

his sons who served during the war. Christiancy's son, James, rose from an infantry private to a second lieutenant in the cavalry and served as an aide to Custer during his cavalry career.⁹ James was awarded the medal of honor at the Battle of Hawes Shop in 1864.¹⁰ Another son, Henry, served on the staff of General Humphreys. Ironically, years after the war, Henry's daughter, Ida, would ultimately marry the son of Confederate General George E. Pickett (of Pickett's Charge fame).¹¹

Christiancy's political career was surprisingly reborn at the end of the Reconstruction era. He left the Court in 1875 after a remarkable rebellion in the Michigan Legislature (involving disaffected Republicans and the minority Democrats), which replaced the long serving United State Senator Zachariah Chandler with Christiancy, an ironic reversal of the outcome in 1856 when Chandler prevailed over Christiancy. But what might have appeared to have been the capstone of a great career was to develop into a tragedy.

Christiancy's wife of many years, Elizabeth McCloskey, and mother of his ten children, died in December 1874, leaving him a bachelor at age 65 when he arrived as a new Senator in Washington D.C. Tensions were high in the capital as the tumultuous post-civil war era of reconstruction was coming to a bitter and ambiguous conclusion. Succeeding Chandler, who had been a leader of the so-called Radical Republicans was no easy task. Christiancy sought to chart what he believed to be a moderate course in an immoderate time.¹²

In addition to the challenge of establishing a role in the Senate, Christiancy's personal life was thrown into turmoil after his arrival in Washington in 1875. After arriving in the Capital, the recently widowed Christiancy lived in a boarding house located on Indiana Avenue. According to the Senator's friends, it was run by "a designing mother and an ambitious daughter."¹³ The daughter's name was Lillie Lugenbeel, and his friends said that he had been "beguiled into matrimony." One of the many fascinating newspaper accounts of the story appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* at the time of Christiancy's death. It reported that Lillie was "a petite blond, with a symmetrically molded form, a mass of beautiful hair, and a pair of big, charming blue eyes of the sort that tempt men to make fools of themselves."¹⁴ She had been a clerk in the Treasury Department. The couple had been acquainted less than two months before the marriage occurred, performed by the Senate chaplain, with fellow



Despite the numerous news articles, there are no reliable photographs of Lillie. The above was included with a reprinted article on the case.

(Proctor, *Historic Court Cases in Washington: Early Society Was Stirred by Several Domestic Conflicts Which Reached the State of Litigation—Van Ness, Gov. Sprague and Several Others—Case of Ann Royall*, *The Sunday Star Magazine* (April 24, 1932), p 6-7.)

Michigan Senator (and President pro tempore of the Senate) Thomas W. Ferry as the groomsman.

Another article, published four years after the marriage, went on to say:

A couple could not have been more mismated. They had no sympathies in common, and she was less than one-third his age. She was disliked by his family, and the dislike was mutual.¹⁵

Nevertheless, in certain respects the match worked well for the bride's family (Lillie was the youngest of four children¹⁶), for as was not uncustomary at the time, Christiancy "did a great deal for his wife's family, procuring Department positions [in the federal government] for nearly all of them."¹⁷

What became part of the standard explanation for the wedding in later years was that it had been forced through a threatened breach of promise suit. Accord-

ing to the account of A.D.P. Van Buren, the designing daughter, mother, and friends assumed the elderly new Senator to be a wealthy man,¹⁸ though he was not, and trapped the man into marriage:¹⁹

Engrossed with his new duties, he did not suspect their designs, until finally confronted with a careless remark that he had casually dropped, and which was adroitly tortured into a meaning that he had not dreamed of giving it when it was made. He was then informed that this was taken by a susceptible and confiding young woman to mean a proposal of marriage, that her affections had become enlisted and that the offer was accepted. To his protests that he meant nothing of

this sort, the reply was that the remark had not been so understood at all, and that the matter had gone too far and become too serious on the young woman's part to warrant any retraction—at least, if any was indulged in, a suit for breach of promise would have to secure some balm for the anguish of a wounded heart.²⁰

Notwithstanding the alleged scheming, it appears to have been conceded that Christiancy was attracted to the beautiful and vivacious young woman, and that he may have assumed the truth of the young woman's claims of love. So, in addition to his concern about a scandalous lawsuit, "it seemed much the most comfortable alternative to surrender to discretion, and let the world simply laugh at an old man's folly."²¹ Sadly, family members later claimed that within twenty-four hours of the marriage his new wife delivered the news that she did not love him, and several years of unhappiness commenced.²²

But what is clearly the standard (or perhaps it is more correct to say the only well-known account) of the marriage, does not do justice to a more ambiguous and complex story. For we have two significant pieces of evidence from Christiancy himself about his decision to marry Lillie, neither of which refers to litigation about breach of promise, although not necessarily inconsistent with it.

