

Kezia paused again, and again said 'Yes, mistress,' and at dinner-time I thought my bit of mince was just as good eaten off the diminished cloth.

The following day Kezia brought in an egg on a tray. 'Tis hardly worth while messing the cloth taking it out of the press for that bit o' food,' she declared.

And I quite agreed with her; besides, the tray was sooner carried off, and Kezia could get to her sewing earlier.

Well, next day I was sitting at my rough wooden table in the window, where I dress my flowers and do my odd jobs, and Kezia saw me and brought me my dinner dish, and laid it down on that. 'I ain't brought a tray,' she said; 'the hot plate won't spoil this table, and it's less trouble.'

And so it was, and my dinner tasted quite as good as usual.

But the following morning dinner was late, very late, extraordinarily late; yet Kezia was neither ill nor idle. I heard her bustling about in the kitchen finely. 'Give her five minutes more,' I said to myself, 'it always hurries her so to ring the bell—for I never ring, you know, Jack, unless I feel my old attack's threatening me—and that frightens the good girl. So I waited till the clock on the mantelpiece struck two, and dinner was an hour late. This would never do. Tingle, tingle! went my bell. As I thought, Kezia burst in, pale and breathless. 'You ain't never took bad, mistress?' she said.

'My dinner, Kezia,' I answered, feebly, for I was quite faint for want of food.

'La! now, well, I never!' Poor Kezia wrung her hands in despair. 'Missis, if I haven't been and gone and clean forgot you

—never so much as thought of your dinner. What with no table to set, and no cloth to lay, and never even the tray to fill, why the whole thing has slipped my memory altogether, and never a bit of dinner have I cooked for you to-day, though it's in the larder ready, and I'll go—'

But the rest of Kezia's speech was lost in her flight to the kitchen. Now, Jack, boy, do you see why I stick to forms and ceremonies, and have my table set as if for a princess every day, though there is no one but old Granny to see the bright silver and the transparent water-jug, and the pretty pepper-box you brought me from China? The dinner is the chief thing, as we all know; but you see it is apt to be forgotten by poor dull minds if we do not keep up a certain form regarding it.

Jack laughed. 'A capital story, Granny, and well told; and 'pon my word I think there's something in it. At all events, we'll go through the ceremony of my giving you an arm to afternoon church. Will that content you?'

As I said before, Jack was a thoroughly well-meaning earnest-hearted lad, and I do believe Granny's argument was not lost on him.

Forms and ceremonies are good for something he found out, and though he immediately took up with some other hasty idea, which he would probably give up, too, by-and-by, we are sure that God never leaves the hearty seeker after truth always in the mists and quagmire, but in His own good time sets his feet on firm ground.

On such ground—the ground of a Holy, Christ-given, Apostolic faith—may Sailor Jack find himself anchored in the end!

