

# GODEY'S

## Lady's Book and Magazine.

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### A MORNING AT STEWART'S.

BY ALICE B. HAVEN.

On the afternoon of a dull November day, in the late dull autumn, we were purchasing some trifle at one of the thronged counters at Stewart's, when we accidentally heard that it was the last week "down town."

Being of the constant conservative temperament that ever deprecates change, whether it is of an article of furniture, a boot maker, or a place of residence, we strolled with a lingering regret, almost amounting to sadness, through those noble saloons for "the last time," calling up the changes that had passed our individual life, since our first bewildered glimpse as a school-girl fresh from the country, of their gay and animated scenes—let us be candid, sixteen years ago!—and the social transition that called for the meditated removal. Then, "Stewart's," opposite the Park, was in the centre of the retail trade; above Canal was up town for general shopping purposes. Now, no one goes below, and the great "quarter"—in which this thronged emporium of spring and fall shoppers stands—is given up, as is "the city," in London to the roar of heavy traffic, and the whirl of vast commercial transactions. They have driven the butterflies from the haunts of trade; the gay equipages and flashing harness give place to the solid dray, or the rattling express; boxes encumber the sidewalk, so lately echoing to the patter of pretty feet, and the light toilets of our "lilies of the field" cease to brighten the anxious, care-worn crowd that throng the public ways. Shall we live to see "below Fourteenth" voted out of reach, and a new Stewart's arise fronting Central Park?

On the morning of Nov. 10th, a sunshiny day at last, after a week of storm and English fog, we drove past the deserted palace, which must

have waked wonderingly that morning to its echoing desolation. Groups of surprised and disconcerted looking females patrolled the steps, tried the various entrances, and at last discovered, from the huge placards, that this was a feminine Stewart's no longer. Henceforth it was given over to unpicturesque buyers of the wholesale.

We designed then, and have recently put into execution, an intention of visiting the new establishment for the benefit of our distant readers who have not an opportunity of seeing with their own eyes. They may congratulate themselves on being saved some physical fatigue, if our pen can photograph its scenes so as to give them some idea of "up town Stewart's."

The building itself, like its predecessor, is of white marble, and looms up purely at the angle of Broadway, occupied by Grace Church, between Ninth and Tenth Streets. It does not yet occupy the whole block, that is left for the hereafter. We will enter on Ninth Street, for this corner is built round, and then have a gradual interior view. We find ourselves instantly in the midst of business. This entrance or lobby is occupied by the package department, where many busy hands are checking, tossing and bearing off for delivery the hundreds of neatly enveloped parcels, stamped, signed, countersigned, and registered to prevent mistakes, to their various places of destination; a most important and beautifully regulated department, and one where great strictness and accuracy are of necessity required, when the whole enormous trade is "retail."

A wide staircase, with a neat mahogany balustrade, apparently ascends to the top of the

building from this entrance; but we are going below, and descending one flight, come upon a room where great brown rolls of oilcloth, twenty, thirty, and forty feet long, are piled like rows of pipes or leaders near an aqueduct terminus; past these, and we enter the wide carpet room, below the level of the busy street, yet as finely lighted on a sunny day as though intended for the sale of silks or satins. How is this managed?

You noticed a pavement of glass running all around the building as you stepped from the sidewalk; knobs of little glass, but so securely set in its close iron framing, and so thickly moulded, that you trod on it as securely as if it had been stone. That is the transparent roof of the recess or gallery that surrounds the room, and from it comes this soft clear daylight; no windows you perceive, unless these great slabs of the same substance underfoot, in the shape of huge windows, occurring at regular intervals beneath the glass roofing, can be called so. They are, indeed, and light a floor still lower, thirty feet under ground, where carpets are stored until required in this the salesroom devoted to them exclusively. Carpets of every degree are spread out upon the wide floor, or ranged in regular order against the wall; from the cotton and woollen plaids, still found upon the floors of the farmer's cheerful sitting-room, to the gorgeous velvet medallions, thick sewn with tropical blossoming, or reproduced from the bewildering lenses of the kaleidoscope, in all their phantasy of form and richness of coloring. Here, by an ingenious contrivance, like the leaves of a huge volume slowly turning, we can choose conveniently from the cumbersome rolls of oilcloth just past; there, as we make the circuit of the room, and mark its depth and breadth, and the graceful Corinthian columns of iron, pure in color as marble, that bear up the fearful weight above them, are piled the luxurious hassocks, on which the rich man kneels to pray in Grace Church yonder; the soft Persian mats that muffle the footfalls of his chamber, or the velvet rugs on which bask "dogs and game," or an antlered deer *couchant*, in the brilliant coloring of life, before his glowing grates.