In a letter to his famous colleague and "dear old friend" on the Michigan Supreme Court, Thomas M. Cooley, dated February 11, 1876, just three days after the wedding, Christiancy gives no hint of anything other than a desired match.²³ He describes his new wife as from a "reputable family" and "well-educated, & accomplished, the equal in all respects of the wives of most senators here."²⁴ He noted that she had been a school teacher before taking a job at the Treasury Department as a clerk "to help her father" and added that "when you come to be acquainted with her as I hope you will you will respect and esteem her highly."²⁵

Referring to some newspaper accounts as "not quite true & in some respects maliciously false," he admits to being upset by the references to his first wife having died only nine months prior when in reality it had been fourteen months. He also concedes that "a noise" was unavoidable given the disparity in ages between himself and Lillie, but states "I am entirely satisfied with

Isaac Christiancy's Adult Children

Isaac had ten children with his first wife. By the time he married Lillie in 1876, seven were still living:

- * **Henry Clay Christiancy** was thirty-four and the father of at least five children, the eldest of whom was a year younger than Henry's baby brother, George.
- * **James Issac Christiancy** was at least thirty-two years old and unmarried.
- * **Mary Christiancy** was twenty-nine years old and married in 1872 to Thomas E. O'Brien.
- * **William Penn Christiancy** was twenty-seven years old and unmarried.
- * **Victor Hugo Christiancy** was around twenty-two years old and unmarried.
- * **John Wesley Christiancy** was around twenty years old and unmarried.
- * **George Armstrong Custer Christiancy** was twelve years old and lived with his father and step-mother. He was the only one of Isaac's children substantially younger than Lillie.



George Armstrong Custer Christiancy in old age.

(As found on FindaGrave.com.)

my marriage & so is my wife, and we care little whether others are not. If all that had been said had been said before marriage I should still have married her because I know she is as worthy a person in all respects as I am.”²⁶

Nonetheless, there was more to the story than Christiancy provides in his letter to Cooley. In a letter to Lillie’s father, intended to be private and confidential, that was written after reports of her alleged indiscretions had become numerous, and reprinted after it was submitted in evidence in the divorce proceedings, Christiancy elaborated on what had occurred prior to the wedding.²⁷ Referencing the facts and correspondence that led to the wedding, he explained at length his concern about his age in marrying someone just over 21, and his statements that Lillie should have reconsidered her willingness to marry him. But his statement that “I wrote her apologizing for the proposition I had made as unfit and absurd”²⁸ would plainly seem to mean that it was Christiancy who indeed proposed marriage, and it was not some casual remark, tortured out of its meaning. Christiancy affirms that he loved Lillie, although for her sake he belatedly argued that no marriage should take place. When she indicated her desire to be his wife, he states, as a gentleman he had no recourse but to proceed.²⁹

Yet, by January of 1881, Christiancy was taking the po-

sition that he had been trapped into marriage and that “I was led into it by her skillfully turning what was intended as a mere compliment to her into a proposition for marriage.”³⁰ This is the story that has now persisted; perhaps it came as a result of mature reflection on past events, or the reconstruction of events by his lawyer in the divorce proceedings, but it is at odds with his earlier statement to Lillie’s father.

Similarly, the story told by his sons of what occurred immediately after the wedding also accords with what Christiancy would later write to Lillie’s father. When Lillie was told that her former fiancée had shown up on the day of the wedding, she told Christiancy that she suddenly realized she still loved him and asked for a divorce, which Christiancy said would not be possible, “she shrieked with utter horror” and he immediately felt himself ruined.³¹ However, Lillie and Isaac seem to have reconciled fairly soon “and loving her as I did, most sincerely I rejoiced.”³²

Apparently, Lillie had been engaged to a young man named Frank Y. Anderson of similar age; the engagement was broken off not long before the marriage. It appears that Lillie continued to see the man after her wedding – even writing to him under an assumed name – fueling the suspicion of the Christiancy family about her true intentions.³³ She was also the subject of gossip involving other young men in Washington.

Given Christiancy’s prominence as a Republican Senator during the turbulent period it is not surprising that his personal drama would have a political element. The same year as the ill-fated wedding, 1876, saw the disputed Hayes/Tilden election that generated a constitutional crisis and was not resolved until March of 1877 when Republicans agreed to end reconstruction in the South in exchange for the acceptance of Hayes as the winner. “Among the names connected suspiciously with Mrs. Christiancy’s is that of Congressman Blackburn, of Kentucky, the same who threatened last year to ‘wipe from the statute books every vestige of war legislation.’”³⁴ Blackburn, a Democrat, was a former Confederate officer elected to the House in 1875, and who was later elected to the Senate.

