

that cow. If he didn't we'd *have* to have something else, now and then."

"I don't believe I'd take the trouble to quarrel with the only luxury we have," Mrs. Stone said, gravely; and Beth laughed, and began to clear off the little table, and put three plates and three cups on it.

"If you could have a cup of tea once in a while, I don't believe I'd mind about the rest so much," she said, after bustling about in silence for a few minutes.

"Oh, well, I do once in a while, you know. We had tea on Thanksgiving Day, and again on Christmas. What are you talking about?"

Beth tried to laugh again, but the mention of Christmas made her remember that the first day of the year was very near. "Just think!" she said, "to-morrow will be New Year's eve! I don't believe there is another family in this town who are not planning to go somewhere, or have company, or do something nice on New Year's. Mother, I can't help it; I think it is just *awful* to be so poor!" Mrs. Stone had no answer to this; sometimes it seemed hard to her not to know what her children would have next to eat, or whether they would have anything; but she had lived long enough to know that it would do no good to fret about it. Beth went about the room in silence after that, until the little table was set with its loaf of bread and pail of milk, then she found new cause for trouble. "Mother, what *do* you suppose can keep Reuben so? It is ever so much later than he generally comes."