

"How long have you been clerking?"

"Three years."

From 12:30 till 3 P. M. I was so busy I didn't have time to think. Every woman wanted to be waited on at once, and as soon as I put one bill of goods in the railroad basket the floor-walker clapped his hands and hustled me off to another. The result was I got flurried and couldn't tell the woman who had bought buttons and given me 25 cents from the one to whom the handkerchiefs at 17 cents even belonged. I couldn't work the baskets very well and for a time I had to hold the steel rim between my teeth while I put the check and change in the leather box in order to keep the basket from flying up above my head. It was like drawing a bucket of water out of a country well to get the goods up to the gallery, and almost as hard to pull the package and change down again. Little boys had charge of this part of the business, but they were neither numerous nor expeditious. and a great amount of time intervened between a sale and the receipt of the money and parcel, in consequence of which the customers grew impatient and scolded the clerks and the clerks looked indifferent and said nothing. I pasted the raw skin on my hands that the ropes had worn to the quick and apologized, but neither availed much. I found the women customers insolent, overbearing, inconsiderate and very curt. But I bore with them, flattered them, humored them, tossed whole boxes of goods on the counter for their inspection, and literally forced them to buy. Of the dozens and dozens of women I approached with my "something I can show you" only two declined my services with thanks. The average woman told me she had been waited on, the fashionable dame said "no," and the ultras didn't answer at all.

At three o'clock I was so tired that I was tempted to go home. My *ruche* had wilted to a mere thread, my hands were black from handling the rope and the stock, there was not a

clean spot on my handkerchief in which to wipe my perspiring face, and I had no place to sit and nothing to lean against. All the girls wore aprons with a large pocket in which they carried their check-book. I had no apron and no pocket large enough for the thick book. For a time I kept the clumsy volume on one of my seven counters, but the walker told me he had "caught on" and commanded me under penalty not to leave it lying there. The only place I could carry it was up under the front of my *basque* and up it was squeezed. Now that *basque* fits me within an inch of respiration, and whenever I squeezed the book up I had to gasp for breath. If I hadn't taken it out as often as I did there is no telling how I should have survived. As it was I was almost ready to shut myself up like a jack-knife from the pain in my chest.

And my feet! How they swelled. I expected every minute to see the buttons of my boots fly off and the uppers go to pieces. I stooped to look at them and a girl came and sympathized with me.

"It's too bad you're not in stock," she said, "you could slip your feet out of your shoes. That's the way the girls do behind the counter, but of course you can't do that out here on the floor. But you'll get used to it. My feet swelled awful the first two weeks, but now I don't notice them at all. Lots of the girls wear slippers behind the counter." I took particular pains to investigate, and counted nine girls with one foot slipped out of their shoes. One girl stood in her stocking feet and ever so many had on one slipper or a pair of old shoes.

Mr. P— treated me very nicely. Besides giving me a free lunch he gave me a white poppy which I wore in my corsage all afternoon and he told me I was getting on finely. He showed me some of the goods he was particularly anxious to sell off and said I would get a "p. m." on each sale. Inasmuch as I had no other prospect prior to September twelfth, I set to work and sold a seventy-five cent imitation Turkish