In July, 1876, it appears likely that Lillie obtained an abortion from a Washington drug store operator.³⁵ Christiancy refers to Lillie’s insistence in having an abortion in his letter to Lillie’s father, adding that he

sought to convince her not to do it.³⁶ During the divorce trial, the drug store operator claimed that it was Christiancy himself who had operated on his wife for this purpose, that Lillie told him that she had protested against it but the Senator insisted, and that she suffered from its effects, causing the Senator to seek his help with a remedy.³⁷ This was among the more implausible bits of testimony offered in evidence, but one could hardly expect the druggist to admit anything to the contrary.³⁸

Perhaps related to these events (or simply due to the natural order resulting from a Senator's temporary time in the capital during the legislative term), in August 1876, Lillie, together with her mother, was transported to Christiancy's family home in Lansing, where some of his adult children were also living. She did not get along with most of them, outside of Christiancy's younger son, George, who was thirteen.³⁹ She would spend most of the next two years there.⁴⁰

In February 1877 she returned to Washington via Philadelphia where she again met with Frank Anderson. In March, she, her mother and Isaac returned to Lansing.

Oddly, there were newspaper reports across the country in January and February 1877, congratulating "Mrs. Senator Christiancy" on her nine-pound baby boy and the Senator on his new heir.⁴¹ The rumor was so prevalent that admirers were sending the couple baby clothing and other gifts, and an emphatic denial was printed shortly after the announcements: "Senator Christiancy has no baby, and never expects to have any, and don't want a baby any way—even if he did have one, and he hasn't..."⁴² And "that Senator Christiancy is much more liable to have a baby than the paragraphist is to start a paper of his own."⁴³

Regardless of the merits of that harsh critique, it appears that Lillie had another miscarriage or abortion in 1877.⁴⁴ Perhaps as a result, Lillie required medical attention for the first half of 1878.⁴⁵

That summer, Lillie traveled to Healing Springs, West Virginia, and the ubiquitous Mr. Anderson showed up as well.

Although Christiancy resigned his Senate in 1879 seat due reportedly to ill health, other reports said that the resignation "had been induced originally by a desire to

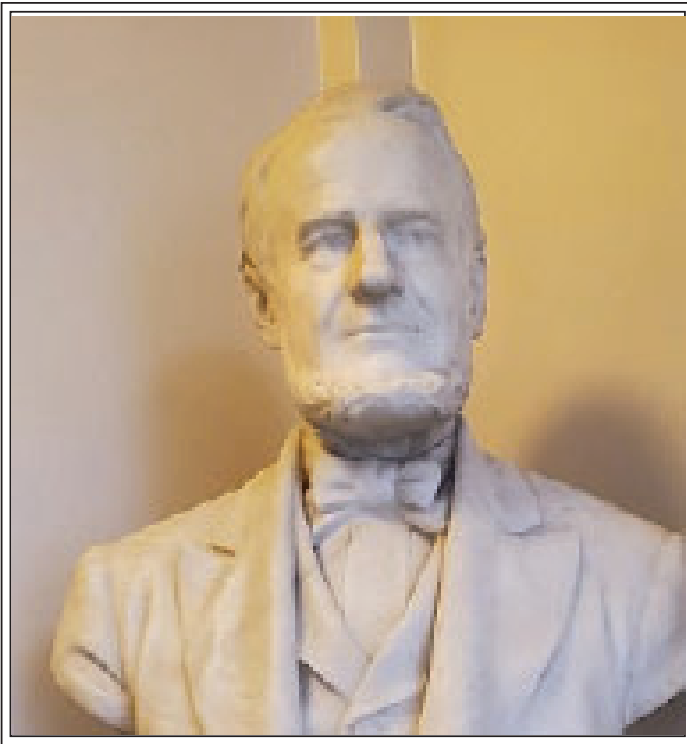
separate his children from their young stepmother."⁴⁶

Christiancy accepted an appointment from President Hayes as Minister to Peru following his resignation. It was not an insignificant appointment at that time as the "War of the Pacific" or "Guano War" between Peru and Chile and Bolivia had broken out that year.

In a letter to Cooley from Peru, Isaac discussed the troubles that led him to leave the Senate. Responding to the news of the deep depression of another public figure, he said: "If he has half the causes for the mental depression I have, God and man ought to pity him, and not blame him."⁴⁷ Similarly commenting in response to the news of Cooley's son's success, he muses: "If my sons whom I dearly loved had done half as well, I might not have sought oblivion behind the Andes."⁴⁸ According to a later article in the *Weekly Wisconsin*, some of his sons "were remarkable for their unique and extravagant methods of dissipation."⁴⁹ But, he added, "their conduct alone would not have driven me to hopeless exile, to the contemplation of death as the only relief from blasted hopes & crushed aspirations."⁵⁰ One can only surmise that it was the troubles with Lillie to which he referred.

