

## SHOPPING IN "THE STATES."

BY AN AMERICAN.



Of course we "go shopping" in street-cars—'tis the way of the country.

Ours is crowded with women, for it is a "shopping car." The business cars, crowded with men, finished their runs an hour ago, and only a few stragglers since have

mingled with the advance-guard of the army of women. And now even these stragglers have fallen away, the last of them queer and forlorn, as if conscientiously out of his element in a garden of spring bonnets.

Your Londoner has an adamant conviction that the Americans are a noisy people. Acknowledged that they are when abroad, and that the neighbourhood of the Langham resounds with their barbarian yells, it may yet be conscientiously denied that they are a noisy people at home. The excitement of meeting each other in a foreign land, the exhilaration of a just-finished sea-voyage, and the emotional stimulus of strange and storied scenes long hungered for, together with the fact that the American voice *is* vibrant, and not booming, like the English, explains this difference, and not that there is more vocal vigour in the effort. America produces more singers than any other country, and her forests are fuller of singing birds. Among bobolinks are often jackdaws; but what music-lover would declare that the jackdaws were all?

A shopping expedition into Boston would convince the most prejudiced "Britisher" that the American *chez lui* roars him but mildly.

Our electric car is as mum as a catafalque. Not a voice is heard, not a nasal note. All the way in from Harvard Square we might be corpses to ramparts carried, save for the muffled voices of a mother and daughter, whose words none can distinguish. It is almost always so, and street-car conversation, when it exists at all, has a woolly suggestion, as if murmured under blankets.

In the great shops it is much the same. The voice of the national bird is not heard to complain. Nobody utters war-whoops. Shopmen and shoppers bend confidentially over counters and talk in discreetly modulated accents.

As we stand in one of the great shops of Boston, New York, or Philadelphia, we are conscious of a short sharp shock incessantly repeated, and punctuating the woolly hum like the prickings of innumerable pins. It comes from above our heads, and looking up to ascertain its cause, we find the upper space thickly threaded with metallic lines, like miniature railways. Over these railways round balls are

continually rushing to and fro, in which money and purchase-slips are conveyed to and from the eyries of the auditing clerks. These balls fall into the stations for which they are designed with a sharp click. The American shopper does not trot up to a cashier's desk with her bit of paper to claim her package, like a nice proper little demoiselle, as the Parisian does, but the whole transaction is finished by means of these aerial railways between shopman and shopper. The numerous stations of the air lines, where auditing clerks work, look for all the world like tiny reading-desks, and are stuck about in all sorts of out-of-the-way places, poised in corners and impinging upon walls—more like swallow-nests than like places reached without wings.

This manner of expressing money and purchase-slips is usually only for the lower floors. Upstairs little cash-girls run about with sparrow-like hop, skip, and flutter, and sparrow-like bickerings. They are not joys for ever or things of beauty. Taken from the very poorest of the poor classes at an age when the children of the ambitious labourer are kept, by hook or by crook, at the public schools, they have no chance to outgrow congenital ugliness and disease, even while growing sharp and clever in the ways of their own dark little world. It is remarkable how many of them, particularly in New York, tots of ten and twelve, wear spectacles, for short sight or to hide rheumy lids, and thus go goggling hither and yon—poorly dressed, queer, uncomely objects, for which our civilisation has no reason to rise up and call itself blessed.

Britannia, who shops with us this June morning in Boston, gazes meditatively about the floors.

"Where are the spittoons?" she murmurs as dulcetly as though she asked, "What are the wild waves saying?"

"Spittoons?"

"Are not heaps of these shop-people, men and women, chewing gum with might and main?"

There was no "denigin of it." Chew, chew, chew—"sales-gentlemen" and "sales-ladies" alike. Their jaws worked like automatic machines.

We confessed then and there to Britannia that this habit of chewing is really a national one. Our chewers are in every rank of life, in every profession. Last summer, at the C— House on Beach Bluff-by-the-Sea, it was a spectacle to see faultlessly attired men and women upon the broad piazzas swaying for ever back and forth in rocking-chairs, chewing, chewing, ever chewing, though the eternal tides came in or the eternal tides went out: though Æolian music swept up from the great deep, or dusty zephyrs howled out from the wide land. Strange was it to hear a beauteous bride call from halfway up the stairs to her husband below—

"Arthur, I do wish you would look under the seat of my rocker, and see if I didn't leave my gum there!"

So popular is this gum habit that physicians have

been known to advise it for gastric deficiencies, as aid to the salivary flow.

