

THE HOUSE OF WINDOWS

little distance, one might have imagined a garden there. Many a passer-by had woven romance about this strangely appearing house, and even in unromantic Brook Street it had earned for itself the name of the "House of Windows." So, in the most unlikely places, do the most unlikely people feel the influence of the unusual and with groping fingers touch the fringes of the skirts of fancy.

Celia never saw the sun upon the House of Windows without a stirring which was almost pain. It looked so like some fairy palace; she knew it so well for what it was. For as one came nearer all the glamour faded; the illusion was ruthlessly destroyed. Not one whit better than its neighbours was the House of Windows. Better? Rather worse, indeed, for it was older, dirtier, more unkempt than they. That it survived at all was due to its being part of an estate which could not be disposed of until the coming of age of a young heir. It had been allowed to stand, therefore, growing a little dingier, a little more out of repair, a little more at odds with its surroundings every year.

The growing change was so gradual that it was almost imperceptible. One was used to a thing before one noticed it, and when one's attention was drawn to it one felt that it had always been like that. To be sure, Celia had observed that the window curtains displayed behind the glass became steadily poorer in quality and showed a growing tendency to smuttiness as tenant succeeded tenant. She noticed that these tenants, when she met them on the stairs, grew constantly more down-at-heel and untidy of head, but the real significance of such metamorphoses is not always apparent to those who live in daily contact with them.

Everybody knew that the Misses Brown were the