

CARMEN PAPA Y ABEVALO AND VICENTE DELGADO, PLAINTIFFS AND APPELLEES, VS. ANGELA MONTENEGRO, IN HER OWN BEHALF AND AS SPECIAL ADMINISTRATRIX OF THE TESTATE ESTATE OF THE DECEASED...

G. R. No. 31384. January 30, 1930

Ponente: VILLA-REAL, J.

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VILLA-REAL, J.:

body { font-family: Verdana, Geneva, Arial, helvetica, sans-serif; font-size:80%; background-color:#FFFFFF; margin:0 2% 0 2%; text-align: justify; } h1 { font-family:times; } h2 { background-color:#cccccc; padding:10px 0 10px 0; font-weight: bold; text-align: center; } h3 { font-weight: bold; text-transform: uppercase; text-align: center; } div#footer { font-size:9px; } This is an appeal taken by the defendant Angela Montenegro, in her own behalf and as special administratrix of the testate estate of Ramon R. Papa, from the judgment of the Court of First Instance of Manila, the dispositive part of which is as follows:

"In view of all of the foregoing, it is held that the plaintiff Carmen Papa y Arevalo is the absolute owner of the land described in the complaint and in the original certificate of title No. 4562, and that the conveyance thereof made by her to Ramon R. Papa is null and void.

"It is ordered that the register of deeds for the City of Manila cancel the transfer certificate of title No. 28280 to said land, issued in the name of Ramon R. Papa, married to Angela Montenegro, and in place thereof issue a new transfer certificate of title in the name of the plaintiff Carmen Papa y Arevalo, upon payment of the proper fees.

"The court orders the defendant Angela Montenegro, in her own behalf and as special administratrix of the estate of Ramon R. Papa, deceased, to deliver the possession of the land described in the complaint and in the original certificate of title No. 4562 to the plaintiff Carmen Papa y Arevalo; to pay her the rents collected upon said land at the rate of P700 a month, from the 11th of April, 1927, with legal interest from the date of the filing of the complaint, and also to pay the costs. So ordered."

In support of her appeal, the appellant assigns eleven alleged errors as committed by the court below in its judgment. Said errors will be discussed further on.

The following facts were proved at the trial without dispute : The plaintiff, Carmen Papa y Arevalo, is a daughter of the deceased Dr. Ramon R. Papa by his first marriage; and the defendant, Angela Montenegro, is the said deceased's widow by his second marriage. During his first marriage, Doctor Papa had acquired a house and lot situated on San Pedro Street, now Evangelista, where he lived with said daughter and his first wife. On July 19, 1909, while the plaintiff herein Carmen Papa y Arevalo was 4 years old, Dr. Ramon R. Papa contracted a second marriage, with the defendant herein, Angela Montenegro, and continued to live in the same house with his second wife and his aforesaid daughter, until the year 1922, when he moved with his family to the new house on Aragon

Street. During his marriage with the defendant, Doctor Papa had an addition built on the southeast side of the old house which cost about P8,000. Later on, having acquired from the widow of Sulce and his brothers the lots contiguous to it on the east side, he had a six-room house built with the money of his second wife, which cost from P14,000 to P16,000. The value of all the lots with their improvements, acquired by Dr. Ramon R. Papa after his marriage with the defendant, amounts to P25,000. After having moved to the house on Aragon Street, Doctor Papa leased the premises on Evangelista Street to the City of Manila to be used as schoolhouse. During the whole time of Dr. Ramon R. Papa's second marriage with Angela Montenegro, until Carmen Papa y Arevalo contracted matrimony with her co-plaintiff Vicente Delgado on July 16, 1927, said plaintiff lived with her father and her stepmother.

While the plaintiff Carmen Papa y Arevalo was on vacation in Baguio with her aunt Dña. Luisa Rodriguez de Aldanese, Dr. Ramon R. Papa conveyed to his daughter on April 11, 1927, the premises on Evangelista Street by virtue of document Exhibit A, drafted by the attorney and notary public Claro Reyes, said document showing that the sale was for the price of P32,000. The premises consisted of two parcels of land with the improvements thereon, situated in the City of Manila, known as lots Nos. 2 and 3, block 2181 of the cadastral survey of said city, and they are recorded in the registry of property under original certificate of title No. 45062. Upon presentation of said deed to the register of deeds of Manila, he cancelled said original certificate of title No. 21826 in the name of Dr. Ramon R. Papa, and issued the transfer certificate of title No. 78280 in the name of Carmen Papa y Arevalo.

