

HOUSEHOLD.

A Glimpse of Himself

(By Margaret E. Sangster, in 'Christian Herald'.)

The day had been unusually trying, and Mrs. Elmore was very tired when at last she had tucked her babies into bed and seen Bridget walk down the street for her evening call on the sister who lived just around the corner. Mrs. Elmore turned up the lamp and laid the new paper invitingly uppermost on the pile of papers and magazines, which she hoped would tempt her husband to read something aloud for her entertainment. Her own evening work was laid out in a basket, which overflowed with stockings to mend, with little aprons, frocks and trousers in need of repairs, and with the new gown which she was by degrees evolving for herself from two half-worn ones. Everybody's basket of work is full, as mothers know, but Mrs. Elmore's was over-full, for she had a large family and was a scrupulously neat house-keeper, who had never acquired the art of slighting a single thing in the day's routine. Often of late she had been aware of something new in her experience—a sense of loneliness and depression such as she had never felt before, and her nerves, hitherto so firm, had grown unsteady. What she needed was rest and a break, a chance to drop her work for a little while; but if ever she thought about this, the possibility was so remote that she bravely put the idea out of her mind as not to be considered at all.

One thing she did covet, and that she was increasingly deprived of—the pleasure of her husband's society in the evenings. John Elmore was a good citizen, a good workman at his trade, and a good provider in his home. When they were first married, he and Mary were constantly with each other, but gradually a change had come to pass. She was occupied with the care of her little group of sons and daughters, all close together like steps, and he became interested in outside affairs—in the school-board, the town improvement, the building fund association, and, more than all, in the club.

Mrs. Elmore approved of public spirit in her husband, and was proud of him as a rising man. But when, six nights out of seven, she sat alone in her little parlor, sewing or reading, not a soul to relieve the monotony, she sometimes felt that she would prefer to have John's company, even if John had less to do for the public welfare.

The parlor looked very pretty, a bunch of golden-red and purple asters on the mantel, and the big chair for John pushed into the best place for reading.

Presently John came in; a big, blond man, with blue eyes and a shock of yellow hair, six-foot two, and as handsome as a picture. Mrs. Elmore lifted her eyes to his and sighed.

'You are in evening dress, John? And I thought you meant to spend this night with me.'

'This night? Why, is there any special reason, Molly? The club is to receive General Frenchson and his staff, and I am on the committee. I wish it were a ladies' night, but it isn't, and couldn't well plead an excuse. If you had mentioned it this morning, little woman, I might have begged off, but it's too late now!'

'It's our wedding anniversary, John—that's all!'

'Sure enough, and I forgot it completely. Never mind, darling; forgive your old husband, and we'll keep it up in fine style when it comes round again next year. Good-by, Mary. There are Harry Post and Frank Barclay at the door waiting for me.'

A kiss and a nod, and John was gone.

As for Mary, she put her work aside, and bowing her face in her hands, cried, hot, scalding tears dropping one by one as if pressed out of her heart. She cried silently, the words beating over and over in her brain: 'He forgot our wedding-day, and he doesn't care.' Something that had bound her fast to John in a ring of wifely trust and love suddenly scorched and bit her as if it had been a fetter. Mary El-

more's gaze went back over the past twelve months. Her solitary evenings, her incessant housework, the babies upstairs, the baby that was coming, and it was overwhelming—the feeling that her good times were passed, and this hard life was to go on forever.

In the midst of her tears there was a knock at the door, and Mary never heard it. The visitor waited a second, turned the knob and came in. It was John's Aunt Phebe, a great friend of the family, and Mary's particular ally and helper.

'Why, Mary!' she exclaimed. 'Why, Mary!'

'Oh—Aunt Phebe!'

'What is it, dear? Tell me!'

'A headache,' stammered Mrs. Elmore.

'Nonsense!' said Aunt Phebe. 'People cry themselves into headaches, not over them. Tell me what has happened?'

'Indeed, Aunt, I have nothing to tell,' answered the wife, too loyal to complain of her lord. 'I was tired and melancholy, and the blues got the better of me. I'm glad you came in.'

'So am I,' declared her aunt; 'and now that I'm here I'll just sit awhile, and if you are tired out you go to bed. John's at the club, I presume, and won't be back till midnight. Lucy Anne will stop with me when her Browning Class has finished its session, and in the meantime I'll amuse myself.'

Mrs. Elmore yielded. She was in no mood to converse, and, indeed, felt too ill to be company for any one. She went to her room, and soon, mercifully, slept the deep sleep of exhaustion.

When, at the stroke of twelve, John Elmore came home, he was amazed to see a bright light still in the parlor, it not being Mary's habit to sit up for him. He tiptoed up the garden walk, and was surprised at that hour to see Aunt Phebe and her daughter calmly established there, deep in conversation. No Mary was visible. John was about to open the door and enter when he heard his own name, and was arrested with the surprise one naturally feels when he hears himself discussed.

Aunt Phebe was talking in a low voice, but her tones were emphatic.

