women who drew a hard-and-fast line against many things which are freely tolerated to-day.

## "MON MONDE"

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Money, though thoroughly appreciated, did not command the power which it at present enjoys; besides, people were rather particular how it had been got, or, at least, pretended to be so—a great difference this from the present state of affairs of seeing "no filthiness in any lucre."

Millionaires were not allowed to ride rough-shod over others by reason of their wealth; indeed, many of them were merely tolerated, like "Louis Quatorze"—a nickname conferred upon a certain rich alien, whose Christian name was Louis, because he was never asked to dinner except when an extra guest was required to prevent the party being thirteen.

To-day, at least among that ridiculous section known as the "Smart Set," millionaires of no matter what race are indisputably lords paramount by right of superabundant cash.

The days indeed have gone when any attempt at arrogance on the part of men or women of Semitic extraction was sternly and promptly repressed.

"I am sorry I cannot send Mr. X an invitation to my party," wrote a wealthy heiress of Hebrew parentage to one of her husband's relatives who had asked for a card for a friend. "As you must realize, he is not of *mon monde*."

"I agree with you about Mr. X not being of your *monde*," came the reply; "his father was not a Jew banker, but only an English gentleman of ancient family."

The late King Edward, who regarded the best class of Hebrews with conspicuous favour, first assured