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PROFESSIONAL CARDS

ROBERT C. STREIBER
ATTORNEY AT LAW,
DURHAM, N. C.
Office in the building next door to
the office of the Trustees in Orange and
a walk in the U. S. Court. Aug 29

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BETRAYED BY A BUCKLE.

It was a bitter disappointment, after years of poverty, to find the fortune which I had thought my own suddenly wrested from me by a stranger. I was my uncle's legal heir, for he died childless, as all the world believed, and on hearing of the old man's death I forgave his long neglect, and waited eagerly to receive the welcome news of my good fortune. To my dismay, the lawyers wrote me that a daughter had appeared, whose claim could neither be doubted nor set aside; the property was rightfully hers, and I was a poor artist still.

Years ago I had heard of my uncle's marriage, and the birth and death of a little child; he himself died suddenly and left no will, but his last words were:

"Be just—give all to Cecil," and those about him believed that he meant me. This beautiful girl appeared, claiming to be his child, and proving that her name was Cecilia, which gave a new meaning to those last words, uttered with great earnestness and vivid in the mind.

The girl made out her case and won it, for I was too poor to fight against such odds, and all was settled before I could earn enough to leave Italy for home. I resolved to see this unknown cousin before I relinquished all hope, however, for a hint dropped by my lawyer suggested the possibility of my winning a share at least of my uncle's handsome fortune.

I was young, comely, accomplished and the possessor of a good name, to which my talent had already added some honor. Why not woo this lonely cousin, and still be master of the wealth I had been taught to think my own?

The romance of the thing pleased me, and as soon as my engagements permitted I was in England. Desiring to judge for myself, after hearing the dry facts from the lawyers, I went down to the hall, unannounced, meaning to play the unknown artist I satisfied that it was wise to confess the truth.

Armed with a note of introduction from a friend of my uncle's, I presented myself as one desirous of copying a certain fine Titian in the gallery. Miss Stanhope was out, but I was permitted to examine the pictures while awaiting her return. Among the old family portraits was a half-finished one, evidently the young mistress, and I examined it with eagerness.

A very lovely face, yet something marred its beauty. At first I thought it was my own prejudice; but saying as my natural bitterness of feeling and regarding it as a work of art alone, I could not escape from the old fancy that those imperious eyes, that smiling, red mouth might betray with a kiss, and that dimpled hand lead a man to perdition. The warm brown of the luxuriant hair, the smooth curves of the uncovered neck and arms, and the soft, rich coloring of the dress gave a sumptuous and seductive grace to the well-painted picture, the charm of which I felt in spite of myself.

Quite forgetting the Titian, I leaning back in the depths of a luxuriant couch, with my eyes fixed on the likeness of my future wife as already called my cousin, in the reverie to which I surrendered myself.

A low laugh startled me to my feet, and made me stare in dumb surprise at the apparition before me. The picture seemed to have stepped from its frame, for there in the arched doorway against a background of soft gloom was Miss Stanhope. The same imperious eyes fixed on me, the same smiling mouth, the same dimpled hand, the same luxuriant hair, the same smooth curves, the same soft coloring, the same sumptuous and seductive grace to the well-painted picture, the charm of which I felt in spite of myself.

well as her own frank air, restored my self-possession, and, eager to remove all recollections of my *gaucherie*, I joined in her laughter, saying, gaily as I kissed her hand with the Italian devotion that women like:

"A thousand pardons for attempting to deceive these bright eyes; but the banished prince longed to see the new queen, and so ventured home in disguise."

"I forgive the rose, because you say home in a tone that betrays in you the same solitude that I feel. It is a large, lonely house. There is room enough for both, and as we are the last of the race, why not cease to be strangers and both come home?"

Nothing could have been more sweet and simple than her look, voice, and manner as she said this. It touched me, and yet the vaguety of her words, and the feeling of distrust born of my scrutiny of both the painting and the living face still lingered in my mind, and robbed me of the answer of the warmth it would have possessed.

"Miss Stanhope forgets that I have lost my right to take shelter here. But since I have seen her my heart is much softened, because for a woman, young and beautiful, it would be harder to work for bread than for a man whose bosom friends have been poverty and solitude."