We are passing on to the staircase on the Tenth Street side, and conveniently near it is a neatly decorated ladies' dressing room of good dimensions, a most admirable thought! of which we make special mention.

Emerging from this staircase, we come at once upon the busy scene. This is the main saloon, entered directly from the street, and

lighted on all sides by walls of plate-glass windows, the light tempered by plain blue shades. No array of laces, and shawls, and silks are displayed temptingly before them, as in other establishments.

"Le bon vin  
Needs no sign."

Not even a tendril of enticement is outwardly put forth here.

At first the hum, the stir, the flashing, changing crowd, prevents anything like a survey in detail; but presently we come to see that there are four departments, or parallel ranges of low shelves, that separate but do not divide the wide space which occupies all the floor, save that one division towards Ninth Street, against which the principal staircase is placed. These divisions are cut in two by a central aisle, running from Tenth towards Ninth Street, and are entered by doors from Broadway fronting them. As we come from the carpet room, we are in the first division, with a long scarlet-covered oval counter directly before us, the glove department. We know it to our cost. We have worn no other gloves but *Alexandre's* since those schoolgirl days, and Stewart monopolizes his manufacture. Let us acknowledge our one feminine extravagance—a costly self-indulgence with gloves at \$1 50 (they were seventy-five cents when we made our first investment in a pair for examination day), and those of the plainest. "Stitched backs" are \$1 60; thanks to the rates of foreign exchange! We are not surprised at being told that the business of this counter alone is \$300,000 yearly. The other half of the first division is occupied by muslin and cambric embroidered *lingerie* of all descriptions, and laces, from the neat Valenciennes collar at \$2 50, to the Brussels points (shawls) at \$100, or \$1000, as required.

In the second division we find, on the right as you enter from Broadway, merinoes and all wool goods; opposite are reps, pöplins, and fancy fabrics in woollen and cotton, woollen and silk, etc. Beyond the dividing aisle, cheaper mixed fabrics; and opposite them again, one side of the hollow square, which incloses the cashier's desk, divided, yet not concealed from the crowd by a particularly light and graceful screen of iron filagree, painted white. Here is another kindly convenience for ladies—a desk where an order, a note, an address, or a despatch may be written at ease, and intruding upon the time and attention of none. There is a corresponding one on the opposite side of the inclosure.

And here "cash boys most do congregate,"

with pencils and currency; tricks and jokes—such as serve to keep these ubiquitous juveniles in good spirits. Here each purchase is remeasured, and each check certified to prevent mistakes, or fancied ones. This is the main artery of the great "cash" system, for which Stewart's is distinguished. In these days six months' accounts are out of date; a thing of the past, and the Reade Street dynasty. Bordering this desk, or series of desks, on the inner side, in the third division, we have the silk department, under the immediate care of an untiring and gentlemanly guide through these unaccustomed labyrinths. And here we are dazzled by a display of delicate and gorgeous fabrics, which never meet the eye of a passing, transient customer, reserved for the occupants of cushioned equipages, which would save them from contact with the dust, and whose owners count their incomes by tens of thousands. Some of these could only be seen in their full perfection by the aid of artificial light, under which they are intended to be worn. They were shown to us in a separate apartment, from which the daylight is entirely excluded, lighted brilliantly by jets of gas, and arranged for an effective display of drapery. But we must not trench on the borders of the "fashion chit-chat," wherein all these beauties will be found in detail, but pass around the several counters of this department, to which the upper end of two divisions is assigned, not failing to notice "the remnant counter"—dear to a woman's heart, be she rich or poor, for the love of bargains is inherent with the sex.

A similar arrangement is noticeable in the department of woollens; and thus the stock is kept "clear," and customers are made happy.

Opposite the first portion of the silk department is the stock of cotton goods—muslins, cambrics, etc.; and adjoining it, just at the present season, the popular stock of the house-keeping department; that is, table linen, etc., of moderate prices, in large demand. Passing through to the one remaining division, also entered from Broadway, we find cloths or materials for the wear of men and boys opposite to a general gentlemen's furnishing department, and at the other end, a long range of gentlemen's hosiery on one side, and ladies' on the other.

To return to the staircase rising from the last division; it is broad, with shallow steps and a plain but handsome balustrade. On the landing, half way up, we pause for a *coup d'œil* of the busy sparkling scene below. Now we have a full view of the saloon itself; the light

and tasteful frescoes on wall and ceiling; the gilded chandeliers with grand glass globes; the graceful Corinthian columns, all of iron, that support the floor above; the innumerable plate-glass windows, with the pale blue tint pervading the light that painters seek to soften an atmosphere, or tone down color; the gayly dressed, restless, ever-changing throng, like a waving tulip-bed, or the glittering of a kaleidoscope, with an ascending hum that marks a hive of human activity and industry.

