

# HOUSEHOLD.

## The Roller Towels.

When Mrs. Colonel Stephenson purchased the old Cushman property, on Lincoln St., the people of Preston prophesied that she'd be like the former owner, close-fisted and exclusive.

'Nobody ever knew Mrs. Cushman to do a single benevolent deed,' declared Sarah Tolman, to her old-time neighbor from across the street. 'And if the new owner is as snug and cold-hearted as she was, it's a detriment to the town—her coming here! I suppose I ought not to say it, but I don't believe Martha Poole Cushman had a single sincere mourner when she died—no I don't. I wouldn't want to live that way; I want people, a few, at least, to be sorry when I'm gone.'

But Mrs. Stephenson hadn't lived long in Preston before the inhabitants of the thrifty New England village had proof that she was neither 'close-fisted,' nor possessed of the other disagreeable characteristics for which the villagers had so severely criticised her predecessor in the stately colonial mansion.

Before the coming of Mrs. Stephenson among them there had been no woman's club in the town; in less than three months after she got settled both a Sanitary Club and the Daily Half-Hour Improvement Circle were organized.

The old Whitecomb place was rented for the season—Mrs. Stephenson had asked aid of no one in this philanthropic undertaking—and all summer long the cool, old-fashioned rooms were filled with working-girls from the shops of Redfield, the city in which Mrs. Stephenson had formerly lived. Here the girls were given each a two weeks' outing, free from a single item of expense.

Then, too, during her first year's residence in Preston, Mrs. Stephenson had bought the ugly, ill-kept vacant lots on Essex St., and after transforming them into an attractive rectangular park, small of course, made a gift of the same to the town.

Her benevolence in every way took a practical turn, and every one in the village, directly or indirectly, felt the influence of this woman's presence among them.

Even old Squire Trueblood, who had never before 'approved of giving,' was induced by her example to head with his name a subscription list, with \$10, to purchase a school-house bell. And later he surreptitiously gave \$15 to the chairman of the board of education for the adornment of the school grounds.

The latest project of Mrs. Stephenson was the formation of a Girls' Household League, to which she admitted all the girls of the village, between the ages of twelve and sixteen years.

'My object,' she explained to them, the afternoon of their first meeting, in her attractively furnished sitting-room, 'is to get our girls interested in doing well the common things that are really the most important in making comfortable and pleasant homes.'

After their fourth meeting each girl received an invitation in the clear, strong handwriting of Mrs. Stephenson, to bring some article of needle-work the following Friday afternoon, and there spend the time till the supper hour working on it.

'As a reward for the best work done,' read the invitations, 'I will give a dress pattern with all the necessary materials for making it up.'

'It's just beautiful!' confided Mabel Stackpole to Ethel Coleman. 'Aunt Lou was over calling last week and Mrs. Stephenson showed it to her. It is the loveliest cream-colored silk, and 'twas brought from China by Mrs. Stephenson's uncle, who for years was attached to the English Legation there. It's the sweetest thing, so Aunt Lou says. And then its coming from China—that's worth something!'

'Are you going to try for it?' asked Ethel. 'Indeed I am; aren't you?'

'I think so. Mother says I'd better do a little Mexican drawn-work doily. Cousin Alma taught me the pattern, and I can do it, so mother and sister say, almost as well as Cousin Alma can. And you know she does everything of that kind beautifully.'

'I shall hemstitch a handkerchief,' and Mabel spread out the one she had with her on her lap. 'I did this, but I can do them ever so

much better now. This was really one of the first I attempted.'

Most of the girls of the league were very free to tell what they were going to take to Mrs. Stephenson's 'prize party,' as they called the gathering for Friday afternoon.

There were to be handkerchiefs to be hemmed, doilies to be done, aprons to be made and ruffled, collars and stocks to be embroidered, sofa-pillow covers to be 'worked,' and Helen Baker announced that she was going to make a college banner.

'I have made so many,' she declared, 'that I believe I could sew on the letters in the dark.'

'I don't believe I'll go,' and Marian Holbrook looked out of the open window upon her mother's bed of bright geraniums. 'Every other girl can make something worth doing, while there's nothing that I can make save patch-work and sheets and towels.'

'But you do them well, dear,' replied Mrs. Holbrook, taking her hands from the 'batch' of bread she was kneading. 'And you know Mrs. Stephenson didn't specify what to bring. Such things as you have mentioned are among necessities in comfortable house-keeping.'