On April 22, 1927, Dr. Ramon R. Papa executed a will (Exhibit 18) clauses 5 and 12 of which are as follows:

"5. I affirm that at the time of my marriage with Angela Montenegro, I was the sole and absolute owner of one-half of a house and lot situated at No. 708, Evangelista Street, District of Santa Cruz, City of Manila, Philippine Islands, the other half belonging as inheritance to my daughter Carmen Papa y Arevalo, as forced heiress of her deceased mother Lutgarda Arevalo.

"12. I devise to my daughter Carmen Papa y Arevalo all my right, title, interest, and estate in the one-half of the realty situated at No. 708 Evangelista Street, District of Santa Cruz, Manila, Philippine Islands. I beseech Angela Montenegro at least for the sake of my daughter Carmen Papa y Arevalo, to abstain from making any objections with regard to the improvements and repairs made on said house, as well as to a certain portion of the land where the same are located."

Without the knowledge and consent of her father and stepmother, Carmen Papa y Arevalo contracted a secret marriage with Vicente Delgado before the justice of the peace of Baguio on the 1st of May, 1927. Neither Carmen Papa y Arevalo, nor Vicente Delgado, her husband, informed her father or stepmother of said marriage, nor even her aunt Luisa Rodriguez de Aldanese, with whom she lived in Baguio.

On page 8 of La Opinion of May 14, 1927, under the title De la Ciudad de Los Pinos, there appeared a brief account of the social life in Baguio, containing, among other news, the following:

"* * * Last night, for instance, the Dwarf learned, betwixt shimmy and jazz, that a Manila beauty had married a wealthy young man from Cebu before a priest * * * of the law, who officiates in Baguio. She belongs to a family very well known in this capital, and at one time reigned over Wallace Field, bearing the scepter of Joy and Good" Humor. Her father is a doctor, popular and well- liked both among the galenos and among the politicians, who owns a drug store and several haciendas, and in addition sits at the helm of a firm at present engaged in exploiting a gold lode in a certain province of central Luzon. The only thing known about him here is that he is a scion of a distinguished family of Cebu, and that after the wedding, he went back to his native city to his parents, with a university diploma under his arm. The wedding took place with the utmost possible

secrecy, but as there is no 'mystery' which 'curiosity' cannot pry into, the secret leaked out in the Auditorium, and is now going the rounds of this city as the latest sensation * * *."

On May 16, 1927, Dr. Ramon R. Papa again instructed the attorney and notary public, Claro Reyes, to draw up another deed, by which Carmen Papa y Arevalo conveyed to said doctor for the same price the same premises which the latter had conveyed to her by virtue of document Exhibit A. As the lawyer and notary public Claro Reyes told Dr. Ramon R. Papa that the presence of his daughter was necessary, he promised to telegraph to Baguio asking her to come. On May 17, 1927, at about 4 or 5 o'clock in the afternoon, Dr. Ramon R. Papa called the lawyer and notary public, Claro Reyes, by telephone and told him that they would meet at the house of the late Lorenzo Perez that same afternoon to sign the contract. At about 6 or 7 o'clock that evening, as twilight set in, Dr. Ramon R. Papa and his daughter, Carmen Papa y Arevalo arrived at the house indicated. Doctor Papa handed his daughter the document (Exhibit C) saying: "Here is the document you will sign." After a short reflection, Carmen Papa y Arevalo signed it in the presence of the notary public and of the witnesses who signed with her. This deed was presented to the register of deeds of Manila, who cancelled the transfer certificate of title No. 78280 issued to Carmen Papa y Arevalo and issued another in the name of Dr. Ramon R. Papa.