The second floor resembles the first in its essential features, save that there are fewer departments and more space. We enter the cloak room, from the staircase where are displayed cloaks of every grade and description, from the street wrap to the delicate cloth or cashmere opera cloaks, of snowy white, crimson lined, and gayly tasselled, that hang in the convenient wardrobes with sliding doors, that line the wall.

Next to this are shawls of lower grades, the neat stella and the comfortable plaid; beyond, in the inner shrine, and exposed to the best light, those marvels of Eastern industry, and Western expenditure, camels' hair shawls and scarfs. Here are displayed to our delighted eyes the graceful combinations of the French looms, and the prouder glories of the "real India," the cost commencing in price at \$100 and reaching a climax in this heavy drapery of quaint design valued at \$2000. Here we longed to share our morning's experience with other friends, who have an instinctive love for shawls as well as bargains; here we craved, with the last trace of feminine malice, to prove to Mrs. White that her boasted India was only French, and to show Mrs. Black, who had strained her allowance and curtailed her children's winter wardrobes for her one hundred and fifty dollar shawl, how coarse and inferior it was, after all, by the side of five and seven hundred dollar cashmeres. How much better it would have been, considering her own position and her husband's means, to have satisfied herself with one of those soft graceful French cashmeres at \$50, either that bride-like white centre with its deep gray and black border, or this rich combination of gold and green, and brown and scarlet, in such wondrous toning and perfect harmony, leaving to Mrs. Smith and Jones, whose husbands are mining gold in Wall Street or California, the triumph duly belonging to an immoderate unstinted income.

Their fairy like frostings of lace draperies indicate an approach to the upholstery, but first we have furs, ermine, sable, mink and

Siberian gray, then we come upon the heavier stuffs for curtains, the reps, drougets, the satin laine, the pure satin, the rich brocade, and the wonderful "cloth of gold," produced from its hidden niche, of real bullion garlanded with silken blossoms such as we find in "kings' houses," or the Fifth Avenue and Walnut Street palaces of the ladies just alluded to. Only \$50 a yard! and how many yards to a lounge, a sofa, or *jauteuil*! There is a sense of freshness and simplicity in the neat furniture chintzes, and twilled stripes for covers, in the immediate neighborhood, and we pass to the housekeeping department beyond, with its dainty wealth of table damask and luxurious blankets, or the plainer grades of every article. Flannels opposite. And now we beg an especial favor, since we have reviewed this large display of selections for the daily wants of domestic life, that we may be admitted to the great work rooms we have heard exist above us, yet so silent and secluded in their operations that not one in ten of the "oldest customers" guesses their existence.

Our amiable conductor kindly procures for us the desired permission, and leads to the story above, which is occupied as a store-room for the reserved stock, to the next, where we enter a vestibule, or long narrow apartment, where are tables, a stove surrounded by irons required in pressing, and a flock of girls and women busily engaged in that employment. Here, also, are piles of finished garments, cloaks, saques, etc. ready for the early trade; beyond they are stamping the braiding patterns with which they are to be ornamented. Passing through, we enter the finest work-room we have ever yet seen; and in our vocation and desire to see the employment of working women, we have visited some of the largest in New York. This is neither "under ground" nor in "an attic," but a saloon, spacious and neat enough for a court ball, occupying the entire space covered by the various departments below, and lighted by windows the same size, with no check to perfect ventilation. Here are ranged work-tables, seating from two hundred and fifty to five hundred girls, as the work demands. Our visit was paid in the "dull season," yet the two hundred and fifty grouped over their work under the superintendence of a careful matron, was no insignificant sight.

Another staircase still—the fifth we have ascended—and a busier, more picturesque scene still, presents itself. In the long room or vestibule are piled bales of black roop, the curled hair, which is to be used in the manufacture of

mattresses, like those finished piles; here are women and girls busy in unravelling it; there are great waves and heaps of the picked hair darkening the room—a sight more picturesque than alluring; so we hasten to the light, cheerful saloon beyond, full of work-tables, full of busy groups, of great wicker crates moved on wheels, and piled with orders for house or steamship furnishing—from blankets to kitchen towels. Here the hum of sewing machines where they are hemmed; they are marked yonder; they are reconsigned to a wicker crate again, ready for delivery and use. One may safely say hundreds of dozens of sheets, pillow-cases, towels and napkins, dozens of blankets, counterpanes, etc., pass through these busy hands in a day. There are the costly curtains of the house this order is being executed for; here the carpets, from the Brussels ticketed "Mr. Smith, Fifth Avenue, front basement," to the plain ingrain, "Smith, fifth story, rear hall bedroom;" it is the cook's, probably—and a very good carpet she is to have!