Lillie did not originally come with Isaac to Peru, but eventually she followed him on a later steamer, which resulted in another much remarked upon episode. In an account sympathetic to Lillie, reportedly upon the advice of the ship's captain after a discussion with her, she was assigned a "protector" to replace the chaperone who was accompanying her. The protector was a gentleman by the name of George Haight, who was said to be going to Peru to learn about the Lay torpedo boat. In this version of events, Haight continued to visit the ministry after the ship's arrival and was "on good terms" with Minister Christiancy. However, he supposedly witnessed acts of cruelty by Christiancy towards his wife, and that this conduct was so serious that a group of residents were prepared to send a recall petition to Washington but they were persuaded not to do so by Lillie.⁵¹ It is unclear whether Haight was the young lieutenant who followed her from Washington to Peru in the version that seems to have been put forth by Christiancy's side.⁵²

Lillie did not remain long in Peru, and in connection with her return to the United States there is another ambiguous story, this time relating to a Cuban business-



man named Edel Giro and his attentions to Lillie. He would later supply an affidavit about their relationship, stating that on the ship headed back to the United States “I gave her attentions a gentlemen would to a lady who seemed sick, seasick and restless,” including multiple visits to her cabin, and later meetings once they had returned to the United States.⁵³ However, it was subsequently learned that Giro had criminal charges levied against him, and if not a perjurer, at least he seems to have been an unreliable witness.⁵⁴

Whatever the truth about her relationship with Giro, Lillie’s return to Washington did not improve subsequent reports of her conduct. According to a later newspaper article, “She was seen in the streets of that city and about the capitol a great deal this winter, and idle tongues have found topics for free comment in her conduct.”⁵⁵

Such stories seem to have found their way to Christiancy while still in Peru; apparently, the rumors and the impact on his reputation were finally too much for him. He filed a divorce suit against her for infidelity, including allegations involving yet another supposed admirer of Lillie’s, Congressman Blackburn of Kentucky. To make matters worse, one paper reported that there was inappropriate correspondence between Lillie and Christiancy’s own son, Victor.⁵⁶

Lillie responded to the allegations of infidelity with in-

dignation. Not to be outdone, she then filed her own petition for divorce on the grounds of cruelty, alleging that living with his family had been intolerable. Furthermore, and most damaging to the old judge, senator, and diplomat, she alleged Christiancy physically abused her.⁵⁷

The Washington Sunday Star dispatched a reporter to interview Lillie, and she provided an interview on March 17,⁵⁸ giving her side of the story:

Mrs. Senator Christiancy was interviewed last night touching on the reputed marital troubles between herself and husband. The lady lives on D street with her mother, who keeps a boarding house. When shown the paragraph in last night’s *Star*, which was the first intimation she had of the publication, she did not express much surprise. She said that within a month after their marriage the Senator treated her badly, and subsequently went so far as to strike her. She says that when she went to Peru this bad treatment was continued, and that she left the Senator of her own volition. She says, too, that the Senator had told her that his position was such that he could crush her out, and hence she expected just such a scandal as she alleges been heaped upon her. She says that she has taken the step to procure a divorce.⁵⁹

That the divorce scandal was news nationally is apparent from a long article in a Kansas paper, *The Leavenworth Times* of May 25, 1882, entitled “A Marital Mistake: The Christiancy Scandal,” which gives the Christiancy children’s side of the story.⁶⁰ The article recounts the testimony of sons George and Victor in connection with the divorce proceedings, which had been completed and was to be forwarded to Washington. Several of the Christiancy children, James, William, Victor, and John had spent considerable time with the unhappy couple in Washington, D.C. and in Lansing and were deposed about it.⁶¹

The testimony focused on Frank Anderson to whom Lillie was previously engaged and who kept turning up throughout the Christiancy’s marriage. Per their account, the termination of their engagement had been a matter of convenience (or connivance) to permit a marriage in name only with Christiancy, and Lillie and Anderson were simply waiting for Isaac to die, a fact about

which Lillie was said to have informed Isaac at the dinner table one night.⁶²

There were also stories of the allegedly intimate relationship between Lillie and Mr. Haight on the journey to Peru, as witnessed by George Christiancy. Finally, the deposition recounted that Mrs. Christiancy “was in the habit of taking morphine and was under the influence of it much of the time.”⁶³

Reflecting the position of the Christiancy family, the article concluded with the statement that “Mr. Christiancy was kind to his wife at all times, and that her conduct toward him was unwifely in the extreme.”⁶⁴

In sum, this was as sad a public spectacle as could have been imagined, with the detailed allegations of both parties spelled out in excruciating detail in an effort to prove the fault of the other and their own blamelessness.

Finally, in something of an anticlimax, the divorce was granted, not for adultery as Christiancy had charged, or cruelty as Lillie charged, but due to Lillie’s desertion of Isaac when she left Peru.⁶⁵ It appears that the funds and the stamina of both parties had been exhausted.

But here again, there may have been more to the story. On July 3, 1882, there was what one paper reported as “an amicable meeting between the parties.” In a detailed and colorful account, ex-Senator Christiancy was seen visiting the Lugenbeel residence where Lillie was staying, with the implication that a letter sent in advance was the basis for the visit. “Husband and wife stood face to face after more than two years separation, and the interim employed in crimination and recrimination . . . in which both had striven to prove the other unfit to live in matrimonial life. . . . She rushed toward her husband and threw her arms about him” speaking words of apparent endearment to which he quietly replied. After a few minutes he “gently and gradually released himself. . . and quickly walked away from the house.”⁶⁶

While no formal explanation for the meeting was given, a change in the pleadings filed by both parties paints a clear enough picture. Isaac withdrew his charge of adultery and replaced it with a claim of desertion; Lillie withdrew her cross-bill alleging repeated acts of cruelty on the part of her husband.⁶⁷ After so much incivility and public disparagement of one another, the couple

had decided to conclude the matter on mutually acceptable terms.

