

## BOOK FIVE.

### A HISTORY OF THE WANAMAKER STORE IN JUBILEE YEAR, 1911.

#### CHAPTER I.

THE fiftieth year of business in the Wanamaker Store was marked by the completion in Philadelphia of the new building, which offers many new facilities for the service of the public. Throughout the twelvemonth, as the available space in the Store increased, various sections flowered into greater usefulness, and there were several entirely new departures. In this respect it was the most notable year of the Store's life.

Earliest in the 1911 calendar came the inauguration of a whole new department—a Store within a Store, indeed—the New Kind of Clothing Store, on the Subway Floor, which was formally opened to the public on January 3, the first business day of the year. This new store sprang at once into popularity. Its reason for being was the universal and insistent need of the right sort of low-priced merchandise. No arbitrary whim called it into existence. It came because it had to come. People found many places where they could buy reliable merchandise; many other places where they could pay low prices; but where to combine those two, where to make a modest purse command indubitably good quality and accurate styles—that was the need that remained to be filled.

The task of the Wanamaker Store, then, was to provide a modification of the usual "basement bargain department," offering goods whose quality and style should

be right, and the price as low as reliable merchandise could be sold for. Add to these requisites a capable, enthusiastic force of salespeople, attractive methods of arranging the merchandise, a pleasant, light, well-ventilated location—and you have this New Kind of Clothing Store, originated by Wanamaker's.

People were not slow to realize the aims of this new Subway Store, and its capacity for service. They learned soon that it was not designed to sell "trash" or shoddy goods, nor to dispose of odds and ends of merchandise from other sections of the main store. On the contrary, whatever it sold was quite good in its way—durable merchandise of trustworthy style and design; not so fine, of course, as corresponding goods sold in the main store—indeed, making no pretense to being "just as good," because frankly made in a less expensive way. Here were to be found just as comprehensive stocks as could be desired, every article being represented in all sizes and many prices—and always in a generous range of styles.

Moreover, instead of attempting to sell in the Subway Store every kind of goods found in the Main Store—with the consequent risk of not treating any of them adequately—the classes of goods represented were strictly limited so as to give each one a fair showing. In general the Subway Store confines itself to ready-to-wear clothing and underwear for men, women and children, millinery, and household linens. To these the whole Market Street division of the Subway Floor is devoted, and unusual emphasis is laid on displaying all goods conveniently, with no crowding. The Store is pleasant, airy and light, with none of the stuffy, congested effect of the average basement store.

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Characteristic of quite a different function of the Wanamaker business are the Little Gray Salons, opened

also during this year 1911. They are designed for the convenience of women to whom luxury, elegance and exclusiveness appeal first of all, whose gowns, hats and wraps must be the last word in fashion, the acme of beauty and taste. To such a woman the price of goods is not the primary consideration. Naturally, she does not want to be charged unfairly, and—other things being equal—she will very wisely buy where she pays least. But it is the "other things" that she looks for chiefly. That Paris is her shopping Paradise is because there she finds the chic, the interesting, the individual; there she can drop into charming and cosy little shops, artistic in every detail, secluded, quiet and leisurely in their air; there she is served by women whose taste and intelligence she can trust as her own.

It was for the Wanamaker Store to introduce these elements first on this side of the water, for in the Little Gray Salons the shops of the Rue de la Paix find their counterpart. A series of delightful rooms annexed to the various regular sections which sell women's apparel, they offer the possibility of selecting purchases under the most ideal conditions of comfort, privacy and artistic atmosphere. They are thoroughly French in their tone, being furnished, finished and mirrored like the best Parisian shops. They are well-lighted by real daylight from wide windows, and for the woman selecting an evening gown there is one room especially arranged with a miniature stage, electrically lighted and planned to display such gowns in their natural *milieu*.

In the Salons of Women's Outer Apparel are shown street and afternoon gowns, evening costumes, suits and coats, evening wraps, riding habits, and mourning wear. Other Salons are devoted to women's custom-made garments, imported French millinery—the hats of Madame Marcelle Demay being shown in a room by themselves

—mourning millinery, luxurious furs, corsets, Paris lingerie, and infants' clothing and accessories.

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A beautiful mid-Spring Wednesday saw the inauguration of another new part of the Wanamaker service—the Great Crystal Tea Room and adjoining Salons on the Eighth Floor. "A delightful place of rendezvous, recreation and refreshment—a series of superb rooms comprising the new Wanamaker Dining Service"—thus it was announced in the advertisements of April 5. Nearly the whole of the Eighth Floor is given up to this series, and it is as remarkable for its architectural beauty as for its magnificent and unusual capacity for serving diners. Immense throngs throughout the first few weeks attested to the public interest and admiration, and many persons took advantage of the services of special guides to go through all the various Dining Rooms, the Public Comfort Rooms, the Rendezvous, and the great modern kitchens in the central part of the building.