'I'm sorry, Lucy Anne, but I'm not going away till my nephew comes home, if it's two o'clock in the morning. You may sleep later to-morrow to make up for this. John is a most thoughtless, selfish and ordinary fellow, and I'm afraid the Elmore blood is cropping out. I used to fancy he was more Wilkinson than Elmore, but I was mistaken.'

'John is slowly killing Mary,' were the next words John heard. Lucy Anne said them in her positive way. Lucy Anne, whom John had tossed in the air when she was a roly-poly baby, and whom he regarded, now that she was a beautiful girl, with an air of cousinly proprietorship!

'She's not going to be so easily killed,' said Aunt Phebe, whose keen eyes and ears had taken note of the listener at the door; 'but he is killing her love—and that's worse! He does not drink or gamble or beat his wife; he simply neglects her—shoves her into a corner of his life and goes on his own way. John likes to be with men, he enjoys a jolly evening, and he fancies Mary is well off and happy because she is at home with her children. You notice, do you not, how seldom John goes to church with Mary now? He is too tired, after a Saturday night at the club, to attend church on Sunday morning.'

'Well,' Lucy Anne chimed in, 'if Edgar Brewster had married Mary Allen, it would have been different. He courted her when John did, and he has never married. They say in Lincoln that Edgar never got over the disappointment when she refused him.'

'She was very pretty,' said Aunt Phebe, 'but she's losing her good looks fast. Flowers do when frost blights them. Well, I must go home after all. Turn the lamp down, Lucy Anne, and tread softly. The poor child is asleep, and I hope isn't going to be ill, but Dr. Ames is worried about her. He told me yesterday she's on the road to nervous prostration. If she has to go to a sanatorium it'll make a hole in John's savings. His sister Jane could come and take care of the house. Come, daughter, we'll just slip off home.'

John softly stepped round the corner of the porch till his relatives were out of sight. He had heard some rather plain truth, and he was wholesomely wounded. All the evening he had had an uneasy sense of meanness, in leaving his wife alone to spend her wedding evening. Now he perceived how he looked through Aunt Phebe's eyes.

'I am a selfish brute!' he muttered, as he went upstairs in his stockinged feet.

Mary was asleep and did not stir. Her husband looked at her. There were hollows in the cheeks that had been so round, and silver threads were showing in the dark brown hair. Her face had the grieved look that a child wears when she has sobbed herself into dreamland. A sharp compunction pricked John's heart. He tried to undress very quietly, and in the effort made considerable noise. He dropped the hair-brush on the floor and knocked over a chair in the endeavor to be perfectly still.

Mary awoke. 'That you, John?'

'Yes, Molly.'

'It's most morning, isn't it?'

'I'm afraid so, Mary. But,' and the big hand stole tenderly under the cover and took hers, which lay in his unresisting, but with no returning pressure. 'I'm ashamed of myself, and I beg your pardon, dearest. I've made up my mind to resign from the club. Married men ought not to carry its burdens. I'm going to turn over a new leaf and be with you more, and—Mary—I'm sorry.'

'Don't say another word, John.'

Two arms were around his neck, a soft cheek was laid against his. Mary forgave him on the spot. He did not tell her what he had overheard, and Aunt Phebe and Lucy Anne kept their own counsel. But John's resolution was not broken. And Mary did not have nervous prostration, and does not now seem in the slightest need of going to a sanatorium.

Attractive Rooms for Invalids.

(Miss Adele K. Johnson, in the New York 'Observer'.)

The angel of our household has been an invalid for many years; for her sake all invalids are dear to me.

If you have one with you, give her a nook near the living rooms in the heart of the home life. Make the invalid feel that she is essential to the family life. And on her side, let her remember that 'we have within ourselves the power to make our days cheerful or disagreeable.' And if we have not physical health, let us succeed in attaining mental strength. 'A cheerful heart makes glad the long day.' And by making their room as pleasant and comfortable as possible, we will help them 'to turn the picture and find the sunny spot,' as Phoebe Cary bravely sang to us.

Hardwood floors and rugs are the most hygienic. A large rug or an all-over carpet is comfortable for a semi-invalid. Pretty rugs are cheap and also artistic. Quiet, unobtrusive colors are best—remember how many hours each day the invalid must see it. Carpets in self tones are also restful. When you come to the walls, if you have few pictures choose one of the modern striped papers, otherwise a plain one, in not too strong a color. If the room is dark, have yellow curtains to simulate sunshine; the effect is very good. Select restful colors, but not too dainty ones. Golden brown with light green is a good combination. A room which has harmonious touches of a different color is more successful than when only one is used.

'Avoid confusion, and do not crowd a room with furniture.' Light woods, as birch, maple and oak, are desirable; they aid in giving such a cheery aspect to a room. Brass bedsteads do also, and a few pieces of enamelled furniture. The chairs should be light, provided with cushions rather than upholstered.

A small, low, two-shelfed table to stand at the head of the bed or beside the invalid's chair is essential, but do not keep the medicines on it in sight. If they must be kept in the same room, have a little screen to shield them from the patient's eyes.