The Star of September 20, 1882, summarized the conclusion of the matter as follows:

The suit for divorce brought by ex-Minister Isaac P. Christiancy, which had occupied the attention of the courts and the public for the last two years, was brought to an abrupt end about noon today in the Equity Court, Judge Hagner presiding. The court simply said, while disposing of the case, that after careful review of the case, he had decided to grant a decree of divorce on the grounds of desertion, and it was not necessary to enlarge on the subject. He said that in disposing of the case he did not take into consideration the depositions of Mr. Christiancy. Neither of the parties was in court at the disposition of the case, and the audience present did not exceed half a dozen persons.

This is one of the most important cases of the kind that has ever been tried in our courts. Thousands of pages of testimony have been taken in the city. Witnesses have been brought here from all parts of the country. Many commissions have been appointed to take the depositions of witnesses in distant cities. Mrs. Christiancy has resided in this city with her parents near the City Hall.⁶⁸

Per the 1932 summary of the case in *The Star*, a further sad note was that “Mrs. Christiancy’s mind was wrecked by the proceedings and she died soon afterward in Brooklyn, N. Y. Senator Christiancy died September 8, 1890, at the ripe age of 78. . . .”

If additional newspaper accounts are to be believed, the conclusion of the story for both Lillie and Isaac was even sadder than this brief summary suggests. *The Deseret Weekly* of Utah published an account of the last years of both parties in an article titled “Pitiable End of a Promising Career.”⁶⁹ Christiancy had introduced and championed what the paper called one of the most infamous measures against the Mormon people, which is why it said it deemed his demise of such interest so far outside his home state.

The article stated flatly that Lillie “became insane” in

the years following the divorce, although it seems possible that drug addiction was at fault. The Christiancy children claimed that she had taken morphine. At some point she also became a user of chloral; near her death, she mentioned to her physician that she was prescribed the drug during her divorce trial due to nervousness.⁷⁰ Chloral had been introduced into medicine in 1869 as a sedative for insomnia and may also have been used for depression; its addictive qualities were later established. Several newspaper stories claimed that Lillie had an operation to ensure she did not have any children and, as we have seen she had either miscarriages, abortions or both; given gynecological healthcare at that time, she may have been taking morphine for that reason as well.⁷¹

Within a year after the divorce, Lillie was found wandering around Washington D.C. clad only in a “thin night-dress”⁷² and was very ill for some time thereafter. She subsequently moved to Brooklyn to live in a boarding house under her maiden name and through the assistance of a former schoolmate, for a time with Dr. Josephine A. Dupre. It seems that she still had moments that harkened back to the time of her brief courtship with Christiancy: “by her sweet disposition and engaging manners she not only gained a friend in the person of the Doctor but won the respect and esteem of the inmates of the adjoining house.”⁷³ Such tranquility was brief. Trouble with her eyes resulted in a visit from a physician who recognized her and her condition, but she appears to have had a manic episode thereafter where she attacked a servant with a hammer.⁷⁴ After several more days of unstable and worrisome behavior, she died in agony in her bed.⁷⁵

Per another less detailed, but plausible account, at the end of these episodes she took a large dose of chloral, and the day after, she was dead.⁷⁶ She was 28 years old. A very similar account appeared in a September 9, 1890, article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* reporting on Christiancy’s death the day before.⁷⁷

An article in the *New York Times* put additional light on the story. It quoted a doctor who attended to her and previously attributed her health woes to chloral (perhaps Doctor Dupre). The doctor said that she was mistaken in her prior diagnosis and pointed to Bright’s disease (now known as ephritas, which is essentially an inflammation of the kidneys rather than a disease per se) as an issue.⁷⁸ An autopsy was said to reveal uremia

as the cause of death with Bright’s disease as the “remote cause.” One of the noteworthy findings was that her lower organs had been forced down and her spleen was half its usual size. This was attributed to tight lacing of her corset,⁷⁹ apparently a cost of retaining her much remarked upon figure.

