

New Reader
Start Here:

Lord Brandon had, during his life-time, so strongly disapproved of his son's association with player-folk that he had disinherited him, and, in a new will, had left Brandon Hall to his niece, the Lady Eleanor Beaumont. Lady Eleanor considered this unjust, and looked upon herself as usurping her cousin's rights. This last will and testament could not be found, although but three persons knew where it had been deposited—Lord Brandon, Lady Eleanor, and Mr. Sharp, of Sharp & Clipper, Solicitors, Lincoln's Inn. Lord Brandon died, Mr. Sharp had not removed the document, and the Lady Eleanor—?

The new Lord Brandon is in need of ready money to purchase Drury Lane Theatre, in which to produce "The Rivals," a play written by Dick Sheridan, who is to act the leading part. To accomplish this, he must sell Brandon Hall, and he visits the office of Sharp & Clipper on the same morning as the Lady Eleanor. Thus they meet for the first time since childhood. He greets the lawyer and his cousin, and brusquely asks what Brandon Hall will bring at auction. Before the lawyer sufficiently recovers from his surprise to give this information, Dick Sheridan, Kitty Clive and other player-folk, with servants bearing hampers of food and wine, come in. They have followed Charles to celebrate his accession to the title, but more particularly to the estate. They take possession of the office and set out the feast, despite the protests of the lawyer.

Lady Eleanor drops her face in her hands and murmurs, "Was it for this, for this!"

Lord Brandon invites his friends, the player-folk, to his country house to talk over their plans and to rehearse "The Rivals." Mr. Sharp sends his clerk, Humble Sycamore, up from London with documents for Lord Brandon to sign. Sycamore takes this opportunity to make love to Miss Chaffers, Lady Eleanor's aunt, and persuades her to promise to marry him on the assumption that he is coming into a fortune of seven hundred pounds a year.

Lady Eleanor's maid, Sophia, tells Miles, the butler, that she has the late Lord Brandon's last will, and proposes that they extort money from Lord Brandon as the price of their silence and for giving up the will.

"SIR, you are mistaken. You mistook me then, and you mistake me now. I do not love you, nor can I ever love again."

"Again? Surely, Nell, you once cared for me, and surely your eyes, that were lit with the glow of Heaven, illuminating the lawyer's dismal den in London when we met a week ago, gave token you had not forgotten? Nelly! Nelly, you are quenching that conceit with which you taunted me. I am not the monster of self-esteem you think me. The lesson is not needed, Nell; a new fear tugs at my heart. Your cold words—your distant manner—Nelly, my girl, do not torture me. I have always loved you, and you know it."

"I know nothing of the kind, Lord Brandon. If I thought this new fancy, born of a moonlit evening and surroundings that appeal to what you call your heart, was not as evanescent as the moonlight, I should be sorry for you. As it is, I trust this transient emotion will fade quickly from your memory when you are again in London. You may be certain it will not linger in mine."

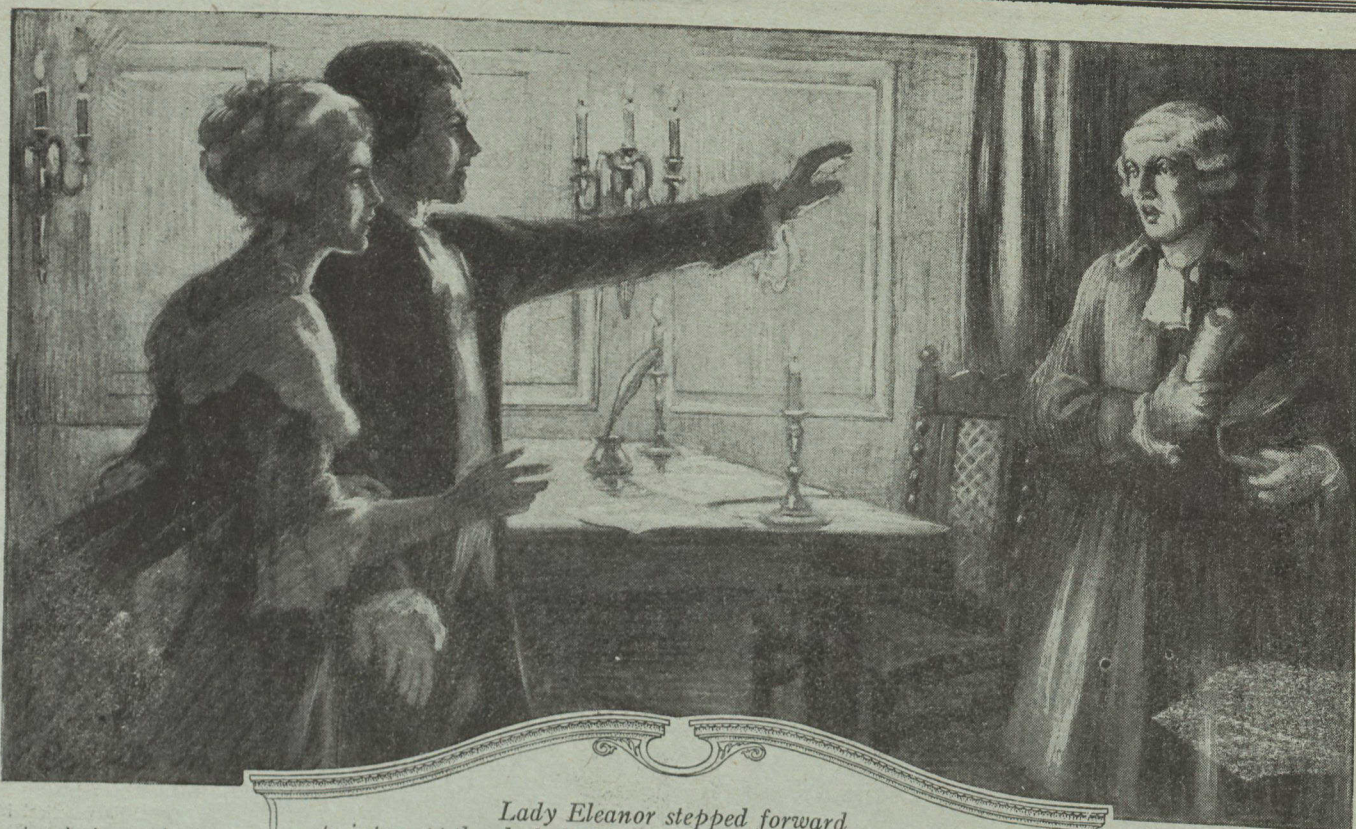
"You say you never loved me?"

