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Fashions

I once made up my mind to keep the ladies of the State of Nevada posted upon the fashions, but I found it hard to do. The fashions got so shaky that it was hard to tell what was good orthodox fashion, and what heretical and vulgar. This shakiness still obtains in everything pertaining to a lady's dress except her bonnet and her shoes. Some wear waterfalls, some wear nets, some wear cataracts of curls, and a few go bald, among the old maids; so no man can swear to any particular "fashion" in the matter of hair.

The same uncertainty seems to prevail regarding hoops. Little "highflyer" schoolgirls of bad associations, and a good many women of full growth, wear no hoops at all. And we suspect these, as quickly and as naturally as we suspect a woman who keeps a poodle. Some who I know to be ladies, wear the ordinary moderate sized hoops, and some who I also know to be ladies, wear the new hoop of the "spread-eagle" pattern—and some wear the latter who are not elegant and virtuous ladies—but that is a thing that may be said of any fashion whatever, of course. The new hoops with a spreading base look only tolerably well. They are not bell-shaped—the "spread" is much more abrupt than that. It is tent-shaped; I do not mean an army tent, but a circus tent—which comes down steep and small half way and then shoots suddenly out horizontally and spreads abroad. To critically examine these hoops—to get the best effect—one should stand on the corner of Montgomery and look up a steep street like Clay or Washington. As the ladies loop their dresses up till they lie in folds and festoons on the spreading hoop, the effect presented by a furtive glance up a steep street is very charming. It reminds me of how I used to peep under circus tents when I was a boy and see a lot of mysterious legs tripping about with no visible bodies attached to them. And what handsome vari-colored, gold-clasped garters they wear now-a-days! But for the new spreading hoops, I might have gone on thinking ladies still tied up their stockings with common strings and ribbons as they used to do when I was a boy and they presumed upon my youth to indulge in little freedoms in the way of arranging their apparel which they do not dare to venture upon in my presence now.

But as I intimated before, one new fashion seems to be marked and universally accepted. It is in the matter of shoes. The ladies all wear thick-soled shoes which lace up in front and reach half way to the knees. The shoe itself is very neat and handsome up to the top of the instep—but I bear a bitter animosity to all the surplus leather between that point and the calf of the leg. The tight lacing of this legging above the ankle-bone draws the leather close to the ankle and gives the heel an undue prominence or projection—makes it stick out behind and assume the shape called the "jay bird heel" pattern. It does not look well. Then imagine this tall shoe on a woman with a large, round, fat foot, and a huge, stuffy, swollen-looking ankle. She looks like she had on an elbow of stove pipe. Any foot and ankle that are not the perfection of proportion and graceful

contour look surpassingly ugly in these high-water shoes. The pretty and sensible fashion of looping up the dress gives one ample opportunity to critically examine and curse an ugly foot. I wish they would cut down these shoes a little in the matter of leggings.

(Source: Twainquotes.com, <http://www.twainquotes.com/Era/18660200et.html>)