Like so much of what has been said about Lillie, it is difficult to be certain of the truth. As the article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* cited earlier put it “Physicians said afterward that the death resulted from kidney trouble, but the general belief was she had become crazed by chloral and was killed by the drug.”⁸⁰

The *New York Times* also included a story dated the following day with what was a lengthy reflection about Lillie from a source identified as a friend of Justice Christiancy. It is worth quoting at length:

I never knew a woman in which the scale of emotion was so long. It ranged from the loftiest exaltation to the deepest depression. She was a creature swayed by impulse. One day she would be buoyant by hope, and the next day wretched. It was in one of these extremes she married Mr. Christiancy, and in the other that she told him on her wedding night that she did not love him, and cursed her fate.⁸¹

Was this an honest assessment of someone who might today be diagnosed as “bipolar” or the after-the-fact musings seeking to put a better face on several years’ worth of perplexing events that were perceived so differently by the families of the protagonists? Perhaps a bit of both is suggested by the further comments of this source to the Times:

The Senator told me, even after his divorce proceedings were begun, that in her happy moods she was one of the kindest and sweetest women in the world. You may not believe it, or you may think that he is a fondly foolish old man, but Senator Christiancy loved that woman with his whole heart and loves her memory now... He was compelled to bring the proceedings for divorce in order to vindicate himself. But all through the hearing he was careful never to say a word more than was necessary. At the very close of the hearing, when he was on the stand, he went out of his way to shield her from asper-

sion.⁸²

After the divorce, things were little better for Isaac than they were for Lillie, and he continued to be haunted by the aftermath of his marriage. A Peruvian friend was said to have entrusted somewhere between \$6,000 and \$20,000 worth of diamonds and or jewels to him.⁸³ They were stolen when Isaac was in a New York hotel. The facts surrounding the story were so peculiar as to suggest that it was a put-up job, and evidence subsequently suggested that this was so.⁸⁴

Around the same time as the robbery came yet another melodramatic development when Lillie's older brother, Dr. French Lugenbeel, who had testified in connection with the trial, issued a challenge to the aged Justice to a duel to avenge the supposed slander of his sister. In this instance Christiancy acted in a way more in keeping with his judicial demeanor, contacting the police and obtaining a warrant against the doctor, spurning what had become an outdated and outlawed custom in connection with affairs of honor.⁸⁵

A subsequent article in *The Deseret Weekly* recounts that "the spirit of the judge was absolutely crushed by the series of disasters."⁸⁶ He retired from public life to attend to literary endeavors, unpublished during his lifetime, including an "aetheistical account of the Bible." These works were to have been published by his family after his death.

Christiancy died from an agonizing case of cancer of the mouth,⁸⁷ suffering greatly—especially in his last month. *The Deseret Weekly* summed it up as follows: "Hon. Isaac P. Christiancy, ex-Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Michigan, ex-United States Senator and ex-Minister to Peru, died recently at his 'lonely home' in Lansing, in comparative poverty and surrounded and accompanied by wretchedness. He attained as high honors as were ever reached by any man of his State, but his descent to oblivion was much more rapid than his trip to power and influence."⁸⁸

ENDNOTES

1 Carl Herstein earned a B.A. University of Michigan, 1973, and a J.D. Yale Law School, 1976. He is currently the President of the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society but the comments and conclusions of this article are strictly his own.

I would like to thank Kaitlyn Colyer, University of Michigan Class of 2022 for her research assistance as an intern for the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society, Assistant Executive Director Carrie Sharlow for her substantial research and editorial work on this article, and attorney Daniel Myers (who has a familial relationship with the Christiancy family), for providing additional articles of interest.

2 There is no biography of Isaac Peckham Christiancy. His very important early political career and role in connection with the formation of the Republican party is set forth only in unpublished form – Ronald E. Seavoy, "Isaac P. Christiancy and the Formation of the Republican Party in Michigan" (unpublished master's dissertation, Michigan Historical Collections, The University of Michigan) – and there is some commentary on his judicial career (e.g. , Isaac Peckham Christiancy, 5 U Mich L Rev 4, 231-235 (February 1907)) but it is mostly overshadowed by broader discussions about his more famous brethren on the Court at that time. His remarkable election to the United States Senate in place of Zachariah Chandler appears to be an almost completely untold story (the brief discussion of the matter in the Detroit Post and Tribune, Zachariah Chandler, An Outline Sketch of His Life and Public Services (1880), Chapter XIX, does it little justice; see also the account in Proceedings in the Legislature Thursday. Detroit Free Press; Jan 22, 1875), and his work as Minister to Peru is underreported as is The War of the Pacific to which it relates (also called "The Guano War") among Peru, Bolivia and Chile, 1879-1884, which overlaps with the heretofore unexplored story of his marriage and divorce to Lillie Lugenbeel.

3 *Pitiable End of a Promising Career*, *The Deseret Weekly* (September 27, 1890), p 5.

4 Lanman, *The Red Book of Michigan: A Civil, Military and Biographical History* (Detroit: E.B. Smith & Company, 1871), p 429.

5 *Id.*

6 *Id.*

7 Edward M Wise, "'The Ablest State Court': The Michigan Supreme Court Before 1885", 33 *Wayne L Rev* 1509 (1987).

8 Buren, "Memoir of Judge Isaac Peckham Christiancy," *Historical Collections: Collections & Researches Made by the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society, Vol. XVIII* (Lansing: Robert Smith & Co., 1892), p 335.

9 See Christiancy and Pickett Families Papers via the Library of Congress <<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms009159>> (accessed October 19, 2023).