About the 23d or 24th of May, 1927, Tonras Delgado, the father of the plaintiff Vicente Delgado, having received a telegraphic advice from Attorney Ramon Villaceran that his son had married Carmen Papa y Arevalo, daughter of Dr. Ramon R. Papa, came to Manila with his wife and daughter, and together with Pilar Dancel, his son's land-lady, went to Antipolo to speak to Carmen Papa's parents about her canonical marriage with his son. As Dr. Ramon R. Papa was absent, his wife, Angela Montenegro, step-mother of Carmen Papa y Arevalo, said that she could not dispose of the matter, and that they would have to speak to the doctor. Having returned home very late and tired, Dr. Ramon R. Papa was only able to exchange greetings with Tomas Delgado, and made an appointment with him at the house on Aragon Street, in Manila. The wedding having been agreed upon, Carmen Papa y Arevalo and Vicente Delgado were married canonically on July 16, 1927, at the San Marcelino Church, Manila, the madrina being the herein defendant Angela Montenegro.

From May 1, 1927, when Carmen Papa y Arevalo and Vicente Delgado were married secretly in Baguio until July 16, 1927, when they were canonically married, Vicente Delgado had not visited Carmen Papa y Arevalo in her parent's house where she continued to live up to the day of her canonical marriage. Thereafter the plaintiffs used to call on Dr. Ramon R. Papa and Angela Montenegro at the latter's house.

The questions of fact to be decided in this appeal are the following: (1) Did Dr. Ramon R. Papa learn of his daughter's civil marriage with Vicente Delgado before the 16th of July, 1927, when they were canonically married? (2) Did Carmen Papa y Arevalo execute the document Exhibit C through violence and intimidation?

As to the first question of fact, the plaintiffs attempted to show that when at 6 o'clock in the afternoon of May 18, 1927, Carmen Papa y Arevalo arrived from Baguio, her father and her stepmother showed her the La Opinion with the news about her civil marriage, which is Exhibit H, as presented by the plaintiff at the trial; that when Tomas Delgado went to see Dr. Ramon R. Papa and his wife Angela Montenegro in Antipolo, the latter showed him the newspaper announcing the wedding of Carmen Papa y Arevalo with Vicente Delgado, and began to weep; that when Tomas Delgado went to the house of Dr. Ramon R. Papa and Angela Montenegro on Aragon Street, to speak to said doctor about the canonical marriage of his son with Carmen Papa y Arevalo, the doctor said that there was nothing left for him to do but to acquiesce, since he knew that they had been married already in Baguio.

The defendant, Angela Montenegro, testifying in her own behalf, stated that Carmen Papa y Arevalo arrived from

Baguio on the afternoon of May 17, 1927 and not on the afternoon of the 18th of that month; that she did not show her stepdaughter the La Opinion Exhibit H, when she came from Bagnio; and that she did not show a copy of said newspaper to Tomas Delgado when he visited them in Antipolo.

If the testimony given by Carmen Papa y Arevalo is true, she must have kept the La Opinion which she contends, her stepmother showed her on her arrival from Baguio, otherwise she would not have been able to present it on the day of the trial about one year later. If Tomas Delgado's assertion is also true, that Angela Montenegro had shown him a copy of La Opinion announcing the marriage of Carmen Papa y Arevalo to Vicente Delgado, it must be supposed either that she had been taking it everywhere with her, or that she had bought another in order to have it ready to show to everyone who visited her. If the first supposition is admitted, then the inference from the testimony of Carmen Papa y Arevalo that she had kept said paper to use it as evidence in this case is not correct; and if the second, then Angela Montenegro must have been recounting the secret marriage of Carmen Papa y Arevalo to many people; And yet, the plaintiff has not been able to present any other testimony but her own and that of her father-in-law Tomas Delgado, as to the knowledge of Dr. Ramon R. Papa and Angela Montenegro of said marriage through said paper. Besides, if it were true that Dr. Ramon R. Papa knew that his daughter had contracted a civil marriage and that he had resigned himself to it, we are at a loss to understand why he failed to take the necessary steps to have, a canonical marriage celebrated, and waited for the groom's father to take the initiative, when, as the father of the bride, and a Catholic, he was bound to do so by his religion and the conventions of his society.

