

SEEING THINGS IN LONDON

Easy Ways of Spending Time and Money
---Political Progress---American Customs Abroad

By Robert J. Burdette

London, July 20.—First thing you wonder at in London is how cheap everything is! You can get so many things for a penny. In fact you can get everything for a penny. Being an American, when you lay down six pence, which is first cousin—two cents older—than a dime, for a penny paper, which the newsboy, who is any where from twenty-five to ninety years old, informs you is a "piper," you walk away without your change, which he calls "chynge." That is, if you wait for it, he does. But if you walk away, he calls it the eternal, everlasting, ubiquitous, irritating English "Thank you!" with an indecipherable rising inflection on the "you." For a few days you spend pennies like a duke in the novels of the type so dear, in America, to the heart of what is known in the best of our own society as the "sinking yral." But the second girl's duke spends pennies thus lavishly only in the novel. After a day or two you go to the bank—pronounced, by the Bus conductor, "bank"—with your letter credit and a frown like a villain's in the third act. You haven't spent thing but pennies, but your money all gone. Little by little it dawns on you that while you have spent thing but pennies, you have spent time incessantly, all day long, every minute, for everything you saw, did, or looked at or asked for. That's all, one thing, if you are old as I am, the English penny is an honest disc of copper just the size of the old-time American cent which was current money of the merchant when your dad was a boy, and was a real William Jennings Bryan cent, with a cent's worth of copper in it, by fair weight. It doesn't occur to you, until you sit down and consider while you wait in the bank, that the English penny is no American cent. And, it is worth remembering. It is like everything else English, honest as its name. For instance, as the boy and I passed a barber shop, I observed that one could be neatly shaved for four pence. Now, I had never had a four-cent shave in my life. How foolish to shave one's self when one could have a valet to shave one for four cents. So I said to the boy, "Go to; I will have a four-cent shave." And the boy said, "Go to, for I likewise will chance it." He isn't the kind of a boy to see his old father rush madly into unknown perils and not stand by him. So he went in, as an unemployed man administered that he called a "shave." About the time you get down on the Plaza end of Spring street. Two days under the sign and tips on the races for one penny. Then he wanted to know "if I wanted my face washed." Cert. Certainly. Then, "Did I want my hair combed?" Cert. Penny. "Did I want my coat brushed?" Naturally. Penny. "Did I want something antiseptic and cooling, such as bay rum, rubbed on my face?" Course. Penny. Until, by the time one got out of the shop, one had had, and paid for, a fifteen-cent shave. That's all. Things in Europe look cheap, until you come to pay for them. Then they cost coin. In fact, if memory serves me correctly, I paid for the article we bought. When we paid for the wrapping paper, and for the string, then for each knot the salesman tied in it. An extra for little loop wherewith to hang it on your finger. And in Syria, the merchant charged us broker's commission for making change. Things don't cost so much at first price, but every last thing, thread, knot, and soap, about them costs something.

and Mr. Woolcott and Mr. Hellman and George Reid and the rest of the men in the banks at home to remember what the Bank of England thinks of my name, when they get into a pinch, or rather, when I do. That concerns me the most.
A Correct Answer.
One thing I would like to know about the Bank of England notes. And that is why a bank clerk, when you indorse the note for him and ask him to give you change for it, tears off a little corner of it. I don't believe he knows why, but he always does it. The only one I ever asked to give me a reason for it said he didn't know.
Clean Money.
You never handle any dirty Bank of England notes. As soon as one is paid into the bank it is canceled and stored away, and a new one issued. A note may leave the bank in the morning, fresh from the printing press, and returning, be canceled before the close of banking hours. They are printed on white paper about the size of commercial note paper—letter paper I mean. And I never saw one that wasn't white and clean. When an American teller thinks of the filthy old bundles of smelly and contagious that he has to handle, it's enough to make him wish he was an Englishman, in spite of the fact that they are so slow over here. They will put a bank note into cold storage after using it twenty-four hours and make a new one, rather than handle the old stuff a second time. Slow system, isn't it? This slow old bank issues about 50,000 new notes every day, the value thereof ranging from \$25 to \$5000. The bank building is one story, irregular in shape, covers an area of four acres, and there is not a window in the outer walls. All the paper money is printed in the building. The canceled notes are kept for five years in the "Old Note Office," in case there should arise some necessity for using any of them in a law suit. Every week, the notes canceled in the corresponding week of five years ago are burned in a furnace specially constructed for that purpose. So I may yet have to pay that note indorsed so readily and thoughtlessly this morning. Well, I shan't worry. It won't be the first time I've been stung. Not by a furnace full. I do not feel at all uneasy, but I do hope war won't break out between the United States and England for six years to come, any how.