- 10 U.S. Army Medal of Honor Civil War Recipients <<https://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/mcginnis/medal/citations1.html#C>> (accessed October 19, 2023).
- 11 See Christiancy and Pickett Families Papers.
- 12 *New Republicans Senators: Their Opinions and Views of Their Relations to the Party*, The New York Times (March 10, 1875), p 1.
- 13 *Mismatched: Mr. Christiancy's Unhappy Marriage*, Chattanooga Daily Times (March 21, 1880), p 1.
- 14 *Coolly Awaiting Death: Judge Isaac Christiancy Dying At His Home: The Eminent Michigan Jurist's Life Being Slowly Ended by a Malignant Cancer—His Happiness Ruined and His Public Career Ended by a Faithless Wife and Dissolute Sons—A Long and Honorable Course in the Service of the Public*, Chicago Tribune (August 23, 1890), p 7.
- 15 *Mismatched: Mr. Christiancy's Unhappy Marriage*.
- 16 The others were French C. Lugenbeel, James Lugenbeel, and Bettie Lugenbeel. Both French and Bettie later testified on Lillie's behalf in the divorce trial.
- 17 *Mismatched: Mr. Christiancy's Unhappy Marriage*.
- 18 There were newspaper reports that Christiancy was a millionaire that were untrue (*A Senator's Marriage to an Alexandrian*, Alexandria Gazette (February 8, 1876) p 3); another newspaper report said his worth at the time was \$50,000, still a considerable sum at the time. (*The Wealth of the United States Senate*, Evening Star (June 26, 1875), p 1).
- 19 Buren, "Memoir of Judge Isaac Peckham Christiancy," p 336
- 20 *Id.* at 336-337.
- 21 *Id.* at 337.
- 22 *Id.*
- 23 Letter from Isaac Christiancy to Thomas Cooley, February 11, 1876, Typescripts of Correspondence, 1876, Box 6, Thomas M. Cooley Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. Christiancy refers to Cooley as his "dear old friend" in a subsequent letter that he wrote from Peru after his appointment as minister.
- 24 *Id.*
- 25 *Id.*
- 26 *Id.*
- 27 *Christiancy's Trials: A Patient Husband's Story of His Sufferings: Letter to His Wife's Father: Startling Record of Intrigue, Deception, Flirtation and Abuse: Repentance Following the Marriage: Association and Clandestine Correspondence with Old Suitors: Testimony Before the Examiner*, New York Herald (May 26, 1882), p 5.
- 28 *Id.*
- 29 *Id.*
- 30 *A Raking Rejoinder: Ex-Senator Christiancy's Reply: To the Charges Brought Against Him by His Wife—He Adds Some Very Interesting Gossip, Implicating Mrs. Christiancy in a Very Unpleasant*, The National Republican (January 14, 1881), p 1.
- 31 *Christiancy's Trials* - This account comes from Christiancy's letter to Lillie's father. There is a mystery here, however, as Isaac says that the event was triggered by the return of James Lugenbeel as the former fiancée. How a man who seems to have been her older brother was the fiancée is not known; most subsequent accounts indicate that Frank Anderson, who Christiancy mentions as appearing shortly thereafter and as being overly attentive to his wife, was the former fiancée. Perhaps the arrival of James was related in some way to her recollection of Anderson. I have followed this assumption in telling the story.
- 32 *Christiancy's Trials*.
- 33 *The Christiancy Divorce; Evidence of Two Sons of the Ex-Senator and Peruvian Minister; The Scandalous Scenes Witnessed by Young George Christiancy; And Mrs. Christiancy's Infamous Proposition to Victor*, Detroit Free Press (May 23, 1882), p 1.
- 34 *The Christiancy Divorce*, Ann Arbor Courier (April 16, 1880).
- 35 It was also suggested that there may have been a miscarriage. *The Christiancy Divorce Case: His Answer to the Cross Bill—New Charges Against Mrs. Christiancy*, Evening Star (January 14, 1881), p 4.
- 36 *Christiancy's Trials*.
- 37 *The Christiancy Divorce Case: His Answer to the Cross Bill—New Charges*.
- 38 *The Christiancy Divorce: Evidence of Two Sons of the Ex-Senator and Peruvian Minister*. George would testify that Lillie told him she had an operation that would prevent her from having children.
- 39 *The Christiancy Divorce: Evidence of Two Sons of the Ex-Senator and Peruvian Minister*. Lillie would later comment that she would always love George. "He is the one bright and pure memory of my married life" *Christiancy: Skinned Alive By the Wife He Has So Basely Treated*, Memphis Daily Appeal (September 24, 1881), p 2.
- 40 For the most detailed account see *The Christiancy Divorce: Evidence of Two Sons of the Ex-Senator and Peruvian Minister*.
- 41 *Personal*, The Kansas City Journal of Commerce (February 2, 1877), p 4.