"Never."

"As a girl you never loved me?"

"Your vanity finds that incredible, no doubt."

"Vanity! I have none. But love of you thrills every fibre of me. You say you never loved me. I must take that as true and am indeed deluded, but it was no vanity that misled me. Such love as mine loomed so huge that it seemed impossible that it could not draw forth its like from you. Great passion calls for great. But though deeply disappointed, I am not cast down—"



Lady Eleanor stepped forward
to intercept the clerk, but Brandon stood before and stopped her.

LADY ELEANOR: LAWBREAKER

A stirring tale of ye olden days

By ROBERT BARR

Illustrated by
ESTELLE M. KERR

"I knew you would not be."
"You are harsh with me. I will win you yet, Nelly."

"Never."
"I swear it. I shall become the man you would have me be. I shall make myself worthy. My o'ertowering passion shall compel your love."

"It cannot. Never again will my heart beat to the promptings of love."

"Again? Twice you have used that word, which now takes on a sinister meaning. Again! Why do you say 'again'? Do you love another?"

"If you must know it, I have loved another."

"Who is he?"
"That you have no right to ask. Yet it matters little now who knows it. Like you, he went to London; but, unlike you, he cannot return. My only lover died in London; judge then how bitterly I hate your vaunted town."

"Eleanor, you break my heart. You loved another, and I, fond fool, never suspected it. Curse luck is mine. But, Nelly, your young heart is not forever sunk in an untimely grave?"

"It is."
"It must not be. 'Tis against nature. I, living, protest against the monopoly of the dead. Let me teach you to forget."

"You cannot. To me my lost love is more real than hosts of living men. Were I to tread the streets of London, his wan ghost were at my side, the only vital being in the throng to me, the multitude vanishing from my sight in his dear presence. Dead! you say; all else is dead, and he and I the sole survivors. I swear to God in Heaven that none but he shall ever call me wife."

"Then may God in Heaven spare a thought for me! None of His creatures need it now so sorely. Nelly, it is for your grief I should sorrow, but I am indeed selfish, as you charge me, and it is my own woe that fills my thoughts. Him you love is dead, yet, dying, loved you. My love lives, but turns from me with loathing."

Sinking into a chair, Brandon flung his arms on the table before it and buried his head in them. Eleanor turned away silently, then impetuously whirled round, taking a step toward him. But her footfall made no sound on the soft grass, and the man with his face hidden guessed nothing of her impulse. He remained motionless, while the girl, checking herself, let her outstretched hands fall to her sides, and went slowly across the terrace, and so into the house.

CHAPTER IV.

MILES viewed his arrangement of glasses and decanters with a critical eye, but his thoughts were not exclusively on his task. From the dining room adjoining came shouts of laughter and the clinking of glasses, indications that the banquet was progressing merrily. Miles was making preparations in the sumptuous withdrawing room for coffee and liqueurs, in readiness for the conclusion of the repast. He paused, listening to the sounds of festivity.

