

THINGS THAT ARE CAESARS.

Lucy Birchfield took her stand before the massive chimney-piece with a determined air of possession.

"A trip I'm used to, thank you!" Lucy replied, the glow of ownership deepening as she settled herself in a chair which was not the one Electa had softly pushed forward.

"Oh, I understand how dear the old place must be to you, and I do hope you will always feel—"

"Dear to me! Why, it's home! My father was born here, and my grandfather left it to Aunt Rachel because she loved it and had always lived here.

"That's easy, after you've got it all! I'd like to know how long this work, as you call it, would go on, or what you'd be doing with yourself, if it weren't for Thorburn's money?"

"I'm not helping," flashed the girl, with sudden spirit, her calm beauty kindling in so unexpected a way that Mrs. Birchfield felt her self-erected pedestal tremble beneath her.

"Surely you know," Electa went on, "that I'll never use the money for personal ends. I will use it as she used it. I mean to carry out all her wishes. I am bound by the most sacred obligation—her trust in me."

"Her trust in you! It's incredible—putting a fortune into your hands like that, away from her natural heirs forever!"

"Why not? The house where she carried on a great work."

"Pauperizing a set of lazy men and women who ought to be out in the world making a living!"

Electa's faith in her work made her careless of the sneer, but she longed to justify the dear old friend who had trusted her.

"You know," she said, "how strongly Miss Thornbury felt about the right and wrong use of money."

"Oh, I suppose she told you that my husband was a gambler," the other interrupted hardly, "because he took risks and lost money on the Stock Exchange! Well, it's true. I don't blame him—not a bit."

"She thought that he should have been content. You had enough—"

"What did she know about enough, or you either? Does one ever have enough when there are five children? Oh, it's too much; I can't bear it!" Lucy sprang up, passionately striking her little hands together.

"You shut yourself away from the world, you see nothing as it really is, and then you attempt to judge the rest of us; to decide what we need or don't need. I'm not afraid to tell you what I believe! I believe a family is the best thing on God's earth, and family claims come first, every time. I want my children to take the place my father and grandfather had before them. I want them to be well-educated, well-dressed, well-established, to live with their own sort, to be proper figures in the world they belong to. That's their birthright, and you've robbed them of it; you've schemed to get it away from them. It takes money, and lots of it too, to keep one's place in the world; there's no use pretending anything different. I'm not a hypocrite; I say what I think. I want my children to have their place. That's my duty, and it's my religion, too!"

Electa had risen and stood looking down at the little hard, hot face and trembling hands. How could she feel anything but love and pity for this blind, starving soul? Her arms went out in a movement of tenderness.

"Oh, my dear, how unhappy you must be! Don't you see how small they are, how worthless, these things that you are living for, that you want for your children?"

Lucy drew back, ignoring the reaching hands. Beneath the tenderness she felt a touch of that unconscious spiritual arrogance that can see no way but its own. She faced Electa with an unflinching eye.

"They may be small, they may be worthless—the things I want. But, such as they are, I mean to get them!"

Six months later the case of Birchfield versus Cragin was under way.

"Single women aren't fit to handle property," declared Mr. Sheldon, of the law firm of Sheldon and Hollister, as he and his young partner went up the courthouse steps together.

"They're the natural prey of the fakir, and the better they are the quicker they get fooled. Women seem to lose all their common sense unless they are tied down by a husband and babies of their own. Now this Miss Rachel Thornbury, she was the salt of the earth—"

"Oh, it's a perfectly clear case," John Hollister assented; "the sort of thing that happens all the time. But I confess I'm puzzled by the other woman, this Miss Cragin. I can't quite make her out. A fanatic, of course—"

"Fanatic fiddlesticks! An adventuress—after the money from the start. Don't be fooled by her. Fra Angelico face and skimpy dress."

alleged that Electa Cragin, a beneficiary and dependent of Mrs. Thornbury, had taken advantage of her situation by exercising undue influence upon the testatrix at a time when she was not of sound and disposing mind by reason of advanced age and failing health, thereby inducing her to destroy an earlier will in favor of her niece and heir-at-law, Lucy Birchfield, and to devise and bequeath her entire estate to the said Electa Cragin.