She looked at me with a sudden dew in those proud eyes of hers, and for a moment so silent, with the color varying in her cheeks; then, as if obeying a generous impulse, she smiled, and looking up at me said, in a tone whose persuasive gentleness was irresistible:

"Cousin Cecil, promise to stay one week, and learn to know me better. I ask it as a favor; and since you possess the Stanhope title, you shall make me your debtor by finishing this picture. The artist who began it will not return; for his own sake I forbid it."

A disdainful little gesture told the story of the cause of this banishment as plainly as words, and was, perhaps, a warning hint to me. I smiled at it even while I felt as the fisher might have done when the Loralee began to charm him.

"I will stay," I briefly said, and then she asked me about my life in Italy, so pleasantly beaming confidence after confidence from me, that if I had possessed a secret it would have slipped into her keeping.

I staid, and day after day we sat in the long gallery, surrounded by beauty of all kinds, talking with ever-increasing frankness, while I painted this lovely cousin, who bewildered my senses without touching my heart.

The old lady who played diatona left us free, and little company disturbed the charming solitude that never lost its delight to me.

A whim had seized Cecilia to change the costume in the portrait from modern to ancient, and as the dress of a beautiful ancestress was still preserved, she put it on, enhancing her beauty four-fold by the rich brocades, the antique jewels, and the precious faces of past days.

"This little shoe must have a buckle if it is to be visible, as I beg it may," I said, as she came rustling in one morning like a *grand dame* of the olden time.

"Bring the steel-bound casket, Ate'e; we may find something there that will suit this masquerade," said Cecilia to the maid who held her train.

Slipping off the coquettish shoe of white silk with a scarlet heel, she let me amuse myself with trying which of many ornaments would suit the best, while she absently clasped her bracelets upon her round arm.

"This is in perfect taste, and a picture in itself," I presently exclaimed, holding up the little shoe ornamented with a great buckle of chased silver, set here and there with a diamond, and a true-lover knot formed a double S in the middle.

"That is one of the very buckles our gallant ancestors wore. You can see them in the picture yonder, and the story goes that they were given him by his lady-love," answered Cecilia, pointing to the portrait of Sir Sidney Stanhope hanging behind him.

wholly to her power. What cause had I to distrust this beautiful and generous girl? None; and yet I did, so much so that I found myself watching her with a curious persistence, as if some subtle instinct warned me to beware.

This habit, and the restlessness which possessed me, led me to roam about the house and grounds by night when all was quiet. My out-of-door life in Italy made this freedom necessary to me, and I indulged my whim so skillfully that no one but the watch-dogs suspected it—they knew me and kept my secret.

One evening twilight overtook me at my easel, and the summons to dinner left Cecilia no time to change her dress. Laughing at the strange contrast between our costumes, I led her to the table, and as I watched the brilliant figure opposite me, I resolved to know my fate that night, and if I had deceived myself, to break away at once from the spell that was increasing daily.

As soon as we were alone again I led her out along the terrace, and as we walked there, arm-in-arm, I told her my hope and my plan. Her reply, a strange expression of relief dawned in her face as she looked up at me with eyes full of tender melancholy.

"I hoped you would tell me this. Do not think it unmanly, but believe me I saw no other way of sharing things safer untold. Here it can make no trouble for either of us, but with me surrounded with curious servants, mischief would come to both. Can you not wait a little longer, and remember that in undoing me you are surely ruin yourself, since you are the greater criminal?"

"It would go hard with both of us, but my age would serve me better than your beauty, for I can humble myself but you have the pride of the devil, and death itself could not unbend it. I'll wait, but I must have money—my fare share. I like to see and touch it, to make sure of it, for you may deceive me as you do the world, and slip away, leaving me to pay the penalty while you enjoy the pleasure."

"You shall have it as soon as I can get it without exciting suspicion by the debase. An opportunity will soon come, and I will not forget you."

"You mean this marriage?"

"Yes."

"Then you'll really do it?"

"I will, for I love him."

"Good! that makes all safe. Now go, child, before the storm breaks, but come often, or I will send for you, and if there is any sign of false play I will buy my own safety by betraying you."

"Agreed. Good-night," and the shrouded figure was gone like a shadow.

