

pay here?' enquired poor Alice, anxiously. 'How ever shall I manage if it is?'

But Mrs. Bent, whom she went to consult, and who had herself spent part of her married life in a London tenement-house, assured her that this was by no means the case.

'Some things are dearer—milk, for instance—but if you keep your eyes open and your wits about you, you may get fish and meat and groceries cheaper than here, and clothing is certainly more reasonable than in the country. The worst is the vegetables. You can't grow 'em, and to buy 'em—well! such as should be fresh—cabbage and the like—seldom is; though you may get the root sort—potatoes, onions, carrots, turnips, and beetroot—very cheap of a Saturday evening. Mind you, Alice, buy enough then to last the week through. A little bit of meat will make a tasty stew if plenty of vegetables cut small are cooked with it—a dish a hungry man who has had no dinner to speak of will relish when he comes in on a cold evening. And mark what I tell you, my girl: many a man would be kept from the public, stick to his work, and bring up his family God-fearing and respectable, if he always found a tidy wife, a clean room, and a comfortable bit of supper ready for him when he comes in.'

'Well, but Mrs. Bent,' objected Alice, 'a poor woman hasn't always got anything to work up for supper. What is she to do then? I should not like to think if we were a bit short one evening that Tom was in the right to go off to the public, wasting money and leaving me alone.'

'You girls do take one up, to be sure,' answered the old woman testily. 'I never said the husband was in the right; I only said that was what they'd do. And then if the wife was a good manager she oughtn't to be shorter on one than another evening, if there wasn't a good reason. What I mean is this. When you get the wages Saturday afternoon just parcel them out and see what you can make them do. Rent comes first of course. Put that aside. Also your club money. Then money for your firing, though if you are

wise you won't buy that in little weekly dribblets, which is a very dear way, but buy in a quarter of a ton of coal and a sack of coke. You can get good coal in London for 16s. 6d. the ton. Coke is cheaper; it varies a little, but is mighty useful, for you burn it with your coal, and it lasts longer, and helps make a cheerful hot fire, and as for a place to keep the coal—for those two rooms of yours you won't have a coal-cellar attached—why, get your good man to make you a box or locker to hold 'em, paint it black, or grain it yellow with a bit of varnish on it; then if it has a neat lid with hinges it'll stand in your room and look handsome, and hold your books at top or what not. As you have money by you you might make a start with this quantity at first, and then put 1s. 6d. by every week for the next start. Then there are your groceries, things for washing and cleaning, such as soap, sand, starch, blue, soda, and the like. Get your tea at a good shop, and keep it in a tin; it spoils in paper.'

'There is my new tea-caddy, and places each side, and the sugar-basin in the middle,' Alice put in.

'Why, of course. Mind you use it then. But don't get into the way of living on tea, as many poor women do. It makes you weak, mind and body.'

'Dear me, does it now? Why, ladies drink a lot of tea, too. At least, some of them do.'

'They can afford it; they've plenty to eat, and the tea brings 'em down; maybe, therefore, they're no worse for being a little reduced; but a working woman wants to keep her strength, not to waste it, and too much tea just drives it out of you.'

'You were always particular to have your tea afternoons, Mrs. Bent.'

'Yes, and you should have yours afternoons too; but not all day long, as some do. You never saw me taking it that way, did you?'

'No, I can't say that I did.'

'Cocoa or coffee are much more supporting for breakfast than tea. You can get skim milk, even in London, for three half-