

wife, for a thorough good servant is good everywhere and at everything.'

Well, the man was not far to seek who was to have the blessing of old Mrs. Bent's favourite for his wife.

Tom Parker had long secretly admired the tidy Vicarage servant, who kept her place so well, and was always so neat and orderly both in her person and in her work. Like other workmen who have to be in gentlemen's houses at times, Tom had been often struck with the slovenly and even dirty appearance of girls when at work, who on Sunday blossomed out gaily.

Tom's own mother was a particularly clean, tidy woman, who got up early, did her work briskly and thoroughly, and had always a comfortable room and a well-cooked and well-served dinner ready for her husband and children at twelve o'clock. Tom had often, of course, seen her with a large bibbed working-apron on, and tightly rolled-up sleeves, but never with untidy hair hanging in her eyes, a smart faded bonnet tilted on one side, stockings in holes, down-at-heel slippers, a smutty face, and a coloured stuff gown that had once been smart splashed and streaked with stains.

Mrs. Parker put on a clean dark print every Sunday morning, and with the help of her big aprons always contrived to look clean and wholesome.

'A mother a chap can feel proud of,' as Tom used to say to his friends.

With such a mother, Tom would not have been likely to choose a slatternly wife, and the sight of Alice always so busy and tidy had a great effect upon his heart.

At last he spoke. It was one day when he had been sent for to mend the kitchen window, and Alice had been left by Mrs. Bent to cook the dinner while she was busy upstairs. Alice blushed and smiled, and we may conclude did not say 'No,' for on the following Sunday afternoon, with the full approval both of the Vicar and Mrs. Bent, Tom and she took a walk together arm-in-arm, which ended in tea at Mrs. Parker's, and an introduction of 'the nicest

girl in Biltthorpe, mother, who has promised to be my wife some of these days.'

And so the courtship went happily on, and when Alice was raised to be house-keeper in Mrs. Bent's place, her wages were raised too, and out of 18*l.* a year Alice managed to put by 6*l.* for each of the two years that she held that position, which, added to what she had been able to save during the six previous years she had lived at the Vicarage, gave her a nice little sum of 20*l.* in the Savings Bank.

Tom also had been careful and saving, and besides money he had by him a little stock of well-made furniture—tables, chairs, presses, and so on—the fruits of evenings of work when other young men were drinking and smoking, or standing with their hands in their pockets doing nothing at all.

Many useful presents were given them when at length the wedding-day was fixed. Mrs. Bent gave them a huge fringed bed-quilt, knitted by herself, which she had begun as soon as she was told of the engagement. The Vicar's present was a substantial iron bedstead with a good mattress which would last their lifetime. Miss Celia, his sister, presented a clock; Tom's parents a pretty tea-service; his young men friends gave a large Bible with all their names written in by the schoolmaster, whose handwriting was more to be relied upon than was their own; while the Sunday School children whom Alice taught regularly presented a huge Britannia-metal teapot, which, as Mrs. Parker remarked, 'though too large for present use, would come in useful by and by, and meanwhile would make a lovely ornament if Alice kept it bright, as well she knew how.'

Many other pretty and useful presents were given, so there was no fear that the new home would be unfurnished. But that new home, alas! it could be only two rooms in a house full of other people; and yet for those two rooms Tom found he should have to pay 5*s.* 6*d.* a week—double the rent of a nice cottage and garden all to yourself in his native village.

'Will everything be twice the price we