I meant to follow it, led by an uncontrollable impulse, but as I paused to let her gain a safe distance, the movements of the old woman arrested me. Nodding and mumbling with weird intelligence, she lifted one of the flat hearth-stones and drew out a packet of papers, over which she seemed to gloat, muttering, as she peered at the scrawled pages:

"I'm old, but I'm warty, and not to be shaken off till I get my share of plunder. She thinks to scare me; but Kate knows where to find my secret if anything goes wrong with me. I've tutored her, and my lady will be outwitted at last."

Chucking the old croaker her treasure back, and raking up the fire, hobbled away to bed. I waded till her light was out, resolving to secure those papers, for I could not distrust myself of the conviction that this secret concerned me. I had not caught a glimpse of the younger woman's face, the voice was unknown, the figure hidden, and the white hand might have belonged to any lady, yet I felt a strong suspicion that this mysterious woman was Cecilia, and this evil-minded beldame was old Elsiebeth.

The storm broke, but I did not heed it, for my new purpose absorbed me. As soon as all was still I gently forced the low lattice, stepped in, and groping my way to the hearth, stirred the smoldering embers till a little blaze shot up, showing me the flat stone, and glittering also on an object that brought confirmation to my dark suspicions, for there, where the unknown girl had stood, lay the silver buckle. I caught it up, examined it by the dim light, and could not doubt my own eyes; it was Sir Sidney's antique ornament, and that impatient gesture of Cecilia's foot had left it here to betray her. I could readily understand how, in her eagerness to slip away, she had hastily changed the brocade for a simpler dress, forgetting to remove the shoes. Now I was sure of my right to steal the papers, and having done so stole noiselessly away.

"Not so helpless as you think, ungrateful girl; feeble, old, and forgotten as I am, I can do what I have done by a word, and I will, I swear, if you are not kinder," cried the old woman, in a shrill, angry voice.

"You promised I could stay with you, should have every care and comfort, and receive a generous share of all you got; but now you keep me here in this unwholesome place, with no one to speak to but half-witted Kate; you never come till I give you into obedience, and you give me nothing but a pair of pound now and then. You know too well how to escape, and you throw me if I complain; but thank you, my lady, I set you up, and I can pull you down whether you murder me or not, for it's all on paper, and hidden from you, but sure to come to light if anything goes wrong with me."

As the old woman paused, "breathless with her own rage and exultation, the younger started, his foot with uncontrollable impatience, and clutched the slender white hand that was visible, but her next words were kinder, though bitter contempt lurked in her tone.

"You say trust me, grandmother. I'll not harm you unless you rouse the mad temper which I cannot control. You know why I do not take you home till my own place is secure. You are old, you forget, and babble of things safer untold. Here it can make no trouble for either of us, but with me surrounded with curious servants, mischief would come to both. Can you not wait a little longer, and remember that in undoing me you are surely ruin yourself, since you are the greater criminal?"

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that the future I had pictured to myself never could be mine. The charm was broken, the warning instinct justified, and an impassable gulf opened between my cousin and myself. As the sun rose my plan was laid, and making a careful toilet, I tried to remove from my face, all trace of that night's experience, but did not entirely succeed, for the glass showed me a pale cheek, eyes full of a gloomy fire, and lips sternly set.

I opened breakfasted alone, for Cecilia kept luxurious hours, and we seldom met till noon. That day I waited impatiently in the gallery, where we had agreed to have a last sitting. My impatience did me good service, however, for when at last she came my paleness was replaced by a feverish warmth, and the stern lips had been trained to meet her with a smile.

"Good-morning, Cecil," she said, with an enchanting glance and a conscious blush as she gave me her hand.

"I did not kiss it as usual, but holding it loosely I examined the soft little fingers outstretched in my palm, wondering as I did if they could be the same I last night saw so very tightly clinched.

"What is it?" she asked, looking up at me with playful wonder in the eyes now grown so soft.

"Perhaps I was thinking of the ring that should be here," I answered, feeling a curious desire to test the love of this unhappy girl.

"I never thought I should consent to wear even so small a fetter as a wedding-ring, I love my liberty so well; but if you put it on it will not burden me, for you will be a tender and a generous master, Cecil," she answered, turning toward her accustomed seat to hide the emotion she was too proud to show me.

"I have the faults of my race—an unbending will, an unforgetting spirit, and the pride of a devil," so beware, cousin."

She started as I quoted the old woman's phrase, and shot a quick glance at me, but I was tranquilly preparing my palette, and she stood down with a relieved, yet weary air.

