

The Extra Christmas Plate

By ROBERT J. C. STEAD

ON THE fourth Christmas in succession Nellie Martin set an extra plate. On past Christmases her husband and the two boys had pretended not to have noticed it. But this year Fred Martin, walking into the big dining room just as his wife was adding the finishing touches to her Christmas table, stopped when his eye fell on the extra plate.

"I think you shouldn't set it, Nellie," he said, gently. "It only reminds us of—things we would be better to forget."

Mrs. Martin brushed a capable, floury hand quickly across her eyes. Things would go blurry when she thought of Lucy.

"Let me leave it just once more," she almost pleaded. "It is more than four years now since Lucy went, and every day I am hoping for her back. Particularly at Christmas I like to think that her place is set and waiting for her. Oh, Fred, if we could let her know."

Fred's hand found hers, where it had rested a moment against the table for support. "I know," he said huskily. "I was wrong in turning her out as I did. I thought the honor of the family demanded it. I thought perhaps she would write; that is, if she is still . . ."

He left the sentence unfinished. Death might not have been unwelcome to Lucy, and four years of silence left them to draw their own conclusions.

"Lucy is too proud to write," his wife asserted. "And yet, I have always felt that sometime she would come back. Perhaps at Christmas."



That is the time of year when one just can't help thinking of home.

"If that Blake boy had been any good," Fred lamented. "She was just throwing herself away on him. That is why I gave her the choice of giving him up or getting out. I wanted to save her. And she got out."

"I know," his wife agreed. "You meant it for the best. Arthur Blake was said to be wild and useless, but the Blake's are a good family, and I've often noticed that boys of a good family generally straighten up again, even if they do go a little wild for a while. You know, Fred, when I married you there were people who said you were, well, just a little—"

"But I got a wife like you," her husband answered. "That makes all the difference."

"Yes, and Arthur got a wife like Lucy—if he married her," Nellie Martin insisted. "Let me leave the plate once more. I'm not giving up hope—"

At that moment the boys were heard coming in by the kitchen door. There were muffled voices, and a sound as though they were helping some one.

George, the elder, appeared in the dining room door, and his face summoned his mother.

"Some one here to see you, Mom," he said, in an awed voice.

In the kitchen Mrs. Martin found a woman sitting on a chair, her head turned away, her figure enclosed in a



frayed cloth coat. Soberly she crossed the kitchen floor and turned the head to her eyes.

"Lucy!" she cried. "Lucy—"

The girl made as though she would speak, but seemed overcome. Her mother dropped to her knees beside her, chaffing her hands, speaking words of endearment, crying for Fred and the boys.

"We found her in the snow, just between the barn and the house," the boys explained. "She seemed to have

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fallen there."

But right then Lucy seemed to come to life. She sprang to her feet. "Mother—Dad—I can't keep it from you any longer. Please help me off with my coat."

Willing hands drew it from her shoulders. "Why, Lucy!" her mother exclaimed, "you are well dressed."

"Well enough, mother. You see, Arthur wanted to be sure how you would receive your erring daughter before he would agree to come in."

"Arthur!"

"Yes. He is in the cutter with little Nellie, just beyond the wind-break. Boys, will you run and tell him?"

The boys dashed off, but Fred Martin seemed the most excited of all. "Two extra plates, Mother!" he shouted. "Two extra plates—and a high chair!"

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CITATION

In the County Court of the State of Oregon, for Marion County.

In the Matter of the Estate of Mary Eastburn, deceased.

To D. F. Eastburn, Daisy B. Myers, Rosa E. Darby, L. E. Eastburn, F. A. Eastburn, S. T. Eastburn, John Eastburn, Mary V. Drury, Charles Eastburn, F. A. Garbe, Ralph Garbe, Virginia Garbe, Sheldon Phillips, Hildred Perkins, Venetta May Perkins, Varnell Phillips, and Glenn Titus:

Whereas application has been made in due form in the above entitled cause on the 25th day of November, 1930, by D. F. Eastburn, administrator in the above name estate for an order and license directing and empowering him to sell certain real property of the estate of the deceased, which real property is particularly described as follows:

Beginning at a point in the center of Cleveland Avenue in Merrifield's Addition to the Town of Aumsville

in Marion County, Oregon, which said point is 11.967 chains West of the Northeast corner of said Merrifield's Addition to the Town of Aumsville; running thence West along the center of said Cleveland Avenue 3.39 chains to the center of Fifth Street in the Town of Aumsville; thence North on a direct line with the center of said Fifth Street 2.99 chains; thence East 3.31 chains to a 16 foot right of way heretofore granted to R. L. Randall, and now owned by Chefings; thence South along the west side of said right of way 2.99 chains to the place of beginning, containing one acre, more or less, situated in Section 25, T. 8 South, Range 2 West of the Willamette Meridian in Marion County, Oregon.

Also the east one-half of the following described premises, to-wit:

Beginning at a point 20.08 chains north and 3.47 chains east of the Southwest corner of the Allen J. Davie and Cynthia Davie D. L. C. Notification No. 53, in Township 9, South Range 1, West of the Willamette Meridian in Marion County, Oregon; thence North 40.00 chains to the center of the Stayton and Aumsville County

Road; thence South 73 degrees 45 minutes East 11.43 chains; thence South 36.84 chains; thence West 10.97 chains to the place of beginning, containing 42.15 acres of land.

The property herein last described being 21.075 acres of land.

And whereas this court has fixed the 19th day of January, 1931, at the hour of ten o'clock a. m. in the room of the County Court in the court house in Salem, Marion County, Oregon, as the time and place for the hearing of any and all objections to said petition and the granting of said order and license to sell.

Now therefore, in the name of the State of Oregon, you, and each of you, are hereby cited, directed and required to be and appear at said time and place then and there to show cause, if any exists, why an order should not be made as in the petition prayed for, and why said petition should not be granted and said license should not be issued.

Witness the Honorable J. C. Siegmund, Judge, with the seal of said court affixed this 26th day of November, 1930.

(Seal) U. G. BOYER,
County Clerk.

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