

might be able to do something with what are mysteriously known as "the books"; but it was discovered that the effort caused Bob Sockitt's head to ache acutely, and that in most instances the totals were wrong. So that now Bob Sockitt comes and goes as he will, and is only useful in a vague sense when Mrs. Sockitt is obliged to fall back upon him, in a fashion of speaking, as someone to whom she can appeal in a last extremity in regard to any matter of business. "I must certainly speak to Mr. Sockitt about it," has a terrifying effect on occasion with people who do not know Bob Sockitt intimately.

The business side of the establishment is completed by Fanny—most cheerful maid-of-all-work (although she would not admit the title in the least as being applicable to herself)—and by Joseph, a youth who was originally designed for a page in some ambitious scheme that had birth in the brain of Mrs. Sockitt, but who has degenerated in the course of years into a hard-worked, shabby young man, who answers bells and opens the door, and, in an intensity of anxiety to do his best, is for ever to be found breathing hard over the polishing of boots or silver, or over the heads or necks of those upon whom he waits at table.

So in that quiet little picture you have a vision of Sockitt's—just as in some painted picture you might have a vision of some harbour to which all sorts of ships might come to their moorings for a little time, or might slip them and drift away again into the larger sea of the world. You may imagine Mrs. Sockitt waiting for all and sundry (provided always that references were satisfactory) and ready to receive them, and to let them go again when the time came for them to up-anchor and sail away out of her sight.