'Yes; but all the other girls can do something nice! Ethel Coleman can make Mexican drawn-work splendidly; you ought to see some of it. And there is no one in Preston that can embroider so well as Beth Farrington. I just can't go, mother—there!'

'I hope, dear, that my daughter isn't afraid of doing the ordinary,' and Mrs. Holbrook deftly filled the tins with the light, spongy dough. 'And I am sure it isn't true that she's ashamed of taking to Mrs. Stephenson's that which she can do well.'

'But, mother, what will the girls say when they see—'

'How nicely she has done her work?' interrupted Mrs. Holbrook, playfully.

'No; when they see me working on—just roller towels—for that's all I really could take to do. There are three of them that need making.'

'They'll say nothing, dear. If the girls are ladies, as I judge they are, they will make no remarks, no more than a daughter of my acquaintance would,' smiling in a sweet, motherly way.

'Then if—if you think—'

'Of course I think my little girl should accept Mrs. Stephenson's invitation—and do her best—as I know she will!'

On Friday afternoon Marian Holbrook was one of the first to arrive with her 'work' at Mrs. Stephenson's home.

Before two o'clock all members of the league were comfortably seated in their hostess' large, airy sitting-room. And it was an interesting picture, each girl in her plain, neat dress, gaily bending over some piece of needle-work, and each one intent on doing her very best.

Dora Wardwell chanced to sit near Marian, and she quietly noticed the work she was doing.

'I am hemming napkins,' and Dora stopped a moment to thread her needle. 'I never had much inclination to learn fancy work. What we're doing is pretty near alike.'

'This is all I can do—well,' and Marian took out a stitch that was not quite 'even.' 'I don't mean that I can't do anything but make towels—but that I do just plain sewing. Mother has always insisted that I be particular, though—even in hemming sheets and that kind of work.'

Mrs. Stephenson had prepared dainty refreshments for her guests, and fifteen minutes before they were to be served she began collecting the articles that the girls had done in the time allotted them.

'I want to introduce you to Mrs. Lucie Miller and Miss Louise Armstrong, two of my friends from Redfield,' she announced, bringing the ladies into the room where the girls were sitting. 'I induced them to visit me at this time, although both just now are extremely busy, that they might aid me in judging your work.'

After the refreshments had been served, and just before the girls arose to go, Mrs. Stephenson brought out the dress pattern which she had offered as a reward to the one whose work should prove the most satisfactory.

'Such a lovely design!'

'Oh!'

'What a delicate tint!'

Mrs. Stephenson and her friends couldn't refrain from smiling at the girls' enthusiastic delight.

'At the next meeting of the league—that is Tuesday—I will announce the award,' and Mrs. Stephenson gave each of the girls as they left a daintily embroidered needle-book.

'Isn't she a—dear!' exclaimed Laura Hunt, going slowly down the broad stone steps.

'Indeed she is!' replied Ethel Coleman, emphatically.

'Well, dear?' Mrs. Holbrook was waiting supper when Marian got home.

'I did my best, mother mine; and I'm glad I went. The girls were splendid and Mrs. Stephenson—she's almost as lovely as some other little woman I know; though not quite—nobody could equal her!' and the kiss Marian gave her mother left no doubt in Mrs. Holbrook's mind as to whom the 'her' referred.

The following Tuesday, after the paper and the usual discussion, followed by the helpful suggestions of their hostess, Mrs. Stephenson went into an adjoining room and returned with the dress pattern tastefully done up in white wrapping paper.

'After a most careful examination of your work, girls, my friends and I decided the dress belonged to one whose work many would regard as of little importance. But while the articles in themselves were commonplace, the work on them was extraordinarily well done. There wasn't an uneven stitch, not a knot visible, and what was especially noticeable and commendable as well, was the fact that the underside of the work showed as much painstaking care as did that on the right side.'

'The object of your league is to prepare my girls—I think I may call you mine—to do well the little commonplace things that count so much toward the attractiveness of the home.'

'All things considered, Marian Holbrook, in the opinion of myself and the ladies who have assisted me in the task of examining your work, has won this recognition,' and Mrs. Stephenson handed Marian the coveted package.

'All my girls did well, and I have reason to be proud of every one!'

'I fear it isn't I who deserve the credit of winning the dress,' and Marian put her arms lovingly around her mother's neck. 'But it is she who taught me to be painstaking, and to have a high regard for the little things that Mrs. Stephenson emphasizes so strongly, as having so much to do with making a well-ordered home.'—The 'Advance.'

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