The impressions of the public were voiced in such newspaper descriptions as these following—appearing the day after the Tea Room was opened:

"Situated on the Eighth Floor and commanding a splendid view of the city and of the Delaware River from the Pennsylvania Railroad Bridge above to the League Island Navy Yards below, the new department occupies the whole of the Chestnut Street and the Central Divisions of the floor—a total area of 33,000 square feet. A detailed list of the various rooms it comprises—the Great Crystal Tea Room, the Imperial Blue Room, the Coronation Red Room, the Golden Jubilee Room, the French Banquet Salon, the private Mirror Room, the Rendezvous and Public Comfort Rooms, and the extensive modern kitchens—the detailing of such an array of departments in this series conveys some idea of its proportions.



Golden Jubilee Room—Great Crystal Tea Room—  
Mirror Room



Imperial Blue Room—French Banquet Salon—Crystal  
Tea Room, Another View

"The largest section is the Great Crystal Tea Room, the largest dining-room in Philadelphia, and one of the largest in the world. Alone it covers a floor area of 22,000 square feet, with a uniform height of 20 feet. The present seating arrangements easily accommodate 1,400 diners. Lighting facilities are excellent, and the ventilating system provides a supply of air equal to 1,250,000 cubic feet an hour. The general treatment of the room is Renaissance, in many respects modeled after the famous tea room in the house of Robert Morris, the financier of the Revolution, at Sixth and High Streets.

"The woodwork is oak, in Circassian brown finish, with white walls. The flooring is oak parquetry, highly polished. The Room takes its name from the remarkable lighting plan: immense numbers of glass reflecting electroliers of a new sort are suspended from the walls outside the double row of massive columns flanking the main portion of the hall, as well as over that portion. When all these are lighted the brilliant effect of the hanging crystals is simply indescribable."

"Elegance, spaciousness, spotless white in contrast with the deep rich brown tints of towering oaken columns, refinement, and unusual artistic value—these characterize the Crystal Tea Room. Yet withal, there is nothing garish in the effect, but a permeating sense of simple comfort and homelike attraction.

"The men's section on the East of the Tea Room is in three parts—the Coronation Red Room, the Imperial Blue Room, and the Golden Jubilee Room. The first two are named for the coronation of King George, and the last for the Golden Jubilee of the Wanamaker Store. These rooms are art gems. The Golden Jubilee Room is in the early English style of architecture, with high-paneled wainscoting and heavy beam ceiling, the wood being in golden brown finish. The Coronation Red Room and Imperial Blue Room have circular paneled ceilings. These will be utilized on occasions for private dinners.

"Most ornate of all the rooms are those on the West of the Tea Room—the Banquet Salon and the Mirror Room, both of them resplendent and magnificent examples of the highly decorated and artificial types which they represent. The Banquet Salon, accommodating three hundred, is in Louis XVI style, finished in soft gray, special attention being given to the coloring, furniture, dishes and other appurtenances. A cameo-like room is that called the Mirror Room, where Louis XV types prevail; here small private luncheons are served.

"The table cloths and napkins in all these dining rooms are of double satin damask in effective designs, imported from Scotland; they are hand-hemmed by deft French workers. To care for this linen a special laundry has been provided, with drier, electric irons and gas stoves. The silverware is of Colonial design with thread border, and each piece is stamped with a fac-simile of the Wanamaker Store. French china of dainty pattern is used.

"The big modern kitchen system designed to supply these dining-rooms, can serve 10,000 persons at once, and is eloquent of that highly specialized and developed product of modern business which we call the 'department store.' It is an extensive affair, and the most modern and convenient that expert knowledge can plan. The kitchens are always open to visitors, and under the direction of guides they reveal a wonderful assemblage of late and improved devices for the saving of time and labor, and for the quick and effective preparation of all kinds of food. There is ample equipment for the serving of 10,000 oysters, and the big ovens will roast 75 turkeys at once. There are rows of large gas ranges, and the mammoth refrigerators are built on a plan that dispenses with the use of ice and its inconveniences. The kitchen is also equipped with numerous baths and lockers for the use of its employés."

"On the West side of the central court, in the

central division, and also adjacent to the Tea Room, are the Rendezvous and Public Comfort Rooms, where customers may meet each other or pass away spare time. The Rendezvous offers checking conveniences, telephone service, newspapers and magazines, time tables, and store guides, while the other rooms constitute a series representative of the best modern German arts and crafts. The unique and beautiful furnishings and decorations of these rooms were shown first at the Louisiana Exposition at St. Louis in 1904, and at its close were purchased by the Wanamaker Store. The exhibit is of great educational value as well as serving to furnish delightful and comfortable rest rooms."

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The approach of the Christmas season each year brings new and larger problems to both merchant and shoppers, and it was with the aim of meeting these that the Wanamaker Store organized the Christmas Headquarters. This departure was an entire innovation in the mercantile world—another example of the Wanamaker method of being the first to introduce a "better way to do things."

