

The Overton Claim

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"Don't ax me, chile. I ain't got time ter bodder fin' in out who all he look lik'."

"Fiu out fer yo'self," mammy said majestically, flinging wide the doors of a tall secretary, black with age.

"Oh, yes, yo' read!" Much dem newspapers knows 'bout hurted folks. Go on ewery, chile. Nebber seed no good come yit outen foolin wid doctor's truck.

"Try to," said Dare. "It is the best thing that could possibly happen to you."



"Let me bathe it," she said, anybody who was suffering, but no doubt I had better bind your arm in arnica and leave you alone until dinner is ready.

Young Haywood sat instantly upright, saying anxiously, "Indeed, Miss Overton, I hope I have not offended you?"

Dare shook her head. "No," she said, "but you will offend me very deeply if you do not at once lie down and make yourself as comfortable as possible."

With a merry feint of terrified obedience, the stranger stretched again on the couch. Dare threw a light gray blanket over him and bent to slip a fresh cushion under his arm.

CHAPTER VI Well might Francis Overton stand aghast at a sight so unexpected, so unwelcome. Already the day had brought him weird and thrilling experience.

tal atmosphere, he had begun to piece together many shreds of his misfortunes and so in a measure judge the stuff whereof they were spun.

Throughout the process the feeling had grown and strengthened that this weakened creature, so brown, so bent, so soft of voice and downcast of eye, held in her hands more than one clew, worth to him far more than life.

Fate had so nearly stripped him of human feelings, of human ties, there was only Dare, a slip of a girl, who would marry away from the Overton name, who would forget in her frocks, her babies, her husband, all the story, the wrong, the tragedy of her race.

Strong in this nameless, formless impulse, he had drawn rein at Jincey's cabin when the sun was an hour high. It sat under the lee of a sharp hill, whose shadow fell heavily about it.

The mongrel lay voiceless, motionless, watching the newcomer with fierce, beady eyes. It was but a starveling atom of skin and bone, hardly able by the look of it to upbear the cha- which was fastened at one end to its collar, at the other to a staple driven in the long wall.

Major Overton looked at it compassionately. He knew that the gaunt creature was no reflex of poverty within, but a victim to the belief among the class of its mistress that only a hungry dog is a trusty guard.

"Marse Frank, won't yo' nebber learn ter kick dogs in time?" The covert significance of the query was lost upon her visitor, or if he heeded it, he gave no sign.

"Jincey, do you know why I have come here? I confess that I cannot say." Again Jincey laughed. This time there was a hint of triumph in it. A sudden flame on the hearth lit up the low, grimy interior, the gun upon the wall, the swinging rack heaped with skins and garments, the big plump bed, with its white pillows and "rising sun" coverlid, the hide bottomed chairs, the row of chests against the wall, the table at one side spread with an untouched breakfast, Jincey herself, with her thatch of snow white wool, her keen, down lidded eyes, her small fingered, skinny hands.

She held both before her, as in deprecation, and said slowly, as if in deep meditation: "Maybe it's because I'm most dead. You couldn't be let wait any longer."

There was so little of African accent or idiom in her speech as to proclaim that she had been in her youth more with white people than with the black. There was, too, a curious similarity of intonation to the voice of her visitor. A quick ear would easily perceive that their speech had been molded after much the same model.

"I don't change—in some things," the black woman said, moving toward the fire and steadying herself against one of the huge rock jambs. Major Overton got up and stood facing her, eying her keenly as she slowly fingered the rosary of keys at her girdle.

Upon one of them—a small dull bit of brass—her hand paused with a slow, sensitive clutch, then moved defiantly on to the copper, the steel, the iron, that made up the tale. But not one of them was so odd, had such wards as the brass one, though it was strangely familiar to Major Overton's eye.

Without a word she laid it in his palm. He saw the duplicate of the key which had locked in his father's deeds in that faraway night, so sorrowfully well remembered.

"What does this unlock?" he asked, his eyes rull on the old, old face. Jincey answered, as though dreaming. "Better ask them that know. I don't."

"How came you by it, then?" "I—found it—in the road—last year."

"Jincey, we are too old for lying. Tell me how long you have had this key." "Why do you want to know?" "You know without telling. It was by help of that key our deeds were stolen—my father murdered."

