

THE HOUSE OF WINDOWS

pale, she stooped, she looked distressingly tired! Her usual prim uprightness had suffered some strange eclipse; even her hair seemed faded, and the grey showed plainly in the brown. It was evident to a less interested person than the floor-walker that Miss Brown was "going off" in looks, and no one knew better than he how fatal such a going off might be. Customers like to be served by bright-looking girls. They resent the very appearance of illness.

"If she doesn't spruce up after her holiday," thought Mr. Page, "she'll have to be transferred to mantles or something." Then, with a shake of his head, "But I'm afraid she hasn't any figure for mantles, poor girl, and no aptitude either, most likely. She has been in the ribbons a long time."

A very long time it seemed to Celia Brown—all her life almost! The years before she had entered Angers' seemed as if they must have belonged to the life of another person. And yet, how quickly the time had gone! Something in the weariness she felt just now made her remember with sudden acuteness her first week behind the ribbon counter, when the long strain of standing had racked her nerves and muscles with strange pain. The girls had been kind, they had told her she would get over it, and she had got over it; that phase had passed. She had learned to stand all day without fainting at night, and she had grown used to being tired. From a new-girl she had become a smart clerk, and then a responsible sales-lady, and then head of the ribbon department. This she had remained, because there was really no further promotion for her, and the work was comparatively light.

She often encouraged herself with thoughts of its comparative lightness, and to-night, as she trudged