

The Remarkable Paradox of the Dahlgren Sisters

How the Blue Blood of the Famous Drexels Seems to Run Red and White in These Strangely Opposite Types—Lucy Shocks Her Aristocratic Antecedents by Renouncing the World for the Cloister, While Katherine, the Fastest Woman Driver in America, Stuns Them With Her Law-Breaking Antics in a High-Powered Motor



Lucy Drexel Dahlgren, who astounded the social world by taking the veil and retiring to a convent for the remainder of her life.



Katherine Drexel Dahlgren, who has shocked staid old New England by her mad driving of a high-powered racing car.



HOW can explain the strange paradox in the lives of Lucy and Katherine Dahlgren? Descendants of the famous Drexels, in whose blue blood runs high pride and social haughtiness, these girls have upset family tradition to a startling degree.

Lucy has renounced the world for the convent, while Katherine has shocked her aristocratic antecedents by her wild antics in a high-powered motor car.

The glaring discrepancy between the cloister and the speeders' court has set all the East asking why.

It has been a paradox of the most sensational form. One girl turns her back upon the world (and a very pleasant world it should have been for her, what with wealth and high society at her feet), while the other maiden violates the canon of dignity which the old, old Drexel family cherished and gets "pinched" (plain, ordinary pinched) time after time.

Sensations Foreign to Drexels.

The Dahlgren sisters are granddaughters of Joseph Drexel, head of the house universally noted in financial and social circles. They are members of a family that has the bluest of Philadelphia blue blood, the most cherished traditions of scrupulous dignity and quietude.

Sensation played no part in the annals of the Drexels until Lucy Drexel Dahlgren suddenly sought divorce from her husband, Eric B. Dahlgren. The complaint came like a clap of thunder to society, accustomed as it was to holding up the Drexels as the paragons of modesty and as exemplifying the blessings of seemly demeanor. All the world knew that the Drexels' proudest boast had been that it had never had a divorce among its members.

Society Stood Aghast.

That was in 1912. Before the edge was off the keenness of this bright piece of gossip another of the Drexel daughters went into the divorce court. Explosive comment and excitement was redoubled.

Mrs. J. Duncan Emmet, younger sister of Mrs. Eric B. Dahlgren, asked and obtained marital freedom.

"What is the dignified old family coming to, anyway?" asked the exclusive society folk of New York and Philadelphia.

Now, three years later, echoes of this pair of divorces have come rattling back upon the "400."

Two daughters of Mrs. Eric B. Dahlgren have performed startling acts, the responsibility for which intimate friends of the Drexel family attribute to the shattering of tradition in 1912.

Miss Lucy Drexel Dahlgren, the eldest of the daughters, is studying in seclusion for the final vows that will make her a Sister of the Blessed Sacrament, destined to go down into the most miserable hovels of the negroes in southern states and bring relief to the wretches there.

Two years younger than Lucy is Katherine, "Katherine the Madcap," they call her. Even at the moment her elder sister was meditating in solemn solitude Katherine was setting all the countryside about Lenox, Mass., agog with her wild automobile escapades.

Drove Officers of Law Frantic.

The village constables grew frantic at her defiance of all laws and regulations. They arrested her for speeding no less than six times, fined her often, warned her again and again, and finally had to take her license away. Once they got wind of her proposed race with a motorcycle speed fiend and dragged her into court again to receive an official threat.

To all of these admonitions, fines and restraints of the law Katherine laughed. At her mother's pleadings she laughed, too. At public indignation she laughed.

When the drawing-rooms first resounded to these reports the old-time intimates of the Drexel family threw up their hands in amazement. "Since those two divorces things haven't been the same. When the Drexel reputation of freedom from divorce or scandal was broken Lucy Dahlgren went into a convent and Katherine became a harum-scarum auto speeder."

You may now hear just such statements

as these made in the inner circles of society in the East.

Furthermore, Katherine has developed a peculiar fondness for eccentric and bizarre clothing, affecting flowing Grecian robes and a jeweled fillet about her brow that is in marked contrast to the Quakerlike demerity of her family's traditional attire.

Made Brilliant Match.

In 1890 Lucy Wharton Drexel married Eric B. Dahlgren. Their wedding was a brilliant one socially. She, daughter of the financial lord, Joseph Drexel, the heiress to not less than \$20,000,000; he the son of Admiral Dahlgren, celebrated civil war hero and inventor of the widely used Dahlgren gun.

Each had been reared in an atmosphere sternly opposed to divorce or to any action that savored of a desire for publicity.

The strictest code of morals, veritably puritanic rules, commanded the Drexel family. There had never been a divorce in it and there never would be, decided Mrs. Drexel.

Her two daughters left at home were married later, one of them to John Duncan Emmet and the other to Dr. Charles Bingham Penrose. The young Dahlgren couple were happy, so the world thought. Eight children came to them. All are living. Lucy is 23, Madeline 22, Katherine 21, Ulrica 19, Olga 17, Eric 14, Joseph 12 and Eva 11 years of age.

Dancing Led to Divorce.

In March, 1912, the divorce papers were brought out in court. Eric Dahlgren was accused of having been guilty of misconduct with a Mrs. Bradley. He admitted having dined her at Rector's and having taken her to her apartments along in the "small hours" of night. He claimed, however, that the wine he had consumed overcame him in the apartments and that he fell down in a stupor, from which he did not recover until 6:30 the next morning. The complaint charged merely that detectives had seen him dancing with Mrs. Bradley upon the street as they wound their way homeward and that he had lavished many

endearments upon his companion during the leisurely journey, and that she had responded in like manner.

The court decided in favor of the complaining wife and gave her both the decree and the custody of the eight children.

A peculiar feature of the case was the departure of Mrs. Dahlgren with her daughter Lucy for Europe upon the same day that the complaint was filed. Throughout the trial the girl, the only mature one of the children, remained with her mother, counseling and sustaining her in all the difficulties.

When the separation was complete Mrs. Dahlgren took her family and settled on the estate "Bel Air," near Lenox, Mass. From this home the two daughters, Lucy and Katherine, went forth upon their errands, so strikingly different.

Did the heartaches and miseries caused by the divorce proceedings turn Lucy Drexel Dahlgren against the world?

Also, did this break-up of a proud tradition make Katherine Drexel Dahlgren say, "I don't care"? Did she suddenly develop "speed" manias and dashing daredevil manners because the century-old habits of the Drexels were removed?

Lucy is now Sister Maria Lucia. Until the summer of 1913, when she suddenly

took the vows, she was looked upon as one of the most brilliant of the society girls of New York and Philadelphia. She was brought into the world of society by her aunt, Mrs. Penrose, in 1910 and for two seasons was feted and sought for.

Often the "400" has awakened of a morning to find that one of their number has gained the laws of conventionality

as laid down by their neighbors. In most cases a ready explanation was at hand, as hereditary traits were named as the cause of the fall from grace.

In the case of the Dahlgren girls, however, the time-worn ready answer cannot be given, and so society knits its brow in perplexity.