Mrs. Birchfield's witnesses had produced a marked effect by their distinction and straightforward testimony. Electa had listened with a failing heart, cut by every word—for it was all true, yet true in a way that made the words themselves seem false. True that she had never left Miss Thornbury alone, even with the physician. How should she leave one who was so touchingly dependent upon her, who clung to her even more wistfully when others were present? And true that she had assumed control at Thornbury's death as the work dropped from her friend's weakened hands. She had thrown herself wholly into the cause of her benefactress, sure of her own motive, oblivious to possible imputations. And now it was an outrage that these worldly, goods-burdened people should think her bent on personal gain—she who, with all the Thornbury estate in her name, felt no sense of possession. She had gone from court in dismay. Could she ever explain? Could she make them see?

"No," she told herself. "My own words will be used against me. They cannot understand."

So on this second day she walked into court as to an ordeal of which she alone guessed. Lucy Birchfield, very trim in a black cloth suit, calculated to delight the eye of the most exacting tailor, and touched with youth and prettiness by the unflinching cosmetic, excitement—dropped her eyes as Electa took her place at the other end of the counsel table. The two women had not met since their interview six months before.

Visitors were gathering expectantly, and Electa, with a chill of apprehension, suddenly realized that it was she whom their curious eyes were seeking. But she gave no sign of disquiet, and when her name was called moved forward to the witness stand with the usual modest composure that made part of her quaint charm. The nun-like brown dress which she wore failed to obscure the youth of her figure, and the little round hat which rested on the coils of her copper-gleaming hair seemed innocently to disavow its own primness.

"It is very effective to be different," Mrs. Birchfield cynically whispered to Hollister; then flushed with annoyance at the warmth of his assent.

But calm as Electa appeared, she found it hard to breathe in this atmosphere of antagonism and resentment. Yet she had never once doubted her right to fight for her inheritance. All her life she had flamed with a longing to help and save, and she accepted the fortune as a mysterious fulfillment. She had the martyr's ardent moments when she felt herself chosen to uphold the life of faith before a mocking world, to fling the divine challenge to the forces of evil, and her eager imagination transformed even her attorney to an appointed instrument in this high warfare,—though to the uninitiated he would seem but imperfectly adapted to spiritual ends. This ramble-jointed personage now walked back and forth in front of his client as he questioned her, his hands in his pockets, his manner a mingling of jocular and assurance.

But he soon proved his adroitness. Quickly and easily he drew forth Electa's story. The girl told how, some six years earlier, she had given up teaching in a public school that she might devote herself to evangelistic work. She had always meant to be a missionary. Her very name bestowed upon her by a Scotch father who had brought the deep religion of his rugged hills to a Pennsylvania farm, had set her apart for a life of service. She spoke very simply; one could see that she was too inexperienced to realize what her own courage had been in throwing aside a bread-winning occupation for the sake of a conviction and facing the world with faith as her only asset. She told of her meeting with Miss Thornbury, who had immediately urged her to help in the establishment of a mission at Thornbury. At first she had hesitated. "I had to wait for a leading," she said, and on her lips the worn phrase had a flavor of his Pollock, the lawyer, dexterously showed her throughout as the trusted adviser of her old friend, careful never to abuse this confidence, never to take the initiative. Intent only upon the truth of her answers, she was scarcely aware of the court-room and of the favorable impression made by her testimony. Once she began an eager explanation in reply to a question concerning the nature of her teaching when a sudden "I object" from the counsel for the plaintiff cut sharply across her eloquence.

"Irrelevant and immaterial," said John Hollister.

Electa fell back, her cheeks helplessly aflame.

"There's fire there—and a heart," thought Hollister in an unprofessional instant.

Electa finally testified as to the clearness of Miss Thornbury's mind when her last will was drawn, stating that she had not been present and had been told nothing whatever in regard to it. Mr. Pollock then yielded to the counsel for the plaintiff. Electa had a wild impulse to run. She felt that a relentless machine was opening to entrap her.

John Hollister drew his chair forward for the cross-examination. Their eyes met, and his were steady and candid as her own. Instantly she felt a soul in the machine. This man cared for something more than the winning or losing of a case. The spirit of justice in her sprang to meet the spirit of justice in him.