"Could you be as unmerciful as old Sir Guy, who cursed his only child for deceiving him?" she asked, lifting her eyes to the portrait of a stern-faced cavalier hanging next Deborah Sir Sidney's.

"I could, for treachery turns my heart to stone."

I saw a slight shiver pass over her, and leaning her head on her hand she sat silent while I touched up a jewel here, a silt-fold there, or added a brighter color to her beautiful hair. She looked fair, young, and tender, but as I had said, treachery turned my heart to stone, and I did not spare her.

"You are *triste* to-day, sweetheart; let me amuse you as you have often done me by a legend of our family. I lately found it in an old manuscript which I will show you by-and-by."

"Thanks; I like old stories if they are strong and tragic," she answered, with a smile, as she lay back in the great chair in an attitude of luxurious indolence.

"Why, you have forgotten the little shoe. I meant to touch up the brilliant buckle and add a deeper scarlet to the coquettish heel. Shall I bid Adele bring it?" I asked, looking from the black satin slipper to the tranquil face lying on the purple cushion.

"No, it hurt my foot, and I threw it away in a pet," she answered, with a little frown.

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"I have it safe, but the painted one is so well done I will not have it touched. Let my eyes outshine my jewels, as you gallantly averred they did, and tell your tale while you paint, for I am sadly indolent to-day."

grew a colorless mask with the effort to subdue emotion.

The old manuscript is not very clear at this point; but I gather that the neglected girl's reported death was only a ruse to shield her from her cruel father. Her claim was accepted, and poor Sidney left to poverty again. Now comes the romance of the tale. He went to see this new-found cousin; she was beautiful and gracious, seemed eager to share her prize, and generously offered the young man a home. This touched and won him, and he soon evidently loved him, and in spite of an inward distrust he favored he returned the passion."

As I slightly emphasized a word here and there in that last sentence, a fiery glow spread over the white face from neck to brow, the haughty eyes flashed full upon me, and the red lips trembled as if passionate words were with difficulty restrained. I saw that my shaft told, and with resentful coolness I went on, still preserving the same light tone that made the truth doubly bitter and poignant.

"Take the fan that lies in your lap, dearest; this heat oppresses you. Yes, it was very curious to read how the lover was fascinated in spite of himself, and how he fought against his doubts till he tried to put an end to them by asking the hand extended to him."

The dimpled hand lying on the arm of the chair was clenched suddenly, and I saw again the hand of the cloaked woman in the wood, and smiling to myself at this new confirmation, I continued:

"But here begins the tragedy which you like so well. The cousins were betrothed, and that very night Sidney, who was given to late wanderings, went out to dream lover's dreams, in spite of a gathering storm which drove him for shelter to a little cottage in the wood. Here he overheard a strange conversation between an old creature and a mysterious woman whose face he could not see. (How her eyes glittered as she listened! and what a long breath of relief escaped her at those last words!) 'This lively gossip excited Sidney's curiosity, and when the lady vanished, leaving this traitor behind her,' (here I produced the buckle), 'this bold young man, guided by the outcries of the crowd, found and secured a strange confession of the treachery of both.'

Here Cecilia, rose erect in her chair, and from that moment her eyes never left my face as she listened, still and colorless as the statue behind her. I think any sign of weakness or remorse would have touched me even then, but she showed none, and her indomitable pride rushed mine, making me pitiless. Brush and palette lay idle now, and looking straight at the fair, false face before me, I rapidly ended the story which I had begun in the disguise of an ancient legend.

"It seems that the old woman had been the confidential servant of Sir Marmaduke's wife, and had a grudge of her own against her master. When my lady and the child died, for die they did, as reported, this woman bided her time, artfully securing letters, tokens, and other proofs, to use when the hour came. At Sir Marmaduke's death she put forward her grandchild, the natural daughter of the old man, inheriting both the beauty and the spirit of her race. This girl played her part well; the plot succeeded, and if the sordid nature of the grand dame had not interfered, the heiress and kept her in a discovery, all would have worked admirably. Half justice, unwaged adroitness of generosity, soothed whatever pangs of remorse the girl felt, and as she loved Sidney, she believed that she could expiate the wrong she did him by keeping him happily blind to the treachery of a wife he trusted. A terrible mistake, for when he discovered this deceit, the old distrust turned to contempt, gratitude to wrath, and love to loathing."

