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Thomasine's Choice

And How She Became Rich

By CLARISSA MACKIE

For twenty years Aunt Lucia Morgan had boarded with Mrs. Deacon Flint, and the two front rooms she occupied in that comfortable house comprised the only home she had known since she broke up housekeeping after her husband's death. She had saved the choicest of her furniture and personal belongings and either given away the remainder or sold them. She was known to have a snug sum of money in the bank, for the Morgans had been well to do and had lived on their interest money.

When Aunt Lucia died all her relatives, who were nieces and nephews, gathered to pay her the last respects. After the funeral they sat in the front room, which she had used as a parlor, and listened in silence to the reading of the brief will.

The lawyer, Mr. Rhodes, polished his eyeglasses and adjusted them to his long nose.

"All the furniture in these two rooms is bequeathed to Mrs. Deacon Flint in remembrance of her never failing kindness—all the furniture with the following exceptions: Bedstead and mattresses, mahogany bureau to match, light cherry stand, work table, morris chair and wicker rocker—to be divided among my four nieces—Jane Morris, Ann Spires, Fanny Ray and Thomasine Wells—and my two nephews—George Giles and Luke Howe—in whatever manner my esteemed friend Henry Rhodes may deem wise.

"Your aunt also wishes that several personal belongings shall be divided among you in the same way. There is a marble clock, a pair of vases, brass andirons, a china lamp, a looking glass and her parrot, the stuffed parrot. You all recollect that this faithful bird was the companion of your aunt for many lonely years and that she esteemed it highly."

Thomasine was the only one who vouchsafed an acknowledgment of this tribute to the defunct bird. She never had liked parrots—she thought them noisy, screaming pests—but because poor Aunt Lucia was dead and had thought to mention her dead pet in the will Thomasine smiled and said they had all heard that the parrot was devoted to Aunt Lucia.

Something Good.

Those who hate nasty medicine should try Chamberlain's Tablets for constipation. They are pleasant to take and their effect is so agreeable and so natural that you will not realize that it has been produced by a medicine. Obtainable everywhere.

It is a melancholy fact that not even this great country has been able to provide a sufficient number of sinecures for all the lame ducks.

"The clothes and little personal belongings were distributed among her close friends before she died," went on the lawyer, referring to the will. "Your aunt has left a sum of money sufficient to cover all necessary expenses, and if there is a little surplus it is to go for the care of her burial plot.

"Here are copies of the will," said the lawyer tersely, handing around duplicates of the document. "You may keep these. You will note that Mrs. Morgan especially emphasizes the fact that each article and all it contains is to go to the one who takes it away. She also suggests that the distribution be made by choice, the oldest one having first choice. This, I think, would be very proper."

"Very well," said Ann Squires eagerly. She was the firstborn among them. The others signified assent with more or less satisfaction according to age. Thomasine Wells felt very helpless somehow. She would have liked to choose the mahogany work table. It was very pretty, with brass knobs on the drawers, but it was very likely that one of the others would want that.

Thomasine was quite poor. She had been apprenticed to a dressmaker when she was fifteen, and now she gazed at those in the few rooms she hired in a small town fifty miles from Little River. The other heirs were well to do farmer folk who had had many opportunities to visit Aunt Lucia and shower attentions upon her declining years.

"As Miss Wells must return to her home early tomorrow morning," remarked the lawyer, "it would seem best for the heirs to make their choice now, and after the will has been probated the articles will be sent on to the owners. I have a list of the heirs compiled from the family Bible, and as Mrs. Ann Squires is the oldest she must have first choice of the furniture." He nodded to the lady in question.

"I'll take the bedstead and mattresses and all it contains," said Ann Squires hastily.

Fanny Ray snaked bitterly and bent her head to that of Jane Morris. "I knew she'd take that! I suppose she thinks the mattresses are stuffed with banknotes."

"Now, Mrs. Ray," said the lawyer sharply.

"I'll take the bureau," said Fanny quickly. The bureau afforded much space for secreting treasure, and there might even be a hidden drawer.

George Giles looked at the work table, but he was a bachelor and shook his head. Then he chose the morris chair, and Luke Howe passed the work table and chose a patent rocker because the covering was red. Jane Morris fidgeted impatiently while they were choosing. At last her turn came.

Severe Cold Quickly Cured.

"On December first I had a very severe cold or attack of the grip as it may be, and was nearly down sick in bed," writes O. J. Metcalf, Weatherby, Mo. "I bought two bottles of Chamberlain's Cough Remedy and it was only a few days until I was completely restored to health. I firmly believe that Chamberlain's Cough Remedy is one of the very best medicines and will know what to do when I have another cold." Obtainable everywhere.

"I wanted that morris chair," she said bitterly, "but as it's gone I'll have to take the work table, although I've got one already." She looked contemptuously at the remaining article, a small round cherry stand.

"Now, Miss Thomasine," encouraged the lawyer.

"I'll take the stand," said Thomasine forlornly.

"Now, the other things, Mrs. Squires, your turn again."

"The marble clock," said Ann promptly. Jane and Fanny exchanged smiles.

"The vases," said Fanny Ray.

"Lamp," said George Giles.

Luke Howe smirked at his reflection in the looking glass and said he'd take that, much to Jane Morris' chagrin.

"Andirons," she snapped viciously, "though I don't want 'em!"

"I—I'll take the parrot," faltered Thomasine as each one arose and began to investigate his or her special choice. They were not unkind people, but each one was unconsciously greedy of gain and none of them realized that the youngest cousin was poor and that the inheritance that had fallen to her share was the poorest of the lot.

After the distribution had been made and they had got over their disappointment at there being no money they would forget all unfriendliness and perhaps invite Thomasine to spend vacations with them.

They parted later, and the next morning Thomasine went home and back to work. Ten days later the legacy came by express—the cherry stand and the stuffed parrot on his perch. Thomasine placed the parrot on the stand and stood them near the mantelpiece and forgot them until one day she took in a homeless cat, which she fed and warmed by the kitchen stove. After while the cat wandered into the little sitting room, and when he saw the green parrot sitting on the perch he snarled angrily and flew at the unoffending bird. When Thomasine ran to the scene the floor was covered with bright feathers and the stuffing was protruding from the body of the bird. The cat, chagrined at this one-sided battle, retired to a corner and washed his face.

Thomasine picked up the body of the bird and wondered if she might not repair the damage with needle and thread and glue. Then her eyes opened wider and wider, for the stuffing of the parrot was composed of tight wads and rolls of greenbacks, and twisted among them was a queer little note from Aunt Lucia:

Dear Thomasine—I know they'll all pick out the best and leave poor Filly to you, so I have made him worth while after all. You need all of 'em, and you can keep it without having any dispute over it. Mr. Rhodes knows, and you can't tell anybody but your husband, if you ever have one, but I don't see how you ever can, handicapped with that dreadful name. With Aunt Lucia's love.

Through her tears Thomasine counted the money and found there was \$5,000, and her worn little face was glorified by a smile of perfect relief. Now she could close her sewing machine and buy a farm and raise chickens! As a beginning she closed the machine with a loud clatter. Then she hugged the strange cat and adopted him on the spot, and thereafter he waxed fat and lazy and never even blinked at the young chickens that ran about Thomasine's poultry farm.

And Thomasine never told a soul about the strange way her legacy had come to her until after she was married, and then she told her husband, for of course she got married.

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