In its first condition this gum is a hard lump, difficult to manipulate. Not until it has been pretty thoroughly chewed is it agreeably chewable. For this reason the first chewing is something to be avoided, if possible; and a certain well-known figure, a boarder in a certain well-known hotel, is said to maintain his high popularity by preparing their gum for all his women-friends!

Thus was Britannia persuaded, much against her will, that the cuspidor is not a feature of American "stores," though the marble water-fountain is, with silvery tinkle into fluted shells. We saw a farmer-looking man drinking from a fountain.

"Is it sody?" asked his wife, hastening to his side.

"Norri," quoth the husband, dropping the silver cup in disdain; "northin' but ice water!"

"What can the matter be?" exclaimed Britannia. "Somebody fainted?"

We were near a little knot of women closely huddled about some central object, and all gazing upward with intent expression.

"Only the elevator," we explained, and laughed with our London friend at this new proof, where none was needed, of the indisposition of Americans to use their own pretty feet when it is possible to avoid it. At every one of the several elevators in the large American establishments is always this waiting group. At some of the stations sofas are provided, so that delicate Columbia may not even stand and wait. Usually one may see Columbias, more than one, waiting there five and ten minutes for the elevator's next ascent, though their business is only to the floor above, and the stairs, close beside them, are wide and easy as Capitoline steps.

That brilliant American novelist—George Fleming—once described one of her brilliant American heroines as "born tired." George Fleming knows her American heroine! So do we, thousands of her, and we see scores of her every time we go shopping, so glued to the cushioned seats of the elevator, that she leaves them reluctantly even when her floor is reached.

Perhaps the reason of this constitutional fatigue is not far to seek—no further than Columbia's mother and grandmother. A generation and more ago, American towns and cities were perfect pandemoniums of lawless domestic service—of raw "hired girls," driven only by starvation from their Emerald Isle, and bringing scarce else with them to this country than great expectations and bog-born and bog-bred ignorance. Not half the labour-saving conveniences existed then that nowadays make it possible to manoeuvre an American house with half the help necessary to an English one of the same pretensions. Thus it doubtless comes about, because Columbia's grandmother and mother spent anxious lives fleeing upstairs and downstairs, and into all my lady's chambers, that baby Columbia came to a heritage of fatigue not of her own earning. She is resting now in "elevators," "electrics," in rocking-chairs, and on sofas,

with electric bells and telephones at her elbow, and Biddy Americanised into Bessie, into Mamie, and Molly and Minnie, into Nellie and Annie and Jennie, when not even Edith and Maud and May; and it is, perhaps, to be hoped that our daughters may reap the benefit of it all.

"You've got seventeen people aboard, 'n y'aint 'low'd to carry but twelve!" cried a pert minx of a sales-lady of sixteen to an elevator conductor.

"Shut yer head!" was that gentleman's suave reply. He, too, was seated, and an open book was between him and his stool.

Shoppers and shop-people meet freely in these mirrored and upholstered boxes. He who knelt at your feet a moment ago, fitting you with bottines, stands now beside you in a Napoleon-at-Elba attitude; while he who a little while ago wooed you with the silken blandishments of ladies' underwear in form *le plus intime*, gazes heroically upon each descending floor, like Washington crossing the Delaware.

This intermingling of shoppers and shop-people, unknown save in this Land of the Free-and-easy, brings one face to face with scraps of domestic histories else eternally hidden from us. The American sales-lady, as a rule, is not a secretive person; and the sales-gentleman, when young, is like her.

Our electric car may start from Bowdoin Square at five, and now it is past four. We have not selected our flower-seeds yet, nor yet prowled among the pirated English reprints sold at the price of a song, a newspaper, or an eighteenth-century chap-book. Nor can we, till a pair of shop-people can spare time to wait upon us from discussing the probabilities of Ernest's being "mashed" on Edith; if Walter's "parr" was mad because Walter had bought that "soot"; if Maud's trousseau were as good as Gracie's; and if Mrs. Cleveland "ain't sorry she married old Grover, who is no bigger than other folks now!"

Americans upon first shopping in London are very apt to vent nasal shrieks at each other in disgust of what they consider the offensive sycophancy and servility of the English shopman.

"Why," screamed a Philadelphia bride, "would you believe it, a Waterloo Place young man said 'Thanks!' when I said I wouldn't take any of that silk to-day!"

*En revanche*, the Londoner just arrived in America booms vigorous objections to seeing a declaration of independence in the manner not only of our sales-people, but of everyone who condescends to wait upon him.

"To whom shall I give these brasses?" a tourist was heard to ask in a vestibule car.

"I say, boss," expostulated the porter; "carn't you speak the Ammerican langwidge? Them ain't 'brasses'—they's 'checks!'"

