

HOUSEHOLD.

A Memory.

The fire upon the hearth is low,
 And there is stillness everywhere:
 Like troubled spirits, here and there
 The firelight shadows fluttering go.
 And as the shadows round me creep,
 A childish treble breaks the gloom,
 And softly from a farther room
 Comes, 'Now I lay me down to sleep.'
 And somehow with that little prayer,
 And that sweet treble in my ears,
 My thought goes back to distant years
 And lingers with a dear one there;
 Again I hear the child's Amen,
 My mother's face comes back to me;
 Crouched at her side I seem to be,
 And mother holds my hands again.
 O, for an hour in that dear place!
 O, for the peace of that dear time!
 O, for that childish trust sublime!
 Oh, for a glimpse of mother's face!
 Yet as the shadows round me creep,
 I do not seem to be alone—
 Sweet magic of that treble tone—
 And 'Now I lay me down to sleep.'
 —Eugene Field.

Imitation and Satisfaction.

(Milford W. Foshay, in the Michigan
 'Christian Advocate'.)

Mrs. Lindsay looked round the room with a critical eye. Everything was neat and clean, but there was no denying that the carpet was worn and the furniture rubbed. The room had a homelike look, it is true, but it had been a long time since a new piece of furniture had been brought to the house. Sickness and a strike at the factory had made it impossible to do more than get along as best they could with the necessary expenses, without adding either to comforts or appearances.

'I don't know whether to call or not,' she said to herself, doubtfully. 'I always have called on everybody who came to that house, but no one ever before moved in who had such good things. I'd almost be ashamed to have her return my call.'

However, she did call, and found in Mrs. Stewart a pleasant addition to her acquaintance. But she felt a trifle uneasy. It was as she supposed from her observation of the furniture van. All the appointments of the home were far superior to her own, and after it was over she doubted if she had done wisely in going. How could she ever have Mrs. Stewart come into her plain room—shabby, she called it?

She brooded over the matter for a day or two, and then spoke to her husband about it.

'Don't you think we could afford a new rug, Henry?' she asked, timidly, because she knew that, although he might wish to please her, he was taxed to keep out of debt. 'Or a new piece of furniture,' she added, knowing that would appeal more strongly to him, 'to brighten things up a little?'

'I don't know,' he answered, slowly, glancing at the different objects. 'The stuff might be brighter, of course, but if you don't really need it, I hardly know where the money would come from. I shall have all I can do to meet my insurance this month.'

It is wonderful how expenses can be twisted and turned to cut down a little here and do without a little there, when one's heart is really set on saving a few dollars for a special purpose! The way was contrived, and before Mrs. Stewart called, Mrs. Lindsay went down town to a furniture store with six dollars to see what kind of a rocking chair she could find. She found plenty from two and a half to seven, but none of them looked very much like those at Mrs. Stewart's.

She asked to look at something better. The dealer took her to another floor, and there she saw the same class of goods that Mrs. Stewart had. But when she priced them her heart sank. The chairs ran from twelve as the very cheapest up to—well, she just caught her breath. She went down to the other floor, and selected the best bargain she could find for six dollars and ordered it sent.

When it arrived, she was not at all satis-

fied. While it made the rest look older in contrast, some of those old pieces were of superior quality, and seemed to resent the society of the cheap, new-fangled sort. Mrs. Lindsay did not know exactly what was the matter, but she felt the lack of harmony without understanding that this was the trouble.

'Well, I can't help it!' she said, desperately. 'She'll see that it's new, anyway. If she doesn't like my home she needn't call again.'

But this independence was only assumed. She felt dissatisfied, and heartily wished that her home looked like Mrs. Stewart's. When that lady called, if she noticed any difference in the homes she certainly did not show it, but made herself entirely agreeable in every way. Mrs. Lindsay had always had pleasant neighbors in that house, and was glad to believe that this was to be no exception; but she had seen the son and daughter once or twice, and wondered whether or not they would associate with hers—they were so differently dressed.

A few evenings later, George Stewart came over to see her Frank about some school work, for they were in the same grade. Mrs. Lindsay's children were well brought up, and, not being hampered by thoughts of any difference in his dress and that of George, Frank made him welcome with the true fraternity of boys. When the visitor took leave he expressed his appreciation of the 'jolly good time' he had had. Then he turned to Alice and said:

'Nell wants you to come over to-morrow. She has something to show you.'

When the children retired for the night, Mrs. Lindsay had a serious conversation with her husband.