The fact that there appeared in an issue of La Opinion a brief summary of social news in Baguio, including the mysterious wedding of two young people of the social standing of the contracting parties, whose names were not mentioned, and the fact that Dr. Ramon R. Papa was then a subscriber to said paper, do not constitute sufficient evidence that he read said news, for serious-minded persons engrossed in their profession, as the said doctor was, do not usually use their time reading news of that sort. There is another circumstance showing that Dr. Ramon R. Papa was not aware of his daughter's civil marriage, and that is the statement in the deed Exhibit C that Carmen Papa y Arevalo was single. According to the attorney and notary public Claro Reyes, Doctor Papa simply told him to prepare another document to be signed by his daughter Carmen Papa y Arevalo, conveying to him the same property he had transferred to her. In drawing up the deed, Exhibit C, the attorney and notary public, Claro Reyes, stated that Carmen Papa y Arevalo was single, which goes to show that neither Doctor Papa nor said notary knew that the plaintiff was already a married woman and the latter who had been pondering over the deed before signing it, according to said notary, and therefore, must have taken notice of its contents, did not call attention to her civil status as it appeared in said deed. She claims, however, that before signing, she said she wanted to call her husband, but that her father and her stepmother objected, and she had to yield. This contention, too, is without merit, for, as we shall see later on, she signed the deed Exhibit C voluntarily.

For these considerations, we are of opinion and so hold, that a preponderance of the evidence shows that Dr. Ramon R. Papa had no knowledge of the secret civil marriage of his daughter to Vicente Delgado until after the canonical marriage on July 16, 1927.

As to the second question, the only evidence upon the alleged violence and intimidation exerted by Dr. Ramon R. Papa and his wife Angela Montenegro on Carmen Papa y Arevalo to compel her to execute the deed of transfer Exhibit C is the testimony of the plaintiff herself. Aside from the fact that such testimony is not corroborated by any impartial witness, the same is improbable and has been contradicted by the testimony of Angela Montenegro, the only one who can now contradict her, for death has already sealed Doctor Papa's lips. We say it is improbable

that Dr. Ramon R. Papa and his wife Angela Montenegro would have had to resort to such means, because, in the doctor's will, executed on April 22, 1927, he stated that one-half of the premises at No. 708, Evangelista Street, belonged to his daughter, who inherited it from her mother, Lutgarda Arevalo, and that he devised to her the other half that belonged to him. It is likewise improbable that Carmen Papa y Arevalo should not remember in what part of the house the alleged violence and intimidation took place, for she continued to live in said house until she was canonically married, and violent impressions are with difficulty erased from memory. Furthermore, the sum and substance of the alleged intimidation consists in the, threat to take her to Japan if she did not sign said deed. Married as she already was, such a threat, far from being an evil for her, would be a blessing, because, away from her family, her husband would be at greater liberty to join her, when they could enjoy each other's company, of which they were deprived, because she had married civilly and secretly. Article 1267 of the Civil Code provides that intimidation exists when one of the contracting parties is inspired with a reasonable and well-grounded fear of suffering an imminent and serious injury to his person or property, or to the person or property of his spouse, descendants or ascendants, and that fear of displeasing persons to whom obedience and respect are due shall not annul a contract.

A preponderance of the evidence, with reference to the second question of fact, shows that there was no such violence or intimidation.

Having reached the conclusion that there was neither fraud, nor violence, nor intimidation in the execution of the deed of transfer Exhibit C, and that Dr. Ramon R. Papa had no knowledge of his daughter's civil marriage with Vicente Delgado, which took place on May 1, 1927, at the time she executed in favor of her father said deed on May 18, 1927; and it appearing that Vicente Delgado had not authorized his wife to execute said Exhibit C, the question arises whether or not said instrument is legal and valid.

Article 61 of the Civil Code prohibits a married woman, without her husband's permission, to alienate her own property, and article 62 provides that any alienation made without such permission is void. Article 65 of said Code empowers the husband and his heirs to avoid acts done by the wife without proper permission or authorization, and the action to that end prescribes, according to article 1301, four years from the dissolution of the marriage.

