

Home, Sweet Home.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Tom had quite disappeared round the corner of the street, Alice returned to her rooms and washed up the breakfast things in boiling water. She had refilled the kettle before sitting down to breakfast, as she was well aware of the great importance of having really boiling water for all greasy or milky things. She had opened the bed and left it to air with the bedding by a window, a practice which Mrs. Bent had always strictly enforced; for she said, 'It is most unhealthy to sleep in beds which are not regularly aired every day.'

By this time it was fully light, and not a bad day at all for winter—'bright sunshine even in London,' as Alice remarked to herself with satisfaction.

'Always settle about your dinner first thing in the morning,' Mrs. Bent had said. But as Tom could not get back to dinner, Alice had cut him some good sandwiches of whole-meal bread and bacon, and she decided to have one of the same herself with a cup of cocoa in the middle of the day, and get a nice little supper ready, which she would share with Tom.

'It will be like the gentry, to have our best meal at seven o'clock,' she thought. 'But that is not the reason. If we were nearer Tom's work so as he could get back to dinner I'd take care and have it ready for him, but as it takes half an hour each way of course he can't come home more than evenings, so I must make him comfortable then instead.'

What should that first dinner-supper be?

Alice felt quite puzzled to choose; she knew of so many things that would be nice. However, she remembered Mrs. Bent's advice to settle all the week at once. This was Tuesday. Suppose she had a stew made of meat and vegetables that evening. She could get one pound of pieces of nice meat off the butcher's piece-board for sevenpence, and she would buy a few turnips,

carrots, onions, and potatoes to last till Saturday, when she was to lay in her supply for the week.

Tom was very fond of puddings—most men are; and it is astonishing how seldom their wives take the trouble to make them for them. Perhaps they don't know how, but often they won't even try, for plain puddings are not difficult to make. Well, Alice thought that for Wednesday evening she might serve the remains of the Tuesday stew as soup, by putting it on with the bones to simmer gently all day in a little water, and thickening it with a spoonful of fine oatmeal, and might have as well a gingerbread pudding. Thursday she would have a beefsteak pudding, and Friday two fresh herrings fried and a baked rice pudding. Then Saturday morning, when Tom would be home by one o'clock, they would have pickled pork baked with haricot beans, and so be able to start on Sunday with a nice little bit of roast beef and a pudding—'apple dumplings, perhaps,' Alice thought.

'I shall make a fresh plan next week,' she considered. 'There may be some cold meat left from the Sunday beef, which must always last Monday, though I shall never buy but a little piece, for fresh-cooked meat is so much tastier than cold or warmed up. Then I shall have a little dripping, and some gravy over too, I hope, which always comes in so useful.'

Alice put on her hat and jacket, took a marketing basket, and went out to make her purchases. And here she found her experience at the Vicarage come in very usefully. She knew good meat from bad, and did not buy pieces all gristle and bone, neither did she allow worm-eaten carrots or turnips half pith to be put off upon her. Alice looked rather longingly at the celery. She knew what a wholesome vegetable it was, and how greatly it improved the flavour of soups and stews, but it was rather dear at the shops, so she decided not to buy any till Saturday, and then always to get a head, of which every part—