"What a rum world this is, to be sure," he soliloquised. "You may laugh—and he waved his hand toward the curtained door—"but you wouldn't laugh so hearty if you knew the brink you are standing on. With one little push Sophia and I could send you whirling. Lor! To think of it! Young Brandon in all his pride is but a pauper, if he only knew it—a begging pauper!"

"Who's a pauper, Miles?"
Miles, startled, became aware of Humble Sycamore's unobtrusive entrance, and retorted:

"You are, for all I know."
Sycamore helped himself to a glass of wine, and smacked his lips.

"That's what you don't know. Why, I'm just coming in for a thousand a year when I marry Miss Chaffers. No pauper about that, Miles."

"No; she'll be the pauper then."

"You're witness to our arrangement, Miles. Remember that. I'll do something proper for you and Sophia the day I'm married. Sophia saw her in my arms, and I'll warrant you were looking on, too."

"Yes; thank 'ee, sir. We'll remember, and we'll witness till we're blind, sir."

"No, keep your eyes open. A blind witness is little good in law, Miles. I've been a-dodging of her since nightfall, for I think somehow she wants to break her bargain."

"Couldn't want that, sir, with a Lunnon gent like you."

"It doesn't seem reasonable, does it? Breach of Promise, in that case, and heavy damages. You're witnesses, you and Sophia, remember, and I'll do something handsome the day of the verdict. Now, where's Lord Brandon? My horse is saddled, and all ready, and I must be in London to-morrow morning. I want him to sign these papers, and then I'm off."

"Beautiful night for a ride, sir."

"Yes; but where's Lord Brandon, so that I can begin to ride?"

"He's in there," said Miles, pointing to

the dining room, "but not likely to come out while drink's a-flowing."

"But there's—"

Miles held up a warning hand. "Hush!" he interrupted, hearing footsteps he recognized. "'Tis Miss Chaffers coming." But the clerk had no time to escape.

"Villain!" was the lady's bitter salutation.

"Miles? A villain?" questioned Sycamore.

"No, you, Humble Sycamore!"

"You hear that?" cried Sycamore, appealing to Miles. "I'm a 'villain.' You heard it. That's good for a hundred pounds any day before a jury, if it's not proved."

"Brazen thief!"

"Me—a thief?"

"Yes, you, you!"

"Defamation of

character in its harshest form. Anywhere from one fifty to three hundred. Go on, madam, go on."

"Serpent!"

"Doubtful appellation—say twenty-five quid," said Sycamore, with a pencil noting the statement on his writing tablet.

"Cut-purse and midnight robber!"

"One moment—robber!" Yes, madam?"

"Crawling under false pretenses into a virtuous home!"

"Virtuous home!" Writing. "Prosecution will not deny the home is virtuous, but will dispute the crawling. I rode here. Continue, madam."

"You shameless liar, saying you had in prospect seven hundred a year."

"I can prove that I had. 'Shameless liar,' I think you said? Quite so." He added it to the list on his tablet. "Universally recognized as a phrase provocative of assault. Madam, be thankful you are not a man, and are thus safe from my just fury. Proceed, madam!"

"Your fury! You cowardly cat!"

"Ah that's a new term. Value uncertain—it may form a precedent. Sycamore versus Chaffers—'cowardly cat' rated by intelligent jury at fifteen pounds, let us say. You were about to remark, Miss Chaffers?"

"I was about to remark that I have learned, since I saw you, all about your deep duplicity."

"Duplicity?" Thanks. Admirable word, imputing sneaking dishonesty. Anything more?"

"I scorn your contemptible attentions."

"And refuse to marry me?"

"Most assuredly I do."

Sycamore snapped shut his tablets and sighed deeply.

"How prone is the lay mind to exaggeration of expression! You should never enter into a discussion of this sort, madam, without a solicitor by your side, and should use no term unsanctioned by him. Madam, you have stirred me to the depths of my nature."

"You mean scoundrel!"

HASTILY Sycamore pulled out his tablets again, and made an entry.

"Scoundrel!" Tut-tut-tut-tut! Probably the most costly word in our language. See Bayles versus Johnson. Yes, madam?"

"You thought I had no protector!"

"The law protects us all, madam. Yes, you'll find that to be the case."

"What do you mean?"

Sycamore struck a dramatic attitude, hand thrust into the bosom of his coat.

"You have wounded a tender heart, madam; you have imputed to me the basest of motives, madam; you have made use of appellations of contempt and calumny, madam, whose seriousness will be more fully explained by your solicitor when you repeat them to his shuddering ears, madam."

"You are a shuddering ass, sir!" retorted Selina, scornfully.

Sycamore hurriedly abandoned his statuesque pose to make another note.

"That's something new," he commented. "Another precedent, by the Chancellor! This will be a celebrated case. Is an ass that shudders worse than one that maintains an immovable calm? That's a point for the jury. I think so; I think so."

"And yet—and yet—" faltered Selina, wavering perceptibly, "if you could convince me 'twas not avarice that tempted

(Continued on page 28)