We are certainly lifted "above the world" for once in our mortal life; face to face and on a level with the delicate carving of Grace Church upper spire. Mark the belfries and spires around; the quaint chimney tops; the flat, pointed, square-peaked, gable-roofed houses below; the thread-like openings among them, which are streets and avenues; the jostling crowd of houses stretching out for miles beyond the limit of the eye; the hum of eager life from the far off noisy street; then look back to the busy throng of workers around you; think of the reservoirs of material below; the great warehouse that pours its tide of fabrics and manufactures into this broad outlet; here are the procurers, the producers; there all around you lie the homes of the consumers of this vast centre of industry; even out to the glittering thread of silver that marks the ocean, bearing the floating transient houses "Stewart's" has furnished!

We moralize; it is a sign of advancing age, and one is not ready to confess that there is a point, or a moral in a morning spent amid the trifles that go to make up the sum of household necessities and embellishments; but we thought, as we came back leisurely through the scenes we have attempted to describe, how harmonious was their arrangement, and how those err who break the harmony of social life by vain and ambitious longings for elegancies beyond their stations, and crowd into "a department" where they find only heart-burnings and mali-

cious sarcasms for their straining after dress and equipage.

Let us be content, my sisters, with our neat muslins and our simple merinoes, and admire Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones in their *moirés* and cashmeres. Let us repress the bitter slander of "extravagance" and "worldliness" when we speak of them. It is not extravagance for them, but proper expenditure of ample means; and if it could but be realized, you have had far more pleasure and enjoyment in the serviceable black silk, so neat, so becoming, that hangs now in your wardrobe, than they have realized from the costly brocade, or the dainty lace, that they purchased the morning you so envied them. "Each in their own sphere, and happiness to each."

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### A SUNSET VISION.

BY JULIA.

ONE time, in the autumn sober,  
When the leaves lay crisped and sere,  
And the evening light fell faintly  
On the hill-tops far and near,

I walked with a full orb'd maiden  
In the dim and shadowy wood,  
Where the oak and maple closely  
In silent grandeur stood.

And her voice was sweet and silver,  
While her laughter, free and wild,  
Gushed forth from her soul like music  
From the lips of a sinless child.

At length her feet grew weary,  
As the shadows came and died  
Across the meadows slowly,  
And up the dark hill-side.

And we sank on a bed of mosses,  
While I vainly tried to trace  
The holy thoughts uprising  
From her white, unshadowed face.

Afar in the purple distance,  
From the mountain's slow descent,  
Above the lake's still bosom,  
The light clouds came and went.

The last gleam faintly trembled  
On the verge of space—and then  
A vast unfathomed ocean  
Lay where the sun had been.

No breeze fell on its stillness,  
While its tideless billows grew  
Up, up to the far Infinite,  
And mingled with the blue.

Then the clouds like sunset islands,  
Crept slowly back again,  
And softly sank to slumber  
Just where the light had lain.

And the solemn silence deepened  
With a power that might be felt,  
Till, before its mighty presence  
My soul in worship kuel.

Then her laughing eyes grew dreamy,  
Like the fall of summer rain,  
And her parted lips devoutly  
Essayed to speak in vain.

And her small hands slowly, gently,  
Clasped softly round my arm,  
And I felt their thrilling presence  
Steal o'er me like a charm.

And when the last gleam faded,  
My heart in transport said,  
That it fell a golden glory  
Around her radiant head.

And now the dream is over,  
I feel a quickening thrill,  
When the vision of that evening  
Comes o'er me calm and still.

For when my eye is clearest,  
My heart is full of tears,  
And a vague, uncertain whisper  
Floats down the tide of years.

And I think of evenings coming  
When I shall list in vain,  
The fall of one light footstep  
Within my room again.

The stars will smile on sweetly  
From their shores of belted blue,  
But their light will bring no longer  
The eyes I once looked through.

And when with throbbing temples  
And quickened pulse I stand,  
I shall miss the cooling presence  
Of one little loving hand.

My life is like those islands,  
My love that purple sea,  
Which like the clouds returning,  
Flows backward silently.

Yet I know that misty ocean  
Leads toward a golden shore,  
Where her laugh shall ring forever,  
And my tears shall fall no more.

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COURTESY AT HOME.—Almost any one can be courteous in a neighbor's house. If anything goes wrong, or is out of time, or is disagreeable there, it is made the best of, not the worst; even efforts are made to excuse it, and to show it is not felt; it is attributed to accident, not to design; and this is not only easy but natural in the house of a friend. I will not, therefore, believe that what is so natural in the house of another, is impossible at home, but maintain, without fear, that all the courtesies of social life may be upheld in domestic society. A husband as willing to be pleased at home as he is anxious to be pleased in a neighbor's house, and a wife as intent on making things comfortable every day, to her family, as on set days to her guests, could not fail to make home happy.