

he's awful fond o' fish, and that'll put he in a good humour."

She departed hastily, and I returned to the kitchen to find the potatoes and chops burned to the saucepan, and the fire out.

Jack appeared about the same time, and we compared notes of our morning's experiences. I had sold—on credit—a halfpenny worth of lollies and a tin of preserved fish. He had received a few orders, and we went into the shop to make them up, and had a



My First Customer

good time laughing at our unbusiness-like parcels, and the difficulty of closing up both ends, and agreed that the making of neat packages might very well be classed among the fine arts.

Thus the stone was set rolling, but it was not the work of the store that troubled us, it was our own ignorance, especially of the art of buying and selling, which did not come by instinct.

"Poor fellow, I could not beat him down," Jack would say apologetically, when expostulated with concerning some very bad bargain. "I want to do a trade you know, and Staunton says we shall never get on unless we buy the people's produce."

"But they are too dear. By the time you have sent those skins into town you will lose on them."

"Well, what are we to do?" Watson asked that, and I couldn't beat him down. It seems little enough, and he said that he could get more if he took them into town."

"Let him take them, and perhaps he will find out his mistake."

My first customer stuck to me, spending his penny most days in two purchases of a half-penny each.

"Yer gets more for two ha'porths than fur one brown," he condescended to explain. And I saw that the child was wise in his generation.

Mrs Lawson resented the fact, that after that first morning I would not spend half the day in gossip, but sternly demanded, "What can I get you?" when she paid her morning call.

"I don't want nothing in particular, but you may show me what you've got, if it's anything new, and I may buy if you are not too dear. But my man says he'll take me to Toko some Saturday in the station cart, and I can get what I wants there; though, in coorse, I would like to deal wi' you, it's only neighbourly, but you do stick the prices on so. You seem to think we're made o' money. Now, what's the lowest you'll take for this bit o' stuff, I don't partic'lar want it, but it ud make the baby a pinnny."

"I have already told you. We do not have two prices."

And she would leave the shop in a huff, only however, to return next day, for I was her nearest neighbour, and she could not afford to lose the mild dissipation of her morning call.

Chief among the produce that we had to take from our customers, was butter. Now this butter was a source of continual worry, the quality being most uncertain; some being delicious, firm and golden, equally good to look at and to eat, but the greater part was colorless, tasteless, shapeless, badly made and battered about, and such as we could hardly get rid of at any price. Many a time, in the late summer evenings or early mornings, I had to plunge it into cold water and remake it all before I could pack it in the boxes prepared for that purpose.