Some Things.
You know how slow we all know that England, and especially London, is, compared with our American progressiveness. I have thought of that so many times riding on the top of the electric car. All trolley cars—which we English call "electric trams" are fitted with the roof garden, or upper deck. It is the favorite place for all people, save in rainy weather. If the English were not so slow they would catch onto the American idea of putting "hanging straps" inside the cars, so that the passengers could be driven into the car with a mallet, and the extra seventy-five could be compelled to hang on the swaying straps and stand on the feet of the sitting members. This is no doubt much better than giving every passenger a comfortable seat as they do in slow old England. And electric buses—they are as common in slow old London as are the antiques that are drawn by horses in our own live and wide-awake and up-to-date towns, to say nothing of Chicago and New York. We ought to send some missionaries over to London. Then they could come back and teach us how to do some things.

And Others.
And then again, some things are odd. For instance this morning I went into the postoffice and bought some stamps. I tendered in payment a Bank of England note—a five pound note. My month's salary.
The obliging clerk handed me a pen and asked me to indorse the note with my name and residence. I never felt so "shy" in my life. That I should be asked to indorse the paper of the Bank of England! I did it, very promptly. Anything to oblige a friend in need. So long as my credit is good in the markets of the world, the paper of the Bank of England shall not be shamed on the streets. I suppose, with all the enormous expenses of such a country as this, the government has to have a little help from its friends once in a while when money is tight. I'm not a bit worried about it, you know. I think I will send word around to the bank that I can go on their paper for fifty, if they don't want it too long. I reckon when that note of mine got back to the bank, the governor looked at it longingly and said, "I wish we could get that man's name on our paper for \$475." I want Mr. Mead,

with great black-letter placards stuck up on the walls, informing the guests that the waiters are forbidden to receive "gratuities," and requesting the patrons not to offer "tips." This in London. Well, if the English people can carry this reform through, and lead the world to follow their example, "Magna Charta" will take second place in the historical running. There will be hope of salvation even for the Pullman sleeping-car company. Which is impossible. This reformation is not merely an English necessity. The tipping nuisance is much worse in the United States. A "penny" doesn't go with the gentleman from the North of Ireland or South Carolina or Darmstadt who brings you soup with his thumb in it. A quarter or nothing. That is a shilling. Moreover, if you go away without tipping the London waiter, he looks hurt. Possibly, if he has been badly trained, indignant. If he doesn't care for his job, he may say something after you that you can hear. The same man in America will say or do something insolently, as though you had not paid your bill. Limitations are always exaggerations of the original, especially when a fault is imitated. I suppose that is one reason why the tipping custom is so much more irritating in America than it is abroad. It is natural over here. It is in the atmosphere. People are born to it. It has, indeed, a noble pedigree. It is a lineal descendant of "largesse," which the noble lord, having wronged by the millions from his subjects, used to distribute a handful at a time, once every fifteen or twenty years. Small handfuls and only a few of them. It was looked upon as noble beyond all measure. When an American does much the same thing, and then scatters his amassed millions over the country in colleges and libraries, a howl of "tainted money!" goes up from everybody who doesn't get any of it; from everyone who is too old to go to college, or too stupid to pass the entrance examinations, or who hates to read. Our ancestors called it "largesse." We call it "graft." Which is much the same thing, only different. The same difference there is between "Guillaume" and "Bill." I think the latter appellation, in both instances, is the honest-er. If you hear it, or see it in print, without seeing the man, you may be a little bit uncertain as to the sex of "Guillaume," and it does sound something like a new kind of sauce for the fish. But you're dead certain about "Bill." And if we called a grafter a "thief," I think we would deal more promptly and more justly with his offenses. "Graft" is one of the bits of American slang, by the way, that is on the road to take its place in the best English society. You can hear it, not infrequently, in the debates in the House of Commons. And possibly, nay, probably—I think, indeed, certainly—in the House of Lords. It has made its appearance in the investigation of the "army stores" scandal. Of this inquiry I need mention but one item to make the whole matter clear and plain as daylight to the American mind. In the sale of "surplus stores" during the war in South Africa—that is much the same, I understand, as "condemned stores" in our army affairs—certain large quantities of "surplus coats" were sold to a contractor at seven shillings per. And the next day—well, say the following week—the same lot was bought back from the same man for army use at eleven shillings per.