According to said provisions, alienations made by the wife of her property without marital permission are not void but only voidable, and they remain effective as long as they are not annulled in a proper proceeding by her husband or his heirs, and become unavoidable four years from the dissolution of the marriage (*Carratala vs. Samson*, 43 Phil., 751). This right granted by the law to the husband and his heirs, like any other personal right, may be waived, according to article 4 of said Code, since such waiver would not be contrary to public interest, or public order, nor prejudicial to a third person. The legal prohibition has not been established in favor of third persons; but of the husband, for whom the law desires to save the damages that might be caused to the conjugal partnership, of which he is the head (*1 Manresa*, 341).

In the case now before us, the plaintiffs planned to conceal their new civil status, allowing everybody who knew them including the plaintiff's father, Dr. Ramon R. Papa, and her stepmother, the herein defendant Angela Montenegro, to keep on believing that she was still single, until the canonical marriage held on July 16, 1927. Dr. Ramon R. Papa had the deed Exhibit C drawn up to be signed by his daughter, Carmen Papa y Arevalo, in the belief that she was still single, and the attorney and notary public Claro Reyes drafted it in the same belief, and once it was prepared, she signed it without calling their attention to her status as single appearing on the

document, although she had been pondering over it before signing it. Of course, Carmen Papa y Arevalo cannot ask for the annulment of her own act done without marital authority, because she cannot repudiate her own acts (Riobo vs. Hontiveros, 21 Phil, 31). If her husband Vicente Delgado colluded with her in such concealment and allowed Dr. Ramon R. Papa to believe that his daughter Carmen Papa y Arevalo was still single when she executed said deed, Exhibit C, thus impliedly waiving the right granted to him by the law to give marital permission to the acts of his wife alienating her property, neither can he be heard to contest his own acts, praying for the annulment of the deed Exhibit C, executed by his wife, without his permission or authorization.

It is also contended by the plaintiffs-appellees that the amount of P32,000 mentioned in the deed Exhibit C as the selling price, is false and fictitious. If this sum is fictitious, not less so is the same amount mentioned in the deed Exhibit A, executed by Dr. Ramon R. Papa in favor of his daughter, the plaintiff Carmen Papa y Arevalo, regarding the same property, notwithstanding the vague testimony given by the attorney and notary public, Claro Reyes, to the effect that the doctor had told him that the property he desired to convey to his daughter, plus P10,000 which the latter's mother had left her, was equivalent to one half of the P32,000, which he asked him to state in said deed Exhibit A, as the selling price. Article 1277 of the Civil Code provides that "even though the consideration should not be expressed in the contract, it shall be presumed that a consideration exists and that it is licit, unless the debtor proves the contrary." Not only have the plaintiffs failed to show that there was no real consideration in said contract Exhibit C, but that in the will Exhibit 18, now pending probate, executed by Dr. Ramon R. Papa, he states that one-half of the premises at No. 708 on Evangelista Street, belongs exclusively to his daughter Carmen Papa y Arevalo, as her inheritance from her deceased mother Lutgarda Arevalo, and that he devised to her the other half of said property belonging to him as surviving spouse. The late Dr. Ramon R. Papa having inserted this provision in his will in favor of his daughter, the latter had to convey the property previously transferred to her by virtue of the deed Exhibit A, for it would otherwise appear that the testator disposed in his will of property not belonging to him. This must have been the motive and cause of Carmen Papa y Arevalo's execution of the deed Exhibit C. If Carmen Papa y Arevalo had been coerced to execute said deed Exhibit C, against her will and without her husband's consent, and if it were true that she kept the La Opinion Exhibit H, in order to prove, as she has attempted to prove, that her father and her stepmother were aware of her civil marriage in Baguio, we are at a loss to understand why the plaintiffs waited till after Dr. Ramon R. Papa's death to bring the action for nullity. Having been silenced forever by death, said doctor cannot now contradict the testimony given by Carmen Papa y Arevalo and her witnesses on the alleged consideration of the contract Exhibit A, and the alleged lack of consideration of the contract Exhibit C. The plaintiffs must have had some motive in acting thus, and that motive could have been no other than that said deceased should not be able to deny their testimony.

For the foregoing considerations, we are of opinion and so hold, that inasmuch as the plaintiff Carmen Papa y Arevalo executed the deed Exhibit C, freely and voluntarily, and for a consideration, the same is legal and valid, though without marital permission, for, as her husband, in collusion with her, has concealed her true civil status, he has waived his right, and inasmuch as it would be unlawful for him to repudiate his own acts, he cannot now ask for the annulment of said deed, under the pretext that he did not give his consent to its execution.