"What did he do?" she whispered, with white lips as an agony of shame, despair and love looked at me from the tragic eyes.

"Possessing something of the chivalry of his race, he declined to crush her even by one reproach; but though forced to decline the proposed alliance, he freely offered her safety and a maintenance, never forgetting that, in spite of deceit, and sin, and shame, she was a woman and his cousin."

"Did he think she would accept?" she cried, lifting the head that had sunk lower and lower as I spoke till all the warm-hued hair swept to her feet.

"I had risen and looked down at her with an uncontrollable pity softening my stern face. I answered her, 'Yes, for where else could she find help but at the hands of her kinsman?'"

She sprang up, as if my compassion

was more bitter to hear than my contempt, the fiery spirit rebelled against me, and love itself yielded to the pride that ruled her.

"Not even the offer of a favor will I accept from you, for I have a kinder friend to fly to. Take your rightful place, and enjoy it if you can, haunted as it must be by the memory of the stain I have brought upon the name you are so proud of."

"She hurried, as if to leave me, but pausing at the easel, cast a sudden look at the smiling image of herself, and as if anxious to leave no trace behind, she caught up my palette-knife, severed the canvas up and down till it hung in strips; then with a laugh which echoed long in my ears, she swept slowly down the long gallery, passed through the wide window at the further end to the balcony that overhung the court below, and standing there with the sunbeams streaming over her, she looked back at me with a fixed that moment ever.

Like a brilliant picture, she stood there with the light full on her shining hair, jeweled arms, rich robes, and stately form, all contrasting so brightly with the wild and woful face looking backward with a mute farewell.

On that instant a terrible foreboding of her purpose flashed over me, and I rushed forward to restrain her; but too late, for with a wave of the white hand she was gone.

Death was the kinder friend to whom she had flown, and when I found her in the court-yard, scattered by that cruel fall, she smiled, the old proud smile, and put away the hand that would have lifted her so tenderly.

"Let me die here; I have no other home," she whispered faintly; then her face softened as she looked up at my pained face, and feebly trying to fold her hands, she murmured tenderly:

"Forgive me, for I love you!"

These were her last words, and as they passed her lips I saw nothing but a beautiful dead woman lying at my feet, and Sir Sidney's diamond buckle glittering in the sun, as it fell from my breast to reveal a bloody stain which lingers still on that relic of my unhappy cousin.—Frank Leslie's Lady's Magazine.

Lumberton Business: The wood work on the Methodist parsonage is now completed and the plastering and masonry will commence in a few days.—The contractor, Mr. Z. P. Higley, has commenced work on the Presbyterian church.—The C. P. & Y. V. R. R. are running heavy freight trains these days, principally loaded with coal.

Charlotte Observer: One hundred wheelbarrows passed through the city yesterday for Shelby, to be used in the rail road work between that place and Rutherford.—The total of listed taxables in the city this year amounts to \$3,700,000, and the returns show a falling off in personal property, but an increase in real estate. The personal property returned for taxation is \$38,000 less than was returned last year, while on the other hand, the real estate is increased by about \$145,000.

Raleigh Visitor: Mr. H. L. Stevens died at the Cooke Hotel, in this city, at 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon, after a brief illness. Mr. Stevens was from Danville, Va., and was a comparative stranger here. His wife, who survives him, is quite sick.—The revenue collections in this district for the month of September were \$29,900.37.—Mr. M. G. Uley is a deputy sheriff in Middle Creek township of this county. He had been out several papers and notices in his way here last night when he was attacked by an ambush by two negroes, knocked in the head, and robbed of all the money he had on his person, about \$15, besides several valuable papers. He has no clue as to who the negroes were.

Salisbury Watchman: There is a demand for skilled curers in this section. Many of the farmers have in their first crop, and it is just now ready for the most difficult stage—that of curing.—The cotton market is opening briskly this season.—The tobacco warehouses continue to do a good business.—The output from the reliable Hoover Hill, in Randolph county, amounted to 461 pounds of gold for August. This is just now the most successful mine in the State.—C. C. Wade, Esq., reports the discovery of a very rich gold vein near Troy, in Montgomery county. The ore is quartz, in country rock of whitish talco slate, and is exceeding rich in real gold.

Atwater & Patton keep the finest line of heavy and fancy groceries ever seen in this market.