

SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

Continued from November No.

Speaking of the stores (as the Canadian shops are called), I must notice the insufferable length to which smoking therein is carried. I had occasion to visit a tailor—found him with his pipe, to a bootmaker, ditto—to a fruiterer, the same, and so on, as I found was the case at butchers, bakers, grocers, confectioners, ironmongers, and indeed at almost every shop. It is not all—even those who can enjoy a cigar—who care about the heavy atmosphere of stale smoke, but these men have no scruples about it, as they do not put aside their pipe while attending to customers.

While wandering around, I met some lady friends who kindly undertook to pilot me through the halls dedicated to feminine embellishment, a business portion of the city's trade I was rather anxious to see. Well, said they, as we cannot visit all suppose we begin at the market and then plod westward. So said, so done. We entered a plain looking building, wherein we found piles of goods, and attentive shopmen, the upper floors being devoted to millinery &c. Here were a great number of girls well dressed, apparently happy, and as busy as bees. A little inquiry, informed me, that the proprietors are very desirous of making all feel at home and content, as they evidently were; the employers being well known and well served, could quickly secure extra help if press of business temporarily needed it.

Forward we went to a similar large establishment, but so far as I could judge with a less business, where the employes shewed clearly enough that their instructions were not to allow a person to leave the house without a purchase of some kind; the proffered attentions were, therefore, rather troublesome, and, my friends said, mostly failed in their object. We soon entered another establishment, of a more aristocratic character, where a large number of milliners and dress-makers are employed, and I was pleased to notice the marked attention shewn without undue solicitation to buy, which my fair friends assured me was a strong inducement to purchase there where the pressure was not so obtrusive, even if they did pay a little more for some goods. We called at several shops of less pretence, and met everywhere ready hands and smiling faces. At one mercer's shop of aldermanic proportions, I noted more placid looks and languid movements. On remarking this to my friends, they pointed to a placard on the wall "Open till ten o'clock" there is the cause, and this without another word fully explained it.

We turned on to another street, for time would not allow our ramble to be very much prolonged, and in shop after shop it was but a repetition. Active girls with merry faces, ever ready to shew customers prompt attention in an easy ladylike way, their manners being much superior to those filling similar positions in England. After inquiry fully satisfied me that these female assistants, are better educated and more obliging than any I had elsewhere met with. Many of them occupy good positions in the city musical societies and in church choirs, while some are very creditable artists and do a large amount of painting on Christmas cards, and others do a goodly share of fancy work; they are also from the best families, and of unquestioned respectability. It is pleasant to record that these relaxations are general-

ly encouraged by employers, who know they are much sater with such a class, instead of those who engage in the mores frivolities, and spend their leisure time in an unsatisfactory manner. All, however, are not equally considerate nor so well served; we entered a large and very showy shop where there was a great many in attendance; while my friends were making a few trifling purchases, I looked on and noted. I could not avoid being surprised at the petulant toss-of-the-head-style shown to would-be buyers, but who were repulsed by the rudeness and inattention they met with. This is an old business said my friend, that advertised largely, and depended through such means on a country trade, but they have not very long been in this beautiful building, and are trying to catch a city business. You will notice there is a difference in the class and their manners, the proprietors too know this for they call their assistants shopwomen; other houses use the term sales-ladies, a very proper distinction and one fully warranted by their demeanours.

After a lengthened walk I came to the conclusion that as a body, a more active, cheerful, good looking body of young ladies could never be found than is to be met with in the shops of Toronto. In the majority of cases, health and content seemed beaming on their faces, but—if I could make a distinction—it would be to say, that the greatest puffers had the inferior grade where all was good.

MALVERN.

Good Goods.—The present season has proved to demonstration that the best articles are the most saleable, and the most profitable also. In almost all instances the London manufacturers have sold out the better class goods, whereas the cheap, duffling articles are a drug upon the market, and are now offered at any price, and, indeed, almost given away.

In many instances the demand has been greater than the supply, and very frequently the wholesale merchant has had to decline orders which poured in upon him after a particular stock had been exhausted.

"The Yule-Tide." Although a very large edition of this was published, every copy was sold more than a week ago.

The run has been great upon good fancy goods which make suitable presents at Christmas. It may be positively asserted that in no prior season have so many good fancy articles been sold as during the present season. The run has been especially on high-class albums, ladies' companions, work baskets, writing cases, and bags which combine the faculty of carrying everything in a small space, from the purse in a secure section, to the toilet necessities for a lady, and even her working materials. Some of these are exceptionally useful, and will be appreciated at the festive season of the year.

Books of all kinds, where instruction and amusement are combined, have also sold well, and indeed we may affirm that Bibles, church services, and religious works, such as are sold by the Queen's printers, Eyre and Spottiswoode, have been well appreciated. There are, however, others in this field, and all record a ready sale.

It may be too late this year to offer advice, but provincial stationers in succeeding years may take example from the present, and order at a comparatively early period really "good goods." These will