The Headquarters were opened late in November, on the Eighth Floor, in the Rendezvous near the Tea Room. Customers were invited to take there all problems related to choosing, buying or sending gifts, the services of the Headquarters staff being offered free of any charge. Classified lists of gifts appropriate for various sorts of people and at graduated prices were printed for distribution, and in other ways suggestions were made to those who were in doubt about what kind of gifts to buy. There were a number of guides always on hand to accompany shoppers about the Store, to facilitate and expedite purchases, and in every way to lubricate the wheels of gift-buying. These guides made themselves familiar with the stocks throughout the Store, so as to

be able to offer suggestions intelligently and judiciously when these were wanted. They were also at the service of people who wished merely to go around the Store, and see its interesting points, without any idea of buying. Many took advantage of this privilege.

After purchases were made they could be brought back to the Headquarters for wrapping, if desired, and this applied not alone to gifts bought in the Store, but to any and all that had to be wrapped or sent away, whether made at home, purchased elsewhere, or bought in the Store. No discrimination was made—no questions asked.

At a counter in the Rendezvous customers could buy ribbon, tissue paper, seals, other small decorations, and various sorts of small gifts. Or without these "trimmings" the gifts could be daintily wrapped and tied with red ribbon (free) at the mailing counter. Here were other members of the Headquarters service ready to wrap, address and weigh, to state mailing or express costs, and to ship parcels direct from there. Lists of mail steamer sailings were posted, and customers could be informed just how many days in advance they must start packages for foreign parts.

Not the least inviting feature of this service was the fact that customers who found themselves unable to come in and do their Christmas buying in person, could write or telephone their wishes to this staff, and have their directions carried out as they themselves would do it. Several members of the staff were kept constantly busy at just this work, seeing to the choosing, buying, wrapping and mailing of hundreds of gifts; the gifts being wrapped and tied as attractively as if they had been despatched from the sender's own hands.

Such a thorough and timely service could not help advertising itself through the people whom it daily helped, and during December the Headquarters were

always crowded. The staff were called upon sometimes in the most unexpected ways, to render help that had not been dreamed of in the original plan. For example, one woman wished to send some article of clothing as a gift to a college classmate who is now a missionary in Teheran, Persia, but she did not know what sort of climate that city has—should she send a pretty lingerie blouse, or would a serviceable and warm flannel waist be better? The proper machinery was set in motion to ascertain facts about Persian climate, with the resulting purchase of a smart-looking shirtwaist of wash silk, with a lace frill, collar and a pair of sleeve-links. These were then daintily boxed and duly mailed at the proper date—and were received "on Christmas Day in the morning," so the purchaser reported in late January.

Yet another Philadelphia woman came in with a request that "sounds absurdly impossible," she smilingly deprecated. "I greatly wish to send some flowers at Christmas to my aunt who is spending the winter in Cairo, Egypt. Could it be arranged?" It could. Through the Paris branch of the Store the order was passed on to a Cairo florist, along with the customer's personal card, and on Christmas Day a box of lovely fresh flowers came to her aunt's hotel.

Another time it was a big breezy man-in-a-hurry, with just two hours to spare before taking his train home to Texas. "How many Christmas gifts can you help me buy in that time?" he asked. "There are 17 people in my relationship to buy for, and whatever I get here I can ship down direct." In those two hours he was rushed merrily over the whole big Store, choosing here, consulting there, until train time found him with all his seventeen beneficiaries provided for satisfactorily—and a highly pleased man got on that Southern train. "I never had such a good time shopping before—I would have been helpless trying it alone!"

Yet again, here is an old lady, with a big, rich fruit cake made many months ago to send to her son who is a consul in a Chinese port. She doesn't know how to get it to him—could it be done safely? Like so many of these requests it had an appealingly sentimental quality that drew forth the best efforts of the staff. And delivered that cake was—to a proud and happy son, on the 24th of December, safe and sound.

## CHAPTER II.

**K**EEPING pace with their record for progress, the Wanamaker Stores became on Monday, May 22, 1911, the first great stores in the world to be equipped as official wireless telegraph stations. The public announcement of this achievement was made thus, in the newspapers of May 20:

"New York and Philadelphia Linked to the Ships at Sea Via Wanamaker Wireless.

"Official public stations in both the New York and the Philadelphia Stores will be open for business Monday morning for the reception of messages to ships at sea and to all points covered by the Marconi Wireless System in foreign countries.

"The stations bring New York even closer to Philadelphia through the Wanamaker Store, but they will not be open for public business between the two cities, that service being covered by the land wires and telephones already installed in both buildings."

For some days prior to this announcement experimental messages were being flashed, among them this one to Mayor Gaynor of New York, through the New York Store:

"May 19, 1911.

"HON. WILLIAM J. GAYNOR,

*Mayor of New York.*

"Sincere greeting and congratulations on completion of enterprise which gives the Wanamaker Wireless as one more tie for service and friendship to unite our cities.

"(Signed) JOHN E. REYBURN,  
*Mayor of Philadelphia.*"