

holds itself select, in that it has a private garden in the centre of it, with a very old and dejected-looking tree at one end, surrounded by a battered wooden seat ; and with a worn grass plot extending down the length of it. There is a fiction in Gridley Square that at one time each of the houses had a key, which let the inhabitants jealously enough into this garden, and kept the surrounding commonplace neighbourhood staring in enviously through the railings. But the last key was lost ever so many years ago ; and now the rusty gate swings backwards and forwards on its hinges, and lets in anyone.

Sockitt's, on the north side, has always contrived to hold its own. There are other scandalous boarding-houses that have from time to time known the advent of brokers' men ; boarding-houses that have changed hands, while the original proprietors have drifted out into the world to find some other means of livelihood. But Sockitt's, in that sense, has always been Sockitt's—the kind of house that pays its way, and gets along, even with difficulties. Mrs. Sockitt, in her arm-chair in her own little private room at the end of the hall, might in some moment of expansion let you into a few secrets concerning good seasons and bad, and satisfactory boarders and unsatisfactory ones ; but save perhaps to Sockitt, mumbling over a pipe late at night, she prefers to be silent. And even Sockitt doesn't know everything.

Mrs. Sockitt is a martyr to an ever-increasing weight. She takes the matter good-humouredly enough, and with some philosophy, as she takes most things ; and when you look at her you see, dimmed and blurred, the blunted outlines of what must have been at one time a rather pretty woman. Looking at