"Master—master was a good man, too good to die," the old woman said, staring straight before her with fixed, glassy eyes. Suddenly her form grew rigid, she threw a hand above her head and gasped in a hoarse whisper, punctuated by saps: "Go away, master; go away! You are dead, dead! I never touched your papers."

Suddenly it slid out of his hands to a writhing heap at his feet, and out of it



"Overton claim! The end is coming," a smothered voice cried, with still the note of mockery: "Overton claim! The end is coming, coming through a woman whose weakness is stronger than your strength."

What wonder, then, that his face blanched at sight of the one woman who owned Overton blood thus in proximity to a young man unheard of, undreamed of before?

CHAPTER VII

Dare faced her grandfather with no sign of confusion. Indeed her first word was for him.

"How wet you are!" she cried, moving toward him. "Surely you did not have to swim at the ford?" He put her away with an impatient gesture, saying no word, but a burning question in his eyes.

Letting a hand fall either side of her, Dare said, with a distinctness that would have been harsh had her voice been less clear: "The gentleman is hurt, grandfather. I have tried to make him comfortable, as you would have done. Let me make you acquainted with him—Mr. Allen Haywood."

"What name did you say? The wind roars so I can hardly hear." Major Overton said, stopping within, unmindful of the dripping from his soaked garments upon the immaculate floor. Before Dare could repeat it the stranger got upon his feet and said, with a profound obeisance: "Let me master that, Major Overton. The young lady knows only a part of my name. I am Allen Hawthorn Fauntleroy, very much at your service."

"Spite of his white hair, fire leaped to Major Overton's eyes; big veins stood out upon his forehead; his mouth grew set and hard; his hand clinched nervously upon the riding whip he held. For a full minute he was silent. Then, speaking very low, he said: "Leave us, Dare. Mr.—Fauntleroy,"

"—choking over the name—"I am sorry to see you in such ill plight. I hope that my people have made you as comfortable as possible."

"They have done much more than that—saved my life. But, Major Overton, every minute you stand thus dripping wet endangers yours. I beg you to make yourself comfortable. Then give me the pleasure of an hour's talk with you."

Major Overton's eyes blazed more than ever, yet he answered in a tone even more sullen soft: "Pardon me, Mr. Fauntleroy, you are my guest. Nothing puts that aside. But under all the circumstances of the case I must ask that all other than casual communications shall come through my lawyers."

With that he bowed himself away, to return a little later in a well brushed suit of fine threadbare black, with a silver tray in his hand, upon which stood a decanter and two glasses. He set the salver on the table at Fauntleroy's elbow and said in the same restrained voice: "Dinah, my housekeeper, has told me of your mishap. After it you are naturally rather shaky, and here is some brandy that I can recommend. It has stood in Ridgeley cellar rising 40 years. As you are somewhat disabled, let me give you a glass."

The other held out his well hand and watched with curious eyes the flow of the oily golden brown liquor that, in spite of a rainy day's gray light, held yet a hint of sunshine. As he sipped it slowly the door was thrown aside, and mammy's voice said, "Dinner's ready, marster."

As the two men entered the dining room the younger looked expectantly about, but Dare was not visible. Only two covers were laid. The meal went heavily forward, though the guest found

"But how did you discover you were in possession of this striking disease?" said Dr. Rodgwick in a state of ecstasy. "Well, I have had suspicions for a long time," I replied, "that something was wrong, but I kept the opinion to myself. A few days ago, however, I tried to insure my life, and the medical officers of half a dozen companies rejected me. I then went to a first class man, was thoroughly overhauled, told exactly what was the matter with me and informed that I was one of the most extraordinary cases that had ever come under his notice. He gives me only six months."

"Ah! The symptoms are most remarkable. I have not been so interested for a long time. It is certainly a very curious case, unprecedented in its complexity."

"Do you really think it is so serious?" "Oh, I hope so. I think I may safely assert that the man you have consulted is absolutely correct in his diagnosis, if the symptoms are as you say."

"Do you think I shall survive it?" "Not unless you allow the course of the disorder to be interfered with by those sentimental quacks who hinder the advance of pathological science by seeking cures."

