

CECIL'S FALSE FAITH.

"It is monstrous!" Cecil was marching up and down the long drawing room at Wellford Place, his face angrily flushed, his brow in heavy wrinkles, his whole frame quivering with passion. He had just told him the terms of Uncle Harry Wellford's will, for he had been in New Orleans when our uncle died and reached home three days after the funeral. "It was a letter from Mr. Hay," I said, "that almost killed Uncle Harry. We thought he had made a new will, but it could not be found."

Cecil face brightened. "A letter from Mr. Hay! A new will!" he said musingly, but keeping his eyes keenly bent upon my face. "Why did you think that?"

"Mr. Potter told Willard so; but we could not find it and—Willard seemed to be pleased."

"No doubt! The cur! No doubt the new will gave me the rights of which he has robbed me."

"Oh, Cecil, don't—please don't!" I pleaded. "Willard is not a cur or a thief."

And yet I said it falteringly, for was not Cecil my cousin and be-

trothed and Willard only my guardian under Uncle Harry's will, and scarcely even a friend as yet?

But Cecil clinched his hands hard a moment and said:

"Tell me again the terms of this unjust will?"

"Uncle Harry has left me the house and ten thousand dollars and to you thirty thousand dollars; the factory, the real estate in New York, the bank stock—you know, Cecil—all the rest goes to Willard!"

I sulked at the oath that broke from Cecil's lips. "But Mr. Hay's letter?" he asked.

"Uncle was very ill when that came and we sent for Mr. Potter at once. I cannot tell you any more excepting that a search was made for the Willard seemed relieved when it was not found."

Cecil made no reply to this. His anger seemed to have been rising till it made him speechless. He strode out at the French window and down the garden path, while I threw myself upon the sofa and cried as I had seldom cried in all my petted life. For Cecil was my betrothed, had been away more than a year, and I fancied I loved him. His letters had been brief and cold for a long time, and now, after one cold caress, he had spoken only of Uncle Harry's will—not one loving, tender word to me—doubly orphaned by our uncle's death.

Willard was not our own cousin, but Uncle Harry's stepson, and much older than either Cecil or myself. We were still children when Willard was sent to Paris to take charge of the importations for our uncle's business and he had lived there until Cecil went to New Orleans, to control a branch establishment. Before Cecil left we were formally betrothed.

But I knew that Cecil was not pleased Uncle Harry; that he was extravagant, negligent of important business affairs, and ugly stories of dissipation came often to us. Mr. Hay, an immensely wealthy Louisiana planter, who was one of Uncle Harry's friends and business correspondents, had made Cecil warmly welcome in his family, and the letter that had so agitated him had been at once destroyed, and no hint of its contents given to me.

But long before this Willard had come home upon business and Uncle Harry would not let him leave again. He was a great contrast to Cecil.

Cecil, at twenty-five, was the handsomest man I ever saw, with curling brown hair and large, blue eyes, a smiling mouth and perfect features. He was seven years older than myself and ten years younger than Willard.

Willard, when he came from Paris, was a dark-haired, dark-eyed man, with a grave face, settled habits of punctuality, a reserved manner; a man who inspired confidence and whom Uncle Harry, at nearly seventy years of age, respected, which was a high compliment.

I was glad Willard was away upon some business of the estate as I watched Cecil pacing up and down the garden walks, restlessly beheading all my pet flowers with his cane. If they quarreled, I thought, with a shudder—Cecil looked murderous.

Then I cried again until Mrs. Stone, my old governess, who had remained as my companion, came in to comfort me. The dear old lady was very kind, very gentle, but she said little about Cecil, and that little seemed to advise me to think no more about him. It bewildered me! Of course I did not expect a wedding to follow a funeral at once, but why was Cecil to be treated like one in disgrace? The new will may have given him Willard's place and property. He evidently thought so.

He came in after an hour or two, in which he had walked off the worst of his

rage, but there was a look in his eyes that was worse than hot anger, and he said:

"That will must be found!" "There was a thorough search made for it!" Mrs. Stone said, coldly.