He was very unlike the men she had known—the missionaries, itinerant preachers, and reformed drunkards of her little sphere. His strong figure and well-made clothes implied attention to corporeal things, but there was a clear hint of idealism in the face, marked as it was with early lines of decision and purpose.

There was nothing terrifying in his deliberate manner, but the pertinence of his queries and his intimate knowledge of her life astonished Electa. Gradually she began to see that she was again revealing herself, but how differently! It was not herself! Or was it? The tone and wording of each question determined the significance of the answer. The same story—but so different! She sat tingling, pilloried, blindly awaiting the questions. Again and again her lawyer thrust an objection to the rescue. Arguing, wrangling, the opposing attorneys seemed to be playing a game in which she was only a passive pawn. She had thought it so easy to speak the truth. Now she saw truth as double-faced, elusive, fleeing before her.

But this grave, clear-eyed young man pursued his tactics unflinched.

"You knew that there had been an earlier will in favor of Miss Thornbury's relative, Mrs. Birchfield?"

"Yes."

"You knew also that she had made a later will?"

"No, I didn't know," she answered very low.

"You did not know? You had no suspicion that you were the beneficiary under a new will?"

"I did not know it. No one ever told me." Electa's face whitened. "But"—she stopped a moment, then broke out suddenly—"yes, I did suspect, I did know, I was sure!"

The court-room rippled with surprise. "You knew and you did not know. Please be more definite."

"No one told me," she repeated. "You mean then that you were morally certain?"

"Yes."

"And why had you this moral certainty?"

"I knew her feeling about the work—about money—that her money was not her own to spend or bequeath—it was dedicated to the cause of the poor."

"Giving this money to you she was, so to speak, carrying out her purposes?"

"She believed so—yes!" Electa lifted her head.

"You shared her feeling about the use of money?"

"I shared it."

"Was her conviction on this point fully settled before you went to live with her?"

"I don't know—how can I tell?" she faltered. "Her convictions grew—we talked things over—"

"Her religious convictions were partly the result of her association and conversations with you?"

"She would always ask me what I thought and believed—yes?"

"And your thought and belief always had weight with her?"

She hardly heard her own answer, given blindly, for she was very tired. The air of the sunny court-room had grown stifling, steamy with needless heat, and she seemed to be trying to push her way through a substance invisible and baffling. A window had been opened, letting in jingling, jerky sounds from the street which hurt her like blows. The white-haired, quizz-eyed judge rocked in his chair with singular indifference. On her left sat the jury, their faces like twelve plates in a row; the court stenographer wrote scratchily, and she felt every stroke of his imperturbable pen; out of the assembly, which swam before her, she could detach Lucy Birchfield's face alone, looking back at her with narrowed eyes and remote smile.

People began to move. It was the noon recess and the room emptied quickly. Electa stumbled a little as she stepped out of the assembly, which swam before her, and put out a steady hand.

"Good, Miss Cragin, good!" he said in a loud whisper. "You held your own; you're a first-rate witness." And Lucy Birchfield's smile became less sure as she overheard. Her son, a lad of seventeen, was standing beside her. "Don't worry, mother; it'll come out all right sure," he said as he threw his arm about her shoulders and led her from the room.

Electa suddenly felt alone. No sympathy was to be expected just then from her disciples, that was plain. Having brought lunch baskets to court, they were actively concerned with hard-boiled eggs and piles of thick sandwiches. Electa turned from their homely banquet with a shiver of distaste.

Struggling in the swirl of new impressions, she crossed to the open window and stood looking out at the ragged crest of hills beyond the river. Then earth and sky grew black and she dropped to a chair, her eyes closed. Instantly some one was at her side, holding a glass of water to her lips. "Drink this," said the voice that had piloted her to court, they were here, she looked up at John Hollister, and flung a quick little cry.

"Oh, don't you know that I'm in the right? Please say you believe in me!"

He set the glass carefully down on the window-sill before he replied.

"I can't discuss the case with you—you must see that it isn't possible. And I can't say that you are in the right. But I do believe in you."