Wherefore, the judgment appealed from is reversed, and the defendant is absolved from the complaint, which is hereby dismissed, with costs against the appellees.

So ordered.

Johnson, Malcolm, Villamor, Johns and Romualdez, JJ., concur.

DISSENTING

Street, J.:

The deed of conveyance which is the subject of attack in this case and which was annulled by the trial court was executed under conditions which amply justify the relief granted. It was executed without consideration by a young wife, without her husband joining in the act, and under the most acute duress. Briefly stated, the facts are these: On April 11, 1927, Dr. Ramon R. Papa executed in favor of his daughter, Carmen Papa, the principal plaintiff in this case, a deed conveying to her the property which is the subject of this controversy, consisting of two contiguous lots with the improvements thereon, located in the City of Manila, for a purported consideration of P32,000. As Doctor Papa explained to the notary who drafted the instrument and before whom the acknowledgment was taken, this conveyance was executed in adjustment of his obligation to his daughter arising from the fact that this property, or most of it, had pertained to the conjugal estate belonging to himself and his deceased first wife, and that, he as surviving spouse, was indebted to his daughter in an amount equal to the interest, which he was in fact conveying. Though it is feebly insisted for the appellant that this conveyance was without consideration, this pretense is undoubtedly baseless.

Well then, on May 1, 1927, Carmen Papa, while visiting friends in Baguio, was united in marriage to Vicente Delgado, in a civil ceremony before a justice of the peace. This marriage was not given immediate publicity, but on May 14 there was published in *La Opinion*, a daily paper of the City of Manila, a communication from Baguio stating that a marriage had been celebrated between two prominent members of society, the bride, of Manila, and the groom, of Cebu; and although the names were not mentioned, the parties to the marriage were described in such a way that no person acquainted with them could entertain the slightest doubt as to the individuals intended. In this communication also Doctor Papa was described in terms that could leave no question as to the identity of the father of the bride.

Doctor Papa was a subscriber to *La Opinion*, and the paper containing this communication was left at his house on the morning of its publication. Upon seeing this communication Doctor Papa got into communication with the notary who had acted officially in the execution of the deed of April 11, and instructed him to draw up a deed conveying the same property covered by the deed of April 11 back to himself. The notary thereupon reminded Doctor Papa that the presence of the girl would be necessary in order that the deed might be executed by her. Thereupon Doctor Papa sent a telegram to his daughter in Baguio requiring her to return at once to Manila, which she did on May 18, 1927. Upon arriving in Manila, she was conducted to the presence of the notary where, after displaying marked hesitation, she signed the deed as required by her father. Carmen says that she was told that, if she did not sign the deed, she would be sent to Japan.

Under these circumstances, in connection with other facts appearing in the record, the motives operating upon the mind of the young woman, impelling her to execute the deed, can be easily discerned. She must have recognized the fact that her father was feeble and that her refusal to execute the deed might imperil his life. When we add to this the parental threat of deporting her to Japan and her consequent certain separation from her husband for an indefinite period, it can readily be seen that the forces operating upon her were not such as to be resisted by a sensitive woman. Upon the ground of duress alone, therefore, the deed should be annulled, to say nothing of the positive provisions of law which deny to a married woman the power to convey property without the consent of her husband.

With respect to the suggestion that she was bound by this conveyance because she may have told her father that

she was not married, it is enough to say that the execution of the deed was extorted from her without consideration, and there is no ground for pretending that she is estopped, as she might conceivably have been, if she had defrauded an innocent purchaser, to the extent of the value of the property, by misrepresenting herself to be single. The law explicitly gives the husband a right to annul such a conveyance, and as he and his wife joined in this action, the relief granted was not improper. If the father did not absolutely know that his daughter was married he certainly had good reason to think that she was so in fact, and this was enough to affect him with notice.

Without going farther into the details of the case, I refer to the careful and well-reasoned opinion of the trial judge as in the main expressive of my own views. The judgment, I submit, should be affirmed.

Ostrand, J., dissenting: I concur in the dissenting opinion of Justice Street.

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