"Yes, by interested parties!" was the sneering reply. "The house is yours, Marian, not Willard's. I ask your permission to look for the will."

I gave it and then escaped to my own room. He would look for the will, perhaps find it, and Willard would lose his inheritance. And I was not glad! A horrible weight oppressed me as I thought of Cecil master in Wellford Place—master of the factory—my husband!

At the last thought the scales fell at last from my childish eyes and I knew that my Cecil was but the natural affection of a child for a life companion, exalted to an ideal perfection by a youthful imagination. And when the idol had fallen there rose in its place a grave face with large, soft, black eyes, and I covered my own face to hide hot blushes; for never had Willard spoken one word of love to Cecil's betrothed—never given me other than the gentle courtesy due to his stepfather's niece and his short-time ward.

Willard wore his calm, self-possessed face again.

"You are unjust, Cecil," he said; "all my influence was exerted in your behalf."

"It looks so!" was the sneering reply. "Your uncle thought his business should be left in competent and experienced hands. Have yours proved to be so?"

"No. I am not a bargaining tradesman. Uncle Harry trained me for a gentleman."

The sneering emphasis brought a dusky red for a moment on Willard's dark cheek. He spoke with stern emphasis.

"Be content, then, to leave the cares of trade to me. Your income and prospects will give you sufficient for idle ease."

His prospects! I looked up then, so puzzled that Willard said:

"Is it possible you have not told Marian?"

"You have doubtless done so."

"No, it was not my duty—certainly not my pleasure."

"Told me what?" I cried, with a dizzy feeling and a choking of my breath.

Mrs. Stone answered: "Your uncle's letter from Mr. Hay announced Mr. Cecil Wellford's engagement to Miss Rose Hay."

"I cannot tell you. Mr. Hay is an old friend, and his only child will doubtless inherit large wealth, but your uncle never spoke of the matter to me beyond giving me the letter to read and destroy and telling me to keep the matter from you till we heard from Cecil."

"But the will?"

"Of that I know nothing."

We were a constrained party at breakfast, but when the meal was over Cecil announced his determination to search in Uncle Harry's room until the will was found. Very gravely Willard advised him to let the matter rest, but was answered by such taunts as no man could bear patiently.

"Have your will!" he said. "We will all search again."

But after the search fell upon Cecil and Mrs. Stone. I would not stir a finger, and Willard stood beside me while the others turned over every paper and rummaged every corner. As Cecil opened a Japan cabinet full of rare coins and stones, I saw Willard turn pale, and a moment later Cecil cried: "I have found it!"

He opened it hastily. It was very short, and as he read all the blood deserted his

I lifted my face then. My secret must have been in my eyes, for I was caught in a strong clasp, and a tender kiss fell on my lips, as Willard whispered:

"My love! My wife!"

So Cecil, returning to his own wife, knew that his false faith had left no broken heart at Wellford Place, where, in the Christmas time of rejoicing, there was a quiet wedding, and I became indeed Willard's wife.—The Ledger.

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Unfamiliar Face.

A captain of a regiment stationed in Natal, South Africa, when paying his company one day, says London Answers, chanced to give a man a Transvaal half-crown, which, as one would naturally expect, bears, 'the image and superscription' of President Kruger.

The man brought it back to the pay table and said to the captain: 'Please, sir, you've given me a bad half-crown.'

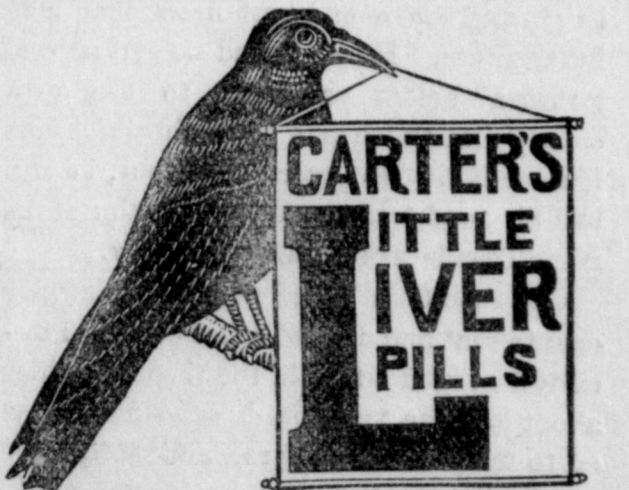
The officer took the coin, and without looking at it, rung it on the table, and then remarked: 'It sounds all right, Bagster. What's wrong with it?'