Electa lay awake that night. Something was happening, something that she didn't understand. Never before had she experienced this creeping, chilling self-trust. She had always been sure. And what did this other thing mean? Thisaching sense of the common life of the world with its warmth of human ties? Strong, real, compelling, the things she had always denied rose before her, and the traditions—yes, even the sacrifices and services—shrank back and dwindled like the Goode Deedes in the morality play she had once seen. She tossed until the November dawn began to glimmer through the bare apple boughs outside her window. Then, as she lay quiet, at last an answer seemed to shape itself out of the stillness in old familiar words: "Forego desire, and thou shalt find rest."

On the third day the pensioners of Thornbury were called to the stand, and one after another they offered the same testimony: the mental competence and independence of Miss Thornbury up to the day of her death. The accumulation of evidence brought no comfort to Electa. For the first time she found herself trying to realize the event from Lucy Birchfield's point of view. What did it prove, this examination of witnesses? Gradually she lost consciousness of the progress of the case in her tense inward effort to find the soul of truth in the confusing array of facts.

An old negress, for years in the service of Miss Thornbury and now doggedly attached to Electa, was called to the stand. At sight of her Electa tried to arouse herself to other things. "What can Aunty have to tell?" she wondered. "Why should Mr. Pollock summon her?"

Auntie smoothed out the folds of her best black dress and played consequentiality with her bonnet strings. Her high cheek bones shone from the scrubbing she had received; cur, jing lured in her lean, brown face, and her beady eyes suggested some primeval creature intent on self-preservation.

She was eager to speak, and Mr. Pollock's question, "Did you have any talk with Miss Thornbury after she was confined to her bed?" brought a ready answer:

"Oh, yas, sir!"

The lawyer seemed amused. "Well, tell us what conversation you had."

"It was this way. She was speakin' 'bout the lak, yo' know, sir, an' she says to me lak this, 'Auntie, in case I die stay here right along, don' yo' never on no 'count go away fur to leave Miss Birchfield.' After she talk that-a-way, I says, 'I never heard nothin' 'bout the way the

home work when yo' pass over Jordan, Miss Rachel,' an' she says, 'Why I thought yo' all knowed 'bout that. Ever' thing yo' go on is the same lak it is now.' Electa listened in amazement. Was it possible that old Auntie, the gossip of Thornbury, should have heard such significant words from her benefactress and yet have kept silence? There had been much uneasy speculation in the little community during Miss Thornbury's illness, though Electa had honestly done her best to suppress it. Frightened, suspicious, she dared not raise her eyes during Auntie's cross-examination. The old woman showed a guarded shrewdness in her grasp of the main issue. Bland and unconfused, never wavering, never contradicting herself, she stuck persistently to her statements. Even Hollister couldn't help joining in the general laugh when she foiled him two or three times by her blank reiterations. She had been thoroughly drilled. She left the stand, feeling her triumph, and halted for Electa's approval, but the girl sat drooping.

Humiliation wrapped her as in a flame. How could the lawyer think that she would descend to dodging and quibbling? And did Auntie know her so little after all these years of her teaching? A crumbling tremor shook the foundations of her life. Somewhere there had been a fatal flaw. The court adjourned, bustling. John Hollister was at her elbow gathering up some books from the counsel table, but she did not look at him. He made a movement as if to speak, then, respecting the silence of misery, he left the room with only a backward glance.

A hand fell familiarly on her shoulder, insensible to her recoil.

"Come, Miss Cragin," said Pollock, "don't be downhearted." He bent over her, his hand on her forehead, and she sickened. "It's all going our way. The jury is with you to a man, I'm keeping back the best witnesses for the last."

At that she found words. "No more witnesses for the last?"

"At that she found words. 'No more witnesses!' she cried. 'This case must not go on. I don't know how to stop it, I don't know the legal method, but it must not go on!'"

"You didn't like calling the old ducky? Oh, I see! Well, perhaps that was a mistake. We didn't really need her. Our case is strong enough for the last."

Her hand wrung a protest. "You don't understand. It's more than that. I'm wrong—I won't take the money! Now do you see?"

