



Gone To The Shops: Shopping In Victorian England (Victorian Life and Times)

Kelley Graham

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When Adam Smith wrote in 1776 that England was a nation of shopkeepers, he meant that commerce was a major factor in political decisions. Smith's observation was even more on-target for Victorian England: shopkeepers, shops, and shopping were a vital part of life. Those Victorians with resources could shop often and had many choices. Industrialization and their imperial connections gave them an almost unprecedented array of goods. Even the poor and working classes had more to eat and more to spend as the century progressed. Here, Graham explores the world of Victorian shops and shopping in colorful detail. She offers information on the types of shops and goods they offered, the people who owned and operated them, those who frequented them, and the contribution of shops and shopping to the Victorian lifestyle and economy.

Shopping in Victorian England reached a level of importance not wholly appreciated even by Victorians themselves. New types of shops appeared, offering an expanding array of goods inventively packaged and displayed for an expanding group of shoppers. As the shops grew, so did the activity — part excursion for provisions, part entertainment. Women shopped most often, but men, too, had their shops. Victorians could, by the end of the 19th century, shop without even leaving their homes: orders could be placed by mail, telegraph, or telephone. Shops catered to all classes — the rich, the poor, and the in-betweens.

This book will help modern readers envision the Victorian shopping experience by taking them inside the shops and up to the counters. Readers will learn how the shop was organized, what services and goods were available, and how goods made their way from the shop to the home. Graham's compelling account provides a vivid glimpse into a vital—but largely unappreciated— aspect of Victorian life.

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