



**The best thing for a PEEVISH child—  
is Califig,  
it's safe and mild**

Peevishness and bad temper in children are often due to constipation. Give them Califig—the gentle, pleasant-tasting laxative that is specially compounded for youngsters from juicy figs and senna.



# Califig

(CALIFORNIA SYRUP OF FIGS)

**The Gentle Laxative**

N.Z. Distributors: Fassett & Johnson Ltd.,  
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2.6

## SHORT STORY

(continued from previous page)

think, but wanted to think, of the harder things. At first she hadn't wanted to go his way, it was too much trouble; she had tried instead to impose her trivial standards on him, but now she could never be grateful enough that he had won; her life was enriched. And she had a dread of being pulled back, of losing all she had gained. Her father and mother—they wanted her to go back; they were jealous of the forces which were taking her from them, without understanding what they were.

It was time to leave. She called Virginia in. Grant closed the cases before he went for the car. At the station he kissed them both, with a special smile for her, and she was very unhappy to be leaving him, he was so necessary to her.

HER father met the train; the arrival imposed a small excitement on the hot, quiet afternoon, and he was flushed and happy as he hurried up to the carriage where she stood waiting. And she kissed him and was happy too, and a little excited, and for the moment she was glad she had come. But, she thought, it was like this last time; it is like this every time. It won't be any different, later, either. Her father talked to Virginia, standing quietly a little behind her, he marvelled at her growth, he spoke to her as if she were still the baby he would have liked her to be; he moved to kiss her, but Virginia dodged, politely but firmly. Alice was sorry for her father, she knew it surprised him that the child didn't want to be fussed over, but she was in sympathy with her daughter, too. That was it—that was what mattered even in trivial things, to see both points of view. . . .

It would have been easier for them all if Virginia had enjoyed and looked forward to these visits. But like Grant, she would never be at home in the country. Everyone wasn't. It wasn't a crime to prefer the city life she was used to, but her grandparents would make it seem so, before the visit was over. They both were intolerant of opposition of any kind, they wanted everyone to like what they liked, to hate what they hated. They never considered any point of view but their own, and if you weren't in sympathy with them you were made to feel a traitor. Alice knew that those set habits were waiting to trap them all, behind the pleasure of the first greetings. The visit would follow the usual pattern, because these people, her parents, had never learned to think in the way that is necessary to adjustment or change.

THE first day there was just sitting in the too hot kitchen making conversation, and listening to her mother talking while she went about the work which made bearable the dullness of her life. Talking. How soon now Alice tired of this endless and aimless talking. The bitterness, the complaints, just as she remembered them. The self-pity. Long, involved stories of people who didn't like her, who were unkind to her, patronised her, looked down on her. The older woman was happy to have someone to tell all this to, and especially one who by every law of nature should be sympathetic, should feel these grievances as acutely as she felt them herself. Alice knew that, but she had now

none of that talk to give. She had had, once. Now it was impossible to go back to it. She felt such an ache at her heart for this woman who had once made all her world, that she would have tried, but it wasn't a matter of trying. It was something that wasn't in her any more. She felt sad and depressed. She felt that somehow it must be her fault. She did her best, but gradually she fell silent, and constraint came into the kitchen, so that their talk to each other was hollow and unnatural, too polite, and her mother resentful.

Why didn't her mother change, as she had done? Or had she, perhaps, years ago, been different? Had she changed from some sweet and pliable young girl to the complaining, stupid, common woman she was now? Was it all chance? Would she, with different opportunities and guidance—

"You're just scared—a no-good townie—" her father taunted Virginia, and Alice had to apologise for Virginia, strongly, silently resisting all her grandfather's efforts to force her on to a horse, to be taken round the farm. She was sorry for his disappointment, even while she felt Virginia was right. She was a sensible, reasonable, lovely child, and she knew what she wanted to do, and even at eight she felt that her prejudices should be respected. Grant had taught her that it was very important to know what you wanted to do, what was good for you to do, and to do it as long as you didn't hurt others. She didn't understand that the old man was hurt, because he hid his feeling beneath jibes and jeers about townies, and being afraid. He couldn't understand that she had never been encouraged to show off, or to attempt to do what she had no urge to do, simply to fill in time. He would never know what already she half understood, that the essential thing was to find your place in the world, find what you were fitted to do, and then everything else would fit in; your happiness and so that of those dependent on you; each contented worker contributing to the progress and peace of the world, constructive and not destructive. He himself was ill at ease always beneath any transient satisfaction he might have, because he should never have been a farmer, but he had never seen it like that. He had, not understanding that there was no shame, only misfortune in his failure, blamed other things—the land itself, his neighbours, the Government, his wife, anything to defend himself from blame.

But you couldn't talk to them like that. They had never learned to see themselves impersonally. So she sat and listened to her mother's gossip about the neighbours—their faults; what she had said to them; what they'd replied; how she'd scored off them. "The likes of her talking to me like that—who does she think she is, anyway?"

Her father. Politics. When he came in at mealtimes, aggressive with the renewed sense of failure. Sometimes, as the days went slowly on, she gripped her hands together to keep her irritation in check, determined that there should be no open break. He wanted her to argue with him, even while his mind was shut to anything she could say. "The sooner we get that lot out, the better. . . ." "But what's a woman know about politics, anyway? You want to stick to your knitting and your housework the

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THE ORIGINAL



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