'You look at it, sir,' was the reply. The captain glanced at the coin, saying: 'It's all right, man; it will pass in the canteen.'

This apparently satisfied Bagster, who walked off, making the remark: 'If you say it's a right, sir, it's a right; but it's the first time I've seen the queen with whiskers on.'

Cholera's Death Rate.

In the cholera plagues since 1848 the death rate has been tolerably uniform, about 40 per cent. of the cases terminating fatally.



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PLOTTER.

He was a king amongst men, and I knew it. For years I had known Uncle Harry's affection and trust in his Paris agent and since he had been at home. I had not wondered at either. The factory hands fairly worshiped him, for he was strict, in rule, just in every dealing, stern to rebuke fault, and yet in trouble or illness he was as generous as a prince and gentle as a woman.

And while I thought of all this I could hear Cecil in the room so lately solemnized by the presence of death, tossing about the furniture, rummaging everywhere, to disinherit Willard. I could not bear it. At last he should know the danger menacing him!

I slipped downstairs and over the village nearly two miles away, sending from there a telegram to New York—only a few words to

*Willard Dennison, M.—Hotel, New York: You are needed at Wellford Place immediately. Marian.

Then I sped homeward, already relieved. At least he would come back and know of Cecil's return. It was evening when we heard him in the hall. I had been reading and Cecil fingering the keys of the piano when Willard came in.

His face was very grave, but he spoke cordially to Cecil, who answered briefly and insultingly—almost accusing him of concealing the will. For one second the dark flashed angrily, but before he spoke

"You might as well add," said Cecil, "that we were privately married the day I left. No one knows that as yet but I shall claim my bride when I return to New Orleans."

I staggered toward the door, but would have fallen had not a strong arm held me up as I reeled forward. The same kind support led me to the library and placed me in a deep armchair. I must have been white and looked faint, for a moment later a glass of water was held to my lips, and Willard said, very tenderly:

"Drink this, Marian! My poor child, try to think he is not worthy of your regret."

That nerved me. I drank the water and said: "I am not grieving! I am glad—glad!"

And then I broke into hysterical weeping. I was but a girl, and had been tried hardly in the last few weeks. I had thought all my tears spent, but they flowed freely, as I buried my face in the cushions of the chair and sobbed.

A gentle hand stroked my curls, and, after I was quieter, I heard Willard leave the library.

Cecil had gone to his own room, and Mrs. Stone was alone, when at last I returned to the drawing-room. She understood me, I think, for when she kissed me, she said:

"I wanted to tell you before, but your uncle forbade it."

"Was he pleased?" I asked.

face and he gasped for breath. It was long before he spoke. Then he said:

"You have seen this?"

"I have," said Willard gravely. "You—hid—it!"

"No! I suspected its whereabouts, but did not know."

"And you would have let it lie there?"

"I will destroy it now if you consent. Let the matter lie between us two."

He glanced nervously at me. But Cecil said: "Marian must see it!" and gave me the paper.

Then I knew that my uncle had revoked his old legacy to Cecil and left him five dollars, while my inheritance was left intact, upon condition that I married Willard.

The paper fell from my hands, and I covered my face. Willard's voice broke an oppressive silence.

"This paper concerns us only," he said, and I take the responsibility of destroying it. I heard a match scrape and Cecil's voice saying:

"You are nobler than I am."

Footstep left the room, and I thought I was alone till I heard Willard's voice, low and tender:

"Marian," he said, "your uncle guessed the secret of my love for you, though I implored him to leave you free, but he made the will you have just seen. Only ashes remain, and you are free, as before. Do not grieve, Marian. It breaks my heart to see you unhappy."