- 42 *Senator Christiancy Has No Baby*, *The Independence Kansan* (February 22, 1877), p 1.
- 43 *What the Wits Say*, *The New North West* (March 9, 1877), p 1.
- 44 *The Christiancy Divorce Case: His Answer to the Cross Bill-New Charges*.
- 45 *The Christiancy Divorce Case*, *Evening Star* (September 21, 1881), p 5.
- 46 *Mismatched: Mr. Christiancy's Unhappy Marriage*.
- 47 Letter from Isaac Christiancy to Thomas Cooley, December 2, 1879, *Typescripts of Correspondence, 1879*, Box 6, Thomas M. Cooley Papers, Bentley Historical Library,
- 48 *Id.*
- 49 *Snared To His Ruin: A Tyebury Girl Wrecks a Brilliant Career; Ex-Senator Christiancy Dying in Oblivion as the Result of Scandall and Unpleasant Notoriety--Story of the Noted Michigan Jurist's Life*, *Wisconsin Weekly* (August 30, 1890), p 1.
- 50 Letter from Isaac Christiancy to Thomas Cooley, December 2, 1879.
- 51 *Lillie Christiancy: The Senator's Accused Wife. Miseries That Followed the Marriage of a Venerable Widower with a Pretty, Vivacious Young Treasury Clerk--A Cruel Husband and Handsome Young Cuban Admirer -- Edil Giro's Testimony--Alleged Criminating Letters -- A Plot to Shut Off Investigation*, *The Buffalo Evening News* (January 4, 1881), p 1.
- 52 *Pitiable End of a Promising Career*.
- 53 *Lillie Christiancy: The Senator's Accused Wife*.
- 54 *Id.*
- 55 *Pitiable End of a Promising Career*.
- 56 *Whig and Courier* (March 31, 1880), p 2. Per the article: "Ex-Senator and Judge Christiancy, the venerable representative of this country at Peru, bases his application for a divorce upon alleged improper intercourse between his young wife, formerly a Treasury clerk, and George Haight, a married American resident of Lima. He has also possession of a letter written to her by one of his sons, Dr. Victor Christiancy, which is said to be couched in more devoted language than is becoming a step-son. Mrs. Christiancy denies the charges and alleges jealousy and brutal treatment by the Judge."
- 57 *The Christiancy Divorce: Evidence of Two Sons of the Ex-Senator and Peruvian Minister*.
- 58 Proctor, *Historic Court Cases in Washington: Early Society Was Stirred by Several Domestic Conflicts Which Reached the State of Litigation—Van Ness, Gov. Sprague and Several Others—Case of Ann Royall*, *The Sunday Star Magazine* (April 24, 1932), p 6-7.
- 59 Proctor, *Historic Court Cases in Washington*.
- 60 *A Marital Mistake: The Christiancy Scandal: Testimony Relative to Mrs. Christiancy's Intimacy with Men After Her Marriage to the Senator—Escapades on Shipboard and in South America*, *The Leavenworth Times* (May 25, 1882), p 1.
- 61 *Id.*
- 62 *The Christiancy Divorce: Evidence of Two Sons of the Ex-Senator and Peruvian Minister*.
- 63 *Id.*
- 64 *Id.*
- 65 *Alexandria Gazette* (September 21, 1882), p 3.
- 66 *The Christiancy Divorce Suit: An Amicable Meeting Between the Parties, But the Cause Not Withdrawn From Court*, *The New York Herald* (July 4, 1882), p 10.
- 67 *Id.*
- 68 Proctor, *Historic Court Cases in Washington*.
- 69 *Pitiable End of a Promising Career*.
- 70 *The Late Mrs. Christiancy*, *Alexandria Gazette* (December 15, 1883), p 1.
- 71 *Id.*
- 72 *A Sad Life Ended: Death of Ex-Judge Isaac P. Christiancy: The Story of His Unwise Love: A Pretty Treasury Girl Causes His Fall From Power to Obscurity*, *San Francisco Chronicle* (September 9, 1890), p 11.
- 73 *The Late Mrs. Christiancy*.
- 74 *Id.*
- 75 *Id.*
- 76 *Id.*
- 77 *A Sad Life Ended*.
- 78 *The Late Mrs. Christiancy*.
- 79 *Mrs. Christiancy's Death: She Went to Brooklyn, It is Said, to Study Medicine*, *New York Times* (December 15, 1883), p 2.
- 80 *A Sad Life Ended: Death of Ex-Judge Isaac P. Christiancy*.
- 81 *Mrs. Christiancy's Death: She Went to Brooklyn*.
- 82 *Id.*
- 83 *Pitiable End of a Promising Career*.
- 84 *Alexandria Gazette* (February 27, 1883) p. 2. A Washington detective seems to have planned the theft.
- 85 *Troubles of An Ex-Senator—Challenged and Robbed—Postoffice, Contract—Suspension of A Contract, Etc*, *The Baltimore Sun* (September 17, 1881), p 4.
- 86 *Pitiable End of a Promising Career*.
- 87 Buren, "Memoir of Judge Isaac Peckham Christiancy," p 333.
- 88 *Pitiable End of a Promising Career*.



3rd Floor, Hall of Justice
925 W. Ottawa Street
Lansing, MI 48915

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