

not difficult to do, but it requires delicacy in the handling, and there are certain details, such as the sweeping up of the cinders, which, although a part of honourable labour, is not the work one would wish to do in public. You have to go on your knees to do it properly; no man likes that attitude, unless he is at Wimbledon. The fire lit, it was necessary to boil the kettle for breakfast. Fortunately, the kettle was full. He had only, therefore, to put it on, lay out the things for breakfast, and take that meal.

When the fire was made, he began to feel in better spirits. Of course there would be hardships. That was to be expected. Many sorts of hardships. For instance, was not there a certain—hem!—an earthiness, a mouldy odour about the room, which he had failed to notice the night before? Perhaps, if he opened the door—he did so; outside, the rain was still pattering on his doorstep, and standing in great pools about the road. Clay soil, stone floor, ground heavy with rain—these were the generators of his mouldiness. He made a mental note anent foundations. Good; the kettle must be nearly boiling now; let us set out breakfast.

No tablecloth; bread—where is the butter? where is the milk? tea; the teapot; sugar—brown sugar. Nothing else? no bacon? no kidneys? nothing else at all? Do labourers make their breakfast off bread and tea, with brown sugar and no milk? Stay. In the corner there is something white lying on a plate. He set this down on the table and contemplated it with dismay.

Yet he had pledged himself to live like the farm labourers.

A piece of cold boiled pork, only the fat, not a morsel of lean—a lump of white, hard, unredeemed fat. Do our agricultural workmen, then, habitually devour the fat of pigs?

He took up a knife and fork, resolved to conquer this luxurious distaste for pork fat. He laid it down. Again, and with the same result.

Then he sighed. At what a price must his end be attained! Perhaps the kettle was boiling. There were none of the signs—no bubbling and running over. He poured a little into a cup. Heavens! it was hardly warm. He sat down with some temper; not the broad facts of disinterested devotion, but these little details worry and annoy one.

He drew his chair to the side of the fire.

If he kept the door open he would catch cold; if he shut it, there was that abominable mouldiness. Patience. Let the kettle boil.

The warmth of the fire, the early hour, the exertion of laying the fire, each of these influences falling singly and together upon him, presently caused his eyes to close.

The fire having made the kettle to boil, went on, in its zeal to do the work thoroughly, until it had boiled all the water away. Then it got the opportunity, which it never neglects, of burning a hole in the bottom of the kettle. By-and-by the door, which was unfastened, swung gently open, and the rain began to beat in upon Alan's new carpet. Then a cat, belonging to a neighbouring cottage, crept in softly, and sat down before the fire, pretending to have made a mistake about the house. As the sleeper took no notice, she rose and began slowly to explore the room in quest of breakfast for herself, if any were to be had. Nothing in the cupboard, nothing on the floor. On the table a piece of pork fat and a loaf of bread. The cat turned the pork over with her paws, smelt it, and finally, digging her teeth into a corner of the skin, jumped lightly to the ground with it and disappeared. But Alan went on sleeping.

Then two little boys, of three and four, looked in at the door. I do not know where they came from, but realising the situation—somebody sound asleep, rain and cold outside—they crept in and sat on the carpet before the fire, warming their hands and feet. Presently one of them, the more enterprising one, began to prowl round the room, and espied a sugar-basin. This he stealthily brought to his companion, and both, sitting down before the fire, fell to upon the sugar, each keeping one eye on the sleeper, without the necessity of speech. When the sugar was quite gone, they gently rose, replaced the empty basin, and crept away on the points of their toes like stage brigands. But still the sleeping man slept on.

When the children were gone, the rain and wind beat in at the open door at their will without awakening the sleeper. Alan was in the land of dreams.

Then there came along the street an old woman. She was going to buy a loaf. Seeing the door of the cottage open, she looked in, with the curiosity of her sex, to see how