THE ART OF SHOPPING.

What is it in shopping which so attracts the feminine mind? It must be admitted that the sex are, as a rule, in different to the charms of such employments as will suffer much, rather than accompany a lady to a sale that will last a season, and not to deck our houses and ourselves in an ostentatious abundance of "bargains" (which are not bargains) picked up so cheaply here and there and everywhere.

Unless one can afford to fret away an amazing amount of money, it is well on entering a tempting shop to ask oneself: "Now what shall I do that I want?" and to keep in mind the query: "What can I do without it?"

A prudent shopper will keep her eyes from straying among the tempting array as she walks up the shop, lest, seeing, the temptation to buy should be too strong for her strength of mind. She will turn a deaf ear to the insinuation of the seller, not being one of the "special cheap line in gloves," or "a manufacturer's stock of ribbons at less than cost price," conscious that though they may be cheap in one way, they would not be so to her, because she does not want them.

Shoppers may be arranged in three classes; we probably can all fix on one of our acquaintances as typical of each.

First, then, the desperately economical, not to say stingy, shopper, of whom mention has already been made. Having possibly abundant means, she gets nothing for her money, so much pleasure as to buy her goods more cheaply than anyone else. Always on the look out for bargains, she moves her patronage from one shop to another with the words: "If these aren't better, she has the idea that they may be cheaper, or that the vendor may be more readily beaten down in price.

For this dreadful individual, on being shown any article, immediately, and as a matter of course, begins to persuade the shopman to take less than the price. Perhaps in the hope of retaining a customer, he does so at first, but, finding that there is no end to her bargaining, he becomes impatient and indifferent whether she goes elsewhere or not.

The members of the second class are not so numerous as those of the other two, but still they exist in no small numbers.

A lady of class number two will not and cannot believe in bargains. She will buy, at any price, on account, the shoe of leather or the waste of time, or the mental and bodily fatigue, which surely are an overcharge of our energies are worth anything.

"Oh, why don't you go to Brown's for that ribbon? I got the very same thing there for 50c, only yesterday," such an one will say to a friend who is paying 60c for it. Jones's. Now Brown's is nearly a mile away, and this economical lady forgot to mention that the time she got to the shop she was so exhausted that she had to take a hansom home, so that in the end she lost considerably by the transaction.

"Perhaps it may, sooner or later, probably later; and meanwhile it will be laid aside, getting dusty and out of date, and when at last a use comes for it its freshness is gone, and you wish you had never bought it, and could and could get new.

Some members of the shopping world have wonderful notions of economy. They will often times fix on a few pence in their purchases, not taking into account the wear of shoes leather or the waste of time, or the mental and bodily fatigue, which surely are an overcharge of our energies are worth anything.

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Certainly there is no object in paying more than is necessary, even though it is but a farthing a yard; but a great deal of extravagance is practised and called economy by people who have not studied the art of shopping. As a rule it is not economical, but the reverse, to buy cheap imitations instead of the real thing; they are in the end not cheap, but dear.

Poor thing, of bad material or badly made, may pass muster for a little time, but very soon its outside gloss of respectability begins to fade, its true self shows itself, everybody can see that it is nothing but a sham. And do we not all in our hearts despise shams? And nightly too, for they are the very essence of vulgarity.

But buy a good thing; and besides lasting ten times as long as the inferior, it will look good and respectable, and unspeakably more refined, even when worn away to its last threads. So the true wisdom and economy is to have honestly good things, if fewer or dearer, and not to deck our houses and ourselves in an ostentatious abundance of "bargains" (which are not bargains) picked up so cheaply here and there and everywhere.

Again, if she be pleased with an article in quality and price, she will gratify the shopkeeper by saying so equally frankly. On the other hand, she will never buy cheap rubbish; she carefully examines it and detects the good from the bad, and lets no amount of persuasion or cheapness tell against her own good judgment. She chooses out certain shops and goes to them as much and as continuously as she fairly can. She knows what she wants before going in, or if she does not know exactly she tells the attendant clearly what purpose it is for, and he is always willing to suggest. By this means she avoids the annoying practice of getting the counter covered with unsuitable goods, and finally departing without purchasing at all.

Should she have unavoidably caused extra trouble, or taken up a good deal of time, a polite "I am sorry to have troubled you" will mollify the poor tired server, and do away with the grumbling remarks which would probably be made after her departure.

If she needs an acquaintance in a shop, after greeting her she will finish her purchases before entering into conversation, so as not to keep the attendant too long. If her time is valuable, though she may have plenty of leisure.

But a word must be said about servers. Are they themselves always perfect? Can they know how much custom they sometimes drive away from their masters' shops by their selfishness and unkindness to oblige? As a rule they are annoyingly patient and good-humoured, but still one hears too frequently such a speech as this, "Oh, I never go to Brown's, they have such disagreeable, uncivil people to serve; I prefer to walk a little further on to Jones's. It is not such a good shop, but they are so polite, and seem so anxious to please."

If they only knew how pleasant it is to be served by a civil obliging person, and how annoying to have an impertinent or unwilling one, they would certainly exert themselves to preserve at least an outward show of patience and good temper, even if they cannot manage to affect the interest in their customers which is such a charm in the attendants at many shops. The impertinent shopkeeper, too, is very annoying, who, when one is in a great hurry, persists in bringing out box after box of "special lines" and displaying them, regardless of your assurances that you do not require anything more.

Also, it is very provoking to be told that a certain article matches your pattern, or is suitable for your purpose, when it is quite evident that it would not do at all. This information is often due to the "rules of the house," where the assistants are paid a commission on articles which they contrive to sell. It is never done at the stores, and hence one of the comforts of shopping at these places instead of at shops. Pressing people to buy in that way seldom has the desired effect, and certainly makes them reluctant to go to the shop again.

The one thing to be considered on both sides by sellers and buyers alike is how to do to others as we would be done by.