

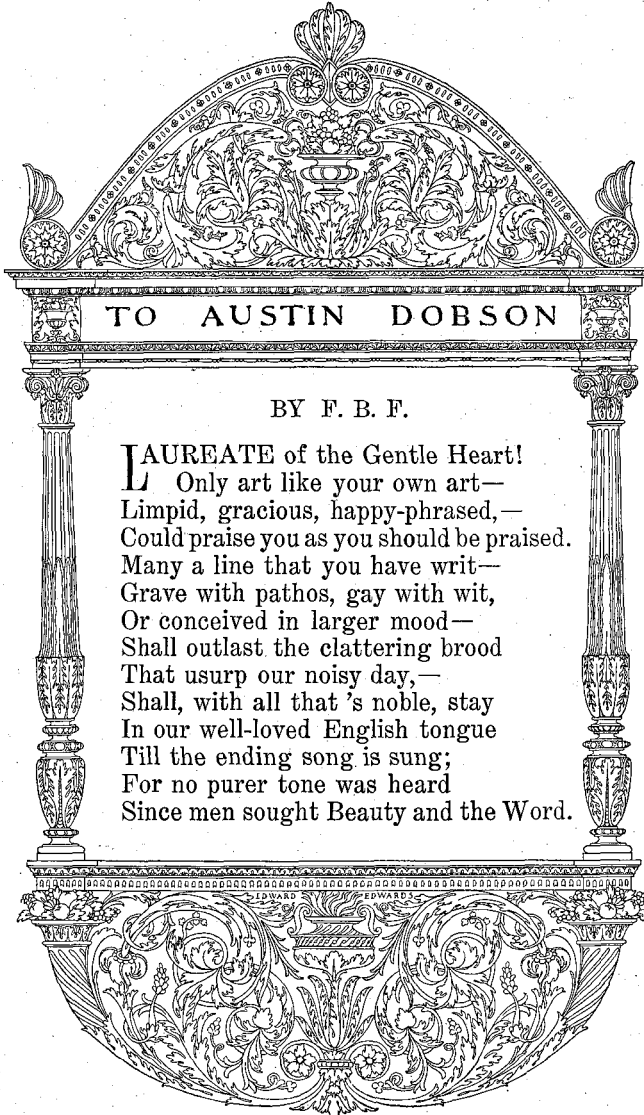
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TO AUSTIN DOBSON

BY F. B. F.

LAUREATE of the Gentle Heart!
Only art like your own art—
Limpid, gracious, happy-phrased,—
Could praise you as you should be praised.
Many a line that you have writ—
Grave with pathos, gay with wit,
Or conceived in larger mood—
Shall outlast the clattering brood
That usurp our noisy day,—
Shall, with all that 's noble, stay
In our well-loved English tongue
Till the ending song is sung;
For no purer tone was heard
Since men sought Beauty and the Word.

SHOPPING IN NEW YORK.

BY LILLIE HAMILTON FRENCH.

ONCE when I was a girl I happened to meet, on an afternoon train, the wife of a certain learned professor who lived near us. She had been to town to buy her new winter coat. When I joined her the coat was in a bundle hidden under the car seat. Something in its cut and its trimmings (fashions do revive) had reminded her of one pronounced becoming in her long-dead youth, now remembered only by herself, and in a moment of excitement she had bought it. She was in a state of absolute dejection, and turning to me, sadly said: "I shall never let my daughters see it. I mean to bury it in the back yard and wear my shabby old one."

In those days I was always running across sufferers like this old lady. Victims of ill-judged enthusiasm in shopping, these women were forever making purchases of which they were sure to repent, the salaries of professors and clergymen in college towns being too small to permit the rectification of any mistakes in cravats or upholstery. The real tragedy of impecuniosity in the country lies just here—in the fact that ill-considered purchases must be retained to afflict a family with their ugliness. There is never any money for a second choice, and the feelings of the shopkeeper are apt to be injured at the mere suggestion of an exchange.

The dweller in town can have no conception of what it means, nor of the hesitations engendered in the villager's mind by the remembrance of previous mistakes. A hopeless sense of timidity arises when there is money to spend and new selections are to be made. You become like a child at a Sunday-school fair, having only a few cents with which to purchase Christmas presents. The importance attached to each decision is enormous, the distress over failures pathetic.

To understand, therefore, what shopping may mean to some of us, you must come to New York, as I did, straight from a country town. In this city no hard-and-fast bargains prevail, and you are never committed to the sum of a morning's indiscretion. If your credit be good and certain other facts have been proved about you, your bill at the end of the month may record the return of almost as many articles as you have de-

cided to retain, and the feelings of the shopkeeper will not be hurt. I was permitted not long since to send back seven yards of a figured silk already paid for; the material was unimpeachable, but I had found it unbecoming.

In order to be able to return those articles which you do not like, it is only necessary that your relations with large establishments be placed upon a substantial basis; and by a substantial basis I do not mean so much one implying the possession of enormous wealth as one implying that of character and financial standing—the financial standing that implies a prompt payment of debts and the character that makes one unwilling to order what he cannot afford.

The New York shopkeeper knows more about the shopper than she suspects. When you have been discovered to be no respecter of a shopkeeper's possessions—to be careless in their handling, or negligent in their care, the news travels with astonishing rapidity. The shop-girl may be as polite, the man behind the counter as courteous, but if your habit is to abuse or injure or in any way mar the things which have been left at your house overnight, they know all about it and will in some way protect the interests of their employer. Again, if you do not pay for what you purchase, they know it. In every store there is always kept a printed record in which your name is entered. Sometimes this record appears in book form, bearing on its title-page the imprint of a company whose business it is to investigate the responsibilities of every one having accounts, large or small, to settle. Sometimes this printed record is supplemented by those which particular stores undertake for themselves, keeping them now in large envelopes, now on cards indexed like those in a public library. Certain men have it as their special work to keep these records in order, adding to them or subtracting from them. They read the newspapers, the legal reports, and the trade journals, and if any judgments have appeared against you, entries are accordingly made. If you are a prey to domestic infelicities, with no private resources of your own, and your husband makes no settlements or re-