One place anywhere in old England you do get your full money's worth. That is in any good family hotel. Writing ahead, our rooms were already prepared for us in London, so we came straight from the train to our hotel, down in the midst of things. When the English landlady has your rooms ready, they are ready. The smallest details for your comfort have been anticipated. Servants in bewildering number, trained to the perfection of ready courtesy, wait on you so deftly you don't know that you are being cared for. The rooms are furnished in homey way. Good pictures—not advertising chromes—on the walls. Old furniture that gladdens the artistic eye and "breathes comfort." Breakfasts, luncheons, teas, dinners, and suppers at any and all unheard-of and impossible hours you can suggest, and any old where you want them. You smile at the absence of the electric bell, but you quit smiling when, before the tinkling of the old-fashioned jangler has ceased to vibrate, a servant stands waiting for your order with lips framed for the everywhere and-all-the-time English "Thank you!" The more intimately you know English people and English ways, the better you like them. They have the art of being comfortable to perfection—in everything except their clothes. And the men will wear frock coats and silk hats—"hats of the highest"—to business, and on the hottest days. If only they could teach the world to dress as comfortably as they themselves live, what a boon it would be. I think I can see signs of reform in the matter of the high hat. The "bus drivers are beginning to discard them, even on the Sabbath day. That is a hopeful indication. Hitherto the "high" of "Halfred" on his "bus seat, has been as sacredly a part of the general "London General's" outfit, as the advertisements of various foods, milks, and things which cover, obliterate, deface and hide names which indicate the route and destination of the omnibus. This you ascertain by getting on all the wrong buses in succession until you find the last one, the right one. By which time you have arrived, so it is all right after all. Or, you can ask a policeman in the first place. And if there is anything about London a London Bob doesn't know, I haven't found it out.

The Tipping Nuisance.
To get back to matters financial, as this seems to be a sort of monetary letter, there is one thing now in London to my eyes. And that is a system of restaurants scattered over the town, here and there, thick as the "surprising coffee" places at home, and Mr. Woolcott and Mr. Hellman and George Reid and the rest of the men in the banks at home to remember what the Bank of England thinks of my name, when they get into a pinch, or rather, when I do. That concerns me the most.
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Say, the way these English cousins of ours are picking up good old American customs they'll be electing their Kings in another generation. Beats everything how rapidly the world is becoming civilized. There wasn't a quartermaster in the Spanish war who could have done anything neater than that. Why, that isn't business. That's clean statesmanship. An Englishman who can do that at home could buy his way into the United States senate if he'd come over to the Home of the Brave. It gives a "Freeman" a very comfortable feeling, when he is traveling abroad, to know that his neighbors are kept so busy cleaning their own chimneys that they have no time to bring complaint against him under the "smoke ordinance." When we finally do get together and begin the reformation of this old world, there's no use of talking about "beginning at Jerusalem." It's got to be a Round Robin movement.—Robert J. Burdette, in Los Angeles Times.

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