"Good God, girl, you are clean crazy—that's what I see! You won't take the money! I like that! What about me? Do you s'pose I've gone into this thing for charity?" He pounded his meaning into the table. "Why, we can't stop! Juggle with the law like that? Make a fool of the court? Besides, the other side's got no case. It's you who are in the right! He won't let the dumb shake of her head. Of course you are right. Undue influence! They've proved nothing! It was kindness, care, attention—nothing that can invalidate a will. She meant you to have her property. You know it!"

"Because down in my heart I meant to have it!"

He shifted roughly. "S'pose you did? That's legitimate. We all get what we can. She wanted you to have it; that's the point that concerns us. It was her free will."

"My will was hers. She thought what I thought, believed as I believed. And the secret wish of my heart—O, God help me! Her hands went up to hide her face."

He scowled down upon her, then tried persuasion.

"Come, come, you mustn't give way. We'll talk it over after you've had a bit of lunch. You're all tired out now. That's what the matter—you're nervous!" And he believed he had the clew to all feminine caprice.

When the case was resumed at one o'clock there was a general impression that the defendant had vindicated her position. It was apparent, however, that Miss Cragin was not in triumphant mood. The contest had wearied her. But her attorney's swagger betrayed his exultance. The Birchfields were losing hope. Tom whispered disgustedly to his wife: "I can't see a pretty red-headed girl with a go-to-the-spot voice and put her on the stand before twelve men, and you can bet on the verdict ev'ry time."

"Oh, you men! That's the worst of it." Lucy dejectedly admitted the perversities that sometimes control human affairs, but she was plucky and meant that no one should suspect what the loss of the suit would cost her in disappointment and actual financial worry.

"You're game, Lucy," murmured Tom with an appreciative vivacity.

Electa sat in a trance-like stillness while the remaining witnesses were called. A black-bearded apostle from Thornbury offered some conclusive evidence, and the case became so one-sided that it ceased to be interesting. People began to wonder why it had ever occurred to the Birchfields to try to set aside so unspontaneous a document. The apostle acquitted himself neatly and was leaving the stand when Electa rose.

"Your honor, please, I must be heard." Her voice rang out through the court-room.

Every eye was turned toward her. Pollock was on his feet, interposing quickly.

"Your honor, I ask indulgence for my client. She is not well. May I have your permission to take her to the consultation room?"

"Your honor," said Electa, "can see that I am perfectly well. My attorney has refused to speak for me. I ask your leave to speak for myself."

The judge looked at her searchingly, then bowed assent.

"We will allow the defendant to be heard."

In the quivering, expectant hush of the court-room she spoke. It seemed quite simple. She had only to tell of what had passed in her mind. Now that she knew her way and could speak in utter sincerity, not a presence embarrassed her—not the judge, preoccupied with the difficulties in legal procedure she had thrust upon him; not Pollock, balked and non-plussed; not the plaintiff, dumb in bewilderment, nor the jury straining forward; nor the spectators, assured at last of their full meed of sensation. In a swift, sure words she laid bare her conflict of motive.

At the end she spoke more slowly. "Everything would have been different if I had been different," she said. "I can see that now. I'm not so sure that I've always been right. I don't know! I only know that I can never touch that money!"

Pollock cut in with apologies to the court for her conduct. "This is what comes, your honor, from dealing with religious cranks!"

Mr. Sheldon arose and addressed the court.

FOR AND ABOUT WOMEN.

DAILY THOUGHT.

Religion is no leaf of faded green. Or flower of vanished fragrance pressed between.

Of love it springeth, watered by good deeds, —John T. Trowbridge.

The smart new lingerie blouses that have just made their appearance have armholes and long small sleeves finished at the wrist with an ornamental band of a turnover cuff. Suddenly, out of the clear sky, it is not considered modish any more to have an everyday blouse made in kimono fashion.

No doubt you will continue to wear them, as every one else will, but the unwritten word has gone forth in some mysterious way that the return to the blouse of another day is desirable. Therefore the new waists of striped silk, voile, batiste and marquisette are made with the conventional shoulder seam and the small armhole.

The startling new thing abroad is called the harem blouse. It is cut on the kimono pattern with the long underarm seam and it fastens down the top of each sleeve from shoulder to wrist. It is a queer looking garment, but fashionable, and when it is on it looks as conventional as all the others.

