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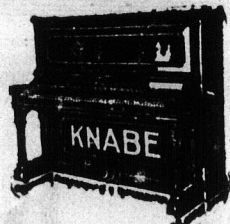
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"I don't know why not," protested her mother (they were now going towards the pantry together)—"truly I don't see why not, Maria; it's so handsome they'll all be pleased over our spending the money."

"We might give her grandmother's teacups," said Maria, thoughtfully, pausing before the shelves.

"One of the saucers is broke," said Mrs. Clutterback; "if you're going to give anything away and then play it broke going, why not play the vase broke, and then you'll have those cups for yourself when you get married. Oh, Maria, if she was to ask you to be a bridesmaid!—the bridesmaids so often marry the young men they walk in and out with. It's been the dream of my life for you to marry someone, Maria; you've never thought what it would mean to me to have you married."

"If we could afford a new cushion, we could give her one of those old mahogany chairs," said Maria. They had now come back to the dining-room.

"They're very rare," said Mrs. Clutterback, "and would make a nice present. And someone lookin' over the presents would, maybe, ask about it, and then come down and buy the rest of the set. The set might sell for enough to let you and me take a little holiday this summer. I should like to get away for a little in the summer, Maria."

"Let's go upstairs and look around," said Maria.

"The things upstairs is so wore out," said Mrs. Clutterback, going along after her daughter as usual, "when you don't buy nothing new downstairs the things upstairs get so awful old."

Maria did not dispute this wisdom. "Why not give her the writing-desk?" she said.

"Why, Maria!" Mrs. Clutterback stood aghast, "I've told you all your life long as your oldest boy was going to get that desk when I died. It's been the dream of my life your oldest boy's having that desk."

"There's that long mirror," said Maria, looking at the long mirror as she spoke, "only the back would have to be mended."

"I tell you," said her mother firmly, "you won't find nothin' so handsome and suitable as that cut-glass vase, Maria; and Mr. Snap will give you some of that curly-haired wood to pack it in, I know. Mr. Snap'll be only too pleased to do you a little favor as won't cost him anything. We'll wrap it up so no one in the world wouldn't never think it was broke to start."

"There's those old fire-irons," said Maria, "they're the kind of thing city people like."

"But we use 'em, too," complained Mrs. Clutterback, "why don't you pick the range out of the brickwork and send her that, if you're going to send useful iron things about the country? Oh, Maria, the cut-glass vase is the thing. I can just seem to see her face when she opens the box and realizes what we bought for her. She'll feel duty bound to have you to visit her sometime, and you might even meet someone going there on the train—don't you know how Minnie Coolidge ran away with the banana boy; she met him on the train just by buying a banana, and now she's his widow, and Mrs. Coolidge has all those nine grandchildren to fill her days with sunshine. It's been the dream of my life to have grandchildren, Maria."

"They say the Coolidges is half mad with those nine children, playing train all over the house from dawn to dark," said Maria. "Well, where is the cut-glass vase, anyhow?"

"It's on a shelf in the back room," said Mrs. Clutterback, joyfully. "Oh, Maria, I am glad to see you so sensible. We'll wash the pieces and polish every one with old flannel, and we'll do it up in tissue paper. No one couldn't give nothing handsomer—they'll just wonder how we could afford to buy it."

Together they went through to the back room, where the pieces of the vase reposed in a cardboard box on a shelf.

"There!" said Mrs. Clutterback,



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