

and a big barn; that the main street was a ploughed track through stiff clay, which half a day's rain converted into liquid mud, from which Jack more than once extricated me *vi et armis*, leaving on one occasion a shoe behind, which he had afterwards difficulty in finding, fishing for it with a stick and hauling it up by the lace. A woeful sight! The other streets existed only on paper, and were parts of grassy paddocks; their course I was never able to trace.

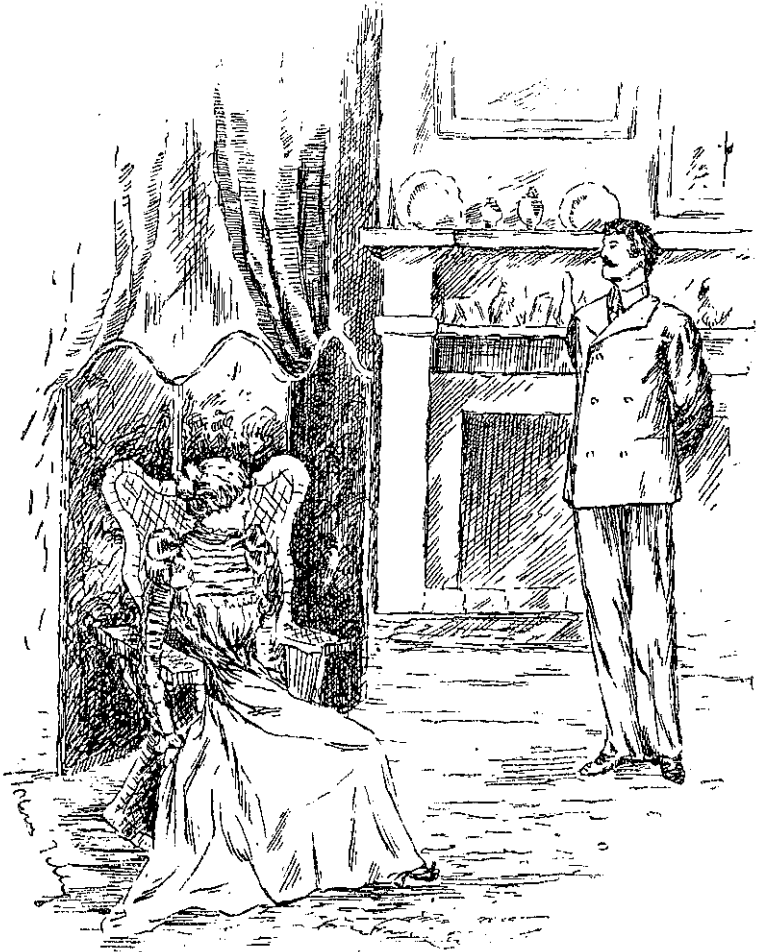
When the store was paid for we had very little money indeed with which to stock it. But our friends remarked that we could draw bills—a process delightfully simple in the beginning, but one which takes your sleep away and makes your hair grey in the end.

In a wonderfully short time the house was built, and a very nice little house it was. One large square room—that was the store—and three others, parlour, kitchen, and bedroom. It was neatly finished within and without, and all our own. How proud we were of it.

The shop was truly a delightful place. Full of shelves and bins, and drawers; and a real counter. I promised myself hours of pleasure in arranging it.

Before we left town we had visited a wholesale store and made—with the assistance of one of the clerks—our modest selection. This was now sent up to us, and brought from the railway station in large

drays. Then we set to work to arrange our goods, and the first thing that struck us was—either that the room was too large, or that we had too few things. The neat shelves looked half empty instead of being packed to the remotest corner in the manner I had so often admired. But we brought our goods to the front, and hoped that no one would detect the cavern-like spaces behind. We



“I THINK WE HAD BETTER TRY TO KEEP A STORE.”

worked very hard arranging and disarranging, climbing up the step ladder, handing things to each other, and then running a little way off to study the effect. And when all was done to the best of our ability, we threw open the door to our customers, who should have been waiting outside, but were not.

In the evening we stuck a kerosene lamp