The fastening may be with buttons and buttonholes, or hooks and eyes under a band of lace, or tiny silk cords, or satin fastenings may be as demure or as ornamental as one chooses.

Nearly all the blouses now have detachable stocks, with short yokes, which can be used whenever one desires to have the neck covered. This necessitates a rather high neck in the blouse. The kind that is cut off exactly at the collar bone is artistic, and is usually avoided by all women except those who are extremely young.

The best line is a little low in front and slightly rounded out at the back. This can be finished with a sailor collar, or a round Puritan one, or a piping with a yoke and stock above of net. The latter is the preferred for separate stocks and collars for certain kinds of blouses, although white chiffon cloth is preferred by the dressmakers for gowns that have any width.

Swat the fly.—Screen all windows and doors, especially the kitchen and dining-room. Keep the flies away from the sick, especially those ill with contagious diseases. Kill every fly that strays into the sick room. His body is covered with disease germs.

Do not allow decaying materials of any sort to accumulate on or near your premises.

All refuse which tends in any way to fermentation, such as bedding, straw, paper waste and vegetable matter, should be disposed of or covered with lime or kerosene oil.

Screen all food. Keep all receptacles for garbage carefully covered and the cans cleaned or sprinkled with oil or lime.

Keep all stable waste in vault or pit, screened or sprinkled with lime, oil or other cheap preparation.

Cover food after a meal; burn or bury all table refuse. Screen all food exposed for sale. Don't forget, if you see flies, their breedings are in nearby filth. It may be behind the door, under the table or in the cuspidor.

If there is no dirt and filth there will be no flies.

The following are different ways in which milk may be prepared for children who dislike to take milk:

Beat the yolk of an egg light, add a teaspoonful of sugar and a teaspoonful of lemon juice; fill the cup with milk, stir well and call the mixture snow lemonade.

Heat a cupful of milk, but do not let it boil, sweeten it and flavor with a little cinnamon and pour from a tiny teapot, calling it cinnamon tea.

Put a cupful of milk and the white of one egg into a glass jar; add a little sugar, screw down the top of the jar and shake until the ingredients are thoroughly blended; flavor with orange and serve it as orangeade.

Cocoa made with milk is liked by most children and is even more nutritious than the milk alone.

The hanging panel at the back of the skirt is being exploited on cloth suits and on linen frocks. It is becoming, easily, applied and covers the fastening of the skirt.

Many of the Eton jackets have large revers. They are either the supple, folded satin shapes or the straight flat ones. They can be of contrasting color, embroidered and beaded.

Softest satin is now used for all petticoats. It is a fad of the season to have the shade of the lining of the coat. Colored linings rather than white are fashionable. Except in tailored costumes, one scarcely ever sees a single skirt. Nearly every one hangs over a second one, which is in turn often split to reveal still another skirt, simulated by a panel of lace, silk or embroidery.

What summer girl does not wish to have dainty shoes and stockings to match her evening gowns? Even the girl whose spending money is far from plentiful may yet boast of these pretty accessories if she cares to take the time and trouble.

White canvas pumps may be "blue" or "pinked" or "lavendered" with applications of a preparation to be gotten at any shoe store, and afterward rewhitened. Another method is to paint the shoes with a solution of gasoline and oil paint, a very small portion of the paint being necessary to give the desired result. Old satin or kid slippers of whatever color may be bronzed with several coatings of the regular bronze polish, and finally blackened for house wear.

Of course, white stockings may be dyed almost any shade. Faded brown stockings and others of light shades are satisfactorily dyed dark brown or black.

Table decorations for a June luncheon are exceedingly pretty arranged in the following way: Cover the table with a cloth of plain white damask, then lay over it a lattice work of pale, pink satin ribbon. This structure is made of ribbon and is fastened to the table at each corner of the four-inch squares with a tiny French rose. Where the lattice ends fringe the ribbons. Place in the center a round flat basket of pink and white flowers, and above the table arrange a canopy or large umbrella of blossoms. Those made of the crepe paper are very natural, light and easy to work with, and the effect is very dainty.

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