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Frailties of fashion, or, the adventures of an Irish smock

interspersed with whimsical anecdotes of a Nankeen pair of breeches

Illustrated with some of the most striking and humorous descriptions in high and low life, that fancy can suggest ...

London, 1783

Chap. V.

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once the thermometer and barometer of spirits, vivacity, gallantry, and wit.

I shall leave the Breeches in possession of this great orator for a short time, to inquire after his old companion the Irish Smock—and a Smock may be justly pronounced the *ne plus ultra* of all shifts, all logic, all reason, all passion.

C H A P. V.

The Irish Smock again brought to light.

—A sketch of the character of Mademoiselle Convert;—an extraordinary revolution in her sentiments, with regard to the male creation.—The cause of her purchasing the Irish Smock.—Her nuptials.—Their defective consummation, and her two-fold amour.

IN the last volume we left the Irish Smock in Rag-Fair, from whence
we

we shall now relieve it by the assistance of Mademoiselle Convert, aged seventy-two, a vestal, upon the point of giving up her pretensions, to lead apes in hell, and to enter into the holy state of matrimony, for the benefit of the rising generation.

This extraordinary lady was the daughter of a French refugee watchmaker, who had saved a pretty easy fortune, which at his demise he bequeathed to his only daughter. She was puritannic, prudent, and prudish, and had for the first seventy years of her life considered that monstrous he-creature Man, as dangerous an animal as a tyger or a lion of the woods. She had, therefore, sedulously avoided so terrific a being, till she sunk into an old maid, though she was still called mademoiselle, or miss, amongst all her acquaintance,

acquaintance, who carefully avoided her other appellation, as they thought it bordered too much upon a double entendre. This was verified one day, when another antiquated spinster, who resided in the *Quartier du Grec*, and had received the first invitation to visit mademoiselle *Convert* in the *Quartier of Spitalfields*; being unacquainted with the precise situation of her abode, she enquired of a gentleman in French, “*Où demeure mademoiselle Convert?*” To which he ludicrously replied in the same language, “*J’ai souvent entendu parler des c—s-noirs, des c—ns-bruns, et même des c—s-rouges; mais pour les Convertis je n’en ai jamais entendu parler?*”

But to return to mademoiselle: her œconomy had hitherto kept pace with all her other prudential steps, and she
had

had not for many years wore a smock or a shift, but only shams with ruffles at the end of them, considering a smock as an useless piece of garment. Some of her most intimate acquaintance ascribed this resolution of forbearance to a religious, a mortifying principle; but as she was born and bred a *Hugenot*, she could not be supposed to be swayed by any principles adopted by the Church of Rome, and therefore we may reasonably conclude, it arose from penury, and ill-named economy.

However, at the period to which we here allude, she began to fancy a connubial state was more eligible than that of celibacy, and having lately fallen in company with a Welch parson, whose living was very small, and whose income might admit of some improvement

ment; she was induced to listen to his addresses, and he was induced to say a thousand civil things to her, tho' they sickened him as he uttered them, because he knew she had four thousand pounds in the *consols*, which formed the only *consolation* he promised himself by his matrimonial union with mademoiselle Convert.

This lady began now to think it would be necessary to lay in a stock of linen, or at least to provide a wedding shift; but parsimony still prevailed, and she coagitated some hours before she came to the *judicious resolution* of repairing to Rag-Fair, to equip herself properly for sacrificing at the altar of Hymen her—Virginity. She accordingly, after having visited every shop and stall in the vicinity, at length dropt into that where the Irish Smock
lay

lay *perdue*. She no sooner cast her eyes upon it, than she was disposed to have it, if she could become the proprietor at a very moderate price; in a word, she became possessed of it for three shillings, and returned home greatly pleased with her bargain.

Phœbus the next morning lighted the torch of Hymen; the Irish Smock assisted at the consummation of the nuptials, which was somewhat whimsical. Mr. Floyd was no adept in the art of unmaking vestals, having never studied under the celestial Doctor, and Madame Convert did not, as she expressed it, "*Savoir que faire*;"—She did not know how to go to work.—In fine, the business was done in so slovenly a manner, that she began to repent of her bargain, and particularly purchasing the *Irish Smock*. Notwithstanding

standing she was ignorant of the practice of connubial joys, she was so well acquainted with the theory, that she pronounced (strange to tell) the parson a fumbler; adding in French, "Il n'a rien fait toute la nuit que me ratter."

Mademoiselle Convert, being now a *femme couverte* (though uncovered) being in no sort of danger of losing her reputation, by having children in the absence of her husband, who was in a few days obliged to repair to Wales, resolved now, having purchased the *Irish Smock*, to have an *Irish Cicisbeo*, to compleat a consummation devoutly to be wished. She accordingly walked to the Change, and took a chair, having previously chosen two stout Hibernian carriers, who promised to gratify all her desires. She ordered them to Covent-
Garden

Garden, and stopt at Haddocks's; being carried in, she threw off all restraint, she put a guinea into each of their hands, telling them she had another fare for them, and if they performed as well in that business, as they had done in the former, she should double the compliment to each of them.

We shall now, for a little while, leave Mrs. Floyd and Messrs. O'Flanagan, and O'Conolly to their private amusements, and we have reason to believe she passed her time for some hours very agreeably, and entirely to her satisfaction.

C H A P. VI.

Mr. Floyd returns.—Contrives to get possession of his wife's fortune.—Quits her in great distress.—She is obliged to commence governante.—Gets into Lady Brilliant's family to teach her daughters French.

UPON Mr. Floyd's return to the capital, he had great reason to suspect his wife's infidelity, and though love had been no part of the consideration that had brought them together, he resolved to get rid of her, but not her money. He accordingly artfully concealed his suspicions of her criminality, appeared more than commonly fond of her, and having laid in a fresh stock of health and vigour, which the air of the mountains of Wales had communicated, he rushed upon her with such lust, that like one of his country