'Henry,' she said, in a way that secured his attention, 'I like to have George and Nellie Stewart with Frank and Alice. They are well behaved, and—and—there was a little hesitation in her speech and a slight flush on her cheek—and they are in a little higher station in life than we are, so I think it will do the children good to be with them.'

'Well?' Mr. Lindsay queried, knowing that these words were only an introduction.

'Did you notice how much better dressed George was than Frank?'

'Yes, of course. His father can afford it.'

'Well,' and he saw his wife's mouth close firmly. 'I want my children to be as well dressed as those they go with. I know Alice will not be nearly as well dressed as Nellie, when she goes over to-morrow.'

'She'll be just as neat and clean, and certainly as good looking,' Mr. Lindsay responded, with some resentment in his voice.

'Yes, but—' and then she was silent for a minute or two. 'The children's clothes must be a little better,' she finally added, firmly.

'Now, look here,' Sarah, her husband returned, in a voice that was the conclusion of argument with him, 'I don't believe it will make one particle of difference with the Stewarts how our children are dressed, so long as they have good manners and are neat and clean. If it does, their friendship isn't worth having.'

'Oh, you think that "neat and clean" is all that is necessary, but I know that Frank and Alice will soon be left out if they don't have something better to wear.'

'I make just so much money and no more,' Mr. Lindsay answered. 'There are certain expenses which must be met, and you have the management of the balance. Do what you think best with it,' and he turned away.

Mrs. Lindsay set herself to the task of gathering a fund for the better clothing of her children. A nickel and a dime and a dollar here and there slowly accumulated until she was ready to make some purchases. When these were made to the best advantage and with the use of every cent, she was more dissatisfied than ever. Somehow, when her boy and girl were with George and Nellie Stewart, the contrast in the clothes appeared greater than when they had the old ones on. Although the goods were new and fresh, they lacked the quality, and consequently the trim style of the garments of the Stewarts. They looked coarser than they really were, in the eyes of the anxious mother, and the fact that they were new proclaimed the truth that no better grade could be afforded.

At this time, while Mrs. Lindsay was more unhappy than she had been for years, a sister-in-law came to pay a month's visit. She

was a woman of practical and independent mind, and she had not been in the home a week until the instructions she heard the mother give to her children, and the allusions she made to the quality of the Stewart children's clothes revealed the situation very plainly. By showing her interest and offering a few suggestions, she was soon the recipient of Mrs. Lindsay's point of view.

'Sarah,' she said one day, when there was a good opportunity, 'you are unhappier than I have seen you for years, and I've discovered the reason. Do you want to know it?'

'I ought to want to,' was the reply, given without looking up, and with the air of one who might say, 'I suppose I could find it out myself, if I should try.'

'Yes. You are trying to do what you can't do, and what there's no use in doing, anyway,' her sister declared bluntly.

'Go on, sis. You're interesting,' Mrs. Lindsay remarked, in a hard tone.

'Oh, if you are going to be offended, I haven't a word to say,' was the quick retort. 'But, Sarah, I don't like to see you unhappy,' and there was so much genuine sympathy in the kind voice that Mrs. Lindsay was overcome.

'I wish you would go on,' she replied, and her head bent lower over her work. 'I have been very unhappy, and I think I know the reason, but I want to hear it from some one else.'

'And there isn't the least need in the world for you to be!' her sister declared in a firm way. 'Your neighbors, the Stewarts, are as nice people as I ever saw, and instead of enjoying them you are keeping yourself miserable trying to imitate them. Were you able to live in their style and dress as they do, if you wanted to imitate them it would be silly enough, but it might not make you especially unhappy. But now you are only able to do a very cheap imitation—in fact, it isn't an imitation at all, only an attempt—and your failure keeps your nerves rasped up all the time. Mrs. Stewart thinks less of you for it—and she can see your attempt, depend upon it—and would much rather you would be just yourself.'

'I have known what I am doing, for a long time,' Mrs. Lindsay replied, in a relieved tone at the opportunity to discuss her burden. 'But I did so want Frank and Alice to go with these children, and I was afraid they couldn't unless they were as well dressed.'

'Well, and if they couldn't? Was it worth ruining your home about? If the Stewart children didn't like Frank and Alice as they were dressed, always neat and clean, I am sure they wouldn't for the sake of a few new garments—especially when they are not in their class in garments, anyhow.'

'I tell you, Sarah, a whole lot of people are making themselves miserable trying to imitate others,' and her sister spoke very



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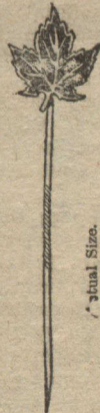
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