In one of Boston's shopping streets is a showy millinery establishment, whose lavish display of artificial flowers will smell as sweet if we call it "The Bouquet" as by any other name.

That June morning Britannia yearned for lilacs to blossom on a new bonnet. A woman met us, stout

and of somewhat Hebraic comeliness. Britannia murmured of lilacs.

"Yes, dear," cooed the sales-lady; "I know exactly what you want. We have it just from Paris."

Britannia's eyes grew prominent, but she tried the bonnet on.

"There, dear; I knew I could suit you!" chirped Deborah (or Judith, and perhaps Saphyra). "It exactly suits your style."

"Isn't it—a trifle—youthful?" breathed Britannia.

"Youthful? No, dear. You know I wouldn't think of offering you a bonnet to betray your age, as one too youthful would. No, indeed, dear!"

The Londoner bought the bonnet. But she never mentions it now except as "that 'dear' bonnet from 'The Bouquet.'"

New Yorkers are given to much tip-tilting of the nose at Boston and Philadelphia for their waterproofs and coloured petticoats—"so English, you know." Boston and Philadelphia on their parts do not refrain from shooting out the lip at New York for its overshownness of taste and embroidered petticoats—dragging through summer dust and winter mire. There is the same difference in the shops and shopping of these cities; and the frills and flounces and furbelows so conspicuous in one are replaced by more Puritan and Quaker-like stuffs in the other. But the principal shops in all American cities, while as fully provided with goods as those of London and Paris, lack the style of those shops. We have Oxford Street in plenty, but little of Regent Street and Piccadilly. No great establishment here requires saleswomen to wear the black silk gowns furnished them at reduced rates, and required of them in London and Paris. There are actually no sumptuary laws at all over

here—motley's the only wear, and very motley it is. In a Whiteley-sort of Boston bazaar a sales-lady wears a dingy black gown and alpaca apron, with elaborately dressed and artificially golden hair, and complexion enough for a dozen renovated belles. In the same building a middle-aged woman waits upon us, and addresses us incessantly not as "madam," but "lady," wearing one of the coarsest of Cardigan jackets out at elbows.

Like everything else in America, our shops are more business-like than artistic. Far more Hamburg embroidery is sold than hand-worked, more bed-spreads than lace flounces, more flannel than foulard. In spite of their extravagant reputation abroad, American women in the vast majority are domestic in their tastes and economical in their dress.

Boston, New York, and Philadelphia shops cater to a vast population, not of those cities themselves alone, but of wide, teeming suburbs and outlying towns, brought close to the city by easy public conveyances. This vast suburban population is not stylish, not extravagant, and it could buy everything it wants in Islington, or within a stone's-throw of the Elephant and Castle. Londoners know nothing of this kind of American, for such never go to Europe, and the English tourist never works his way into the pine-fantasticity of our villa'd and cockney suburbs—where women read housekeeping journals with infinitely more zest than fashion-books.

But it is for these that the large American shops cater. It is something the same in all cities. But not all large shops, like those of Boston and Philadelphia, deliberately choose to attract patrons by displays of useful articles rather than decorative, flannel petticoats rather than jupes de point d'Alençon.

DELIVERANCE DINGLE.

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## CURIOSITIES OF MUSICAL EXAMINATIONS.

BY AN EXAMINER.



ONE of the most gratifying features in connection with the revival of musical culture in the United Kingdom is the effort of students to acquire a knowledge of the so-called "theory of music," by which is understood the rules of musical grammar, musical terminology, and the construction of chords, as well as an acquaintance with the history of the art in past ages. This effort is greatly encouraged by the examinations held by the leading musical institutions of the country, a conspicuous place being occupied by the popular "Musical Knowledge" Examinations of a well-known London College.

Among the thousands who present themselves as candidates for certificates, the majority come well prepared for the ordeal by competent teachers, but

not a few afford diversion to the examiners by their helpless floundering in the attempt to grapple with the difficulties of the questions set. Naturally, Junior candidates furnish the greatest fund of amusement; in default of knowledge, they "take shots" at the answer. Thus: a Shake means "when the same note is played two or three times, when it sounds shaky." We are also informed that "9 crochets (*sic*)=1 minim," and that—in a time-signature—"the lower number explains into how many 'crochets' the minim is divided."

The Italian directions employed in music yield scope for many ingenious and ingenuous speculations. *Da Capo* "is to cut short; it is derived (*sic*) from the Italian." Evidently, the candidate's idea is "off with his head." Another says that *Da Capo* means "that the music is to be played slower," also that *Dal Segno* signifies "at the usual time." Then we learn that *slentando* means "slenderly"; *stringendo*, "with