"But six months is very short," I said despondently. "Not at all. With care, the thing may be induced to run its course even more quickly. Drugs and a low diet may be made to do a good deal in accelerating matters."

"What would you advise? Should I consult Sir John?" "No, no, no! Don't consult anybody."

The system of handling cotton and other freight with compressed air locomotives at the terminal of the New Orleans and Western Railroad company at Port Chalmette has been tested and has proved to be a success. This system was devised by A. N. Swantz, chief engineer of the Delta Construction company, and will result in great saving of cost in handling freight and in complete immunity against fire in the terminal yards.

(CONTINUED.)

THE ELECTRIC SPIRIT.

With wild wings fettered I ride the wire. My life finds issue in blinding fires. Bright shapes are wrought by my flying breath. But my touch is flame, and my kiss is death. Since man hath bound me with coil and chain, Nor man nor spore can his word restrain. I wind my strokes of burning speed. The round globe over to serve his need. Of warring winds I am king and lord; The storm comes whirling my radiant word. I laugh in light as the swift strokes fly. The sullen thunders make slow reply.

With myrtle poison I yearn from far To my secret home 'neath the northern star. And thence, on the vast black walls of light, I fling great rays from my gates of light. Time flies before me, and none may know My course as from star to star I go. For I am life. In the utmost dark God's touch enkindled my fervid spark.

Think ye to know me, O ye who raise My torch of flame on the world's highways? Ask him whose throne is the central light Of countless suns in their whirling flight. With fierce strength fettered, I ride the wires. From these spirits have I named my fires. And God alone, in his chosen hour, Can free the force of my nameless power. —Marion Coakley Smith.

A RUSE THAT LOST.

She was my first love, and so far as I can tell, she may prove to be my only one. She is now a buxom wife with some four or five rosy, romping children, and I am still a bachelor. But time is a great healer, and I can now tell the story of my luckless suit with Dora Rodgwick without a pang.

Dora was the only daughter of a retired London medical man. At the time I first made her acquaintance her father had retired from practice and was a widower. I fell head over heels in love with the girl—though I can hardly believe it when I look at her today—and she consented to marry me if the old doctor gave his consent. She never professed to have any deep affection for me; she liked me, however, and was willing to become my wife if her papa approved.

But the eccentric old man would not hear of it. I remember how dejected I was after he had told me, with considerable rigor, that I could not become his son-in-law, and how indignant I felt at his declining to give me any reasons for his decision. The following day I met an old college friend in Bond street—Douglas Bligh.

"You are not looking very bright," he said. "What are you worrying about?" Bligh also was a doctor. He had walked the same hospital as old Rodgwick, only many years later.

"A love affair," I confessed, with a forced smile. "Ah! I thought something of the sort. Girl thrown you over?"

"No, not the girl—the father!" "Oh, that's nothing! If the lady is willing, love will find out a way, and papa will come round."

"He is a pig headed old doctor—I beg your pardon, but I suppose a doctor may sometimes be pig headed like the rest of us?"

"Undoubtedly. Do I know him?" "Dr. Gordon Rodgwick."

"Oh, yes, I am acquainted with him. I also once met Miss Rodgwick. I congratulate you, old fellow. A charming young lady, 'pon my word. But the old man—ha! ha—no wonder he rejected you!"

"Why?" "You are too healthy!" "Too healthy!"

"Yes. You ought to have some interesting and deep seated disease—something complicated and lingering!"

"I—what on earth are you driving at, Bligh?" "Don't you know? He's"—and he touched his forehead with his forefinger. "You don't mean it?"

"Yes. He is mad on one point. He has a contempt for healthy people, and respects only those who are suffering from some terrible disease."

"But his daughter never told me." "She doesn't know. They have kept it from her. And this is the cause of his want of parental affection. There is absolutely nothing the matter with the young lady. Now, what he wants is a son-in-law riddled with disease. You must get some internal growth or—"

"Good heavens, Bligh!" "Come with me and I will coach you up in all the symptoms of a most interesting malady. Everything will then turn out according to your best wishes."

"But how did you discover you were in possession of this striking disease?" said Dr. Rodgwick in a state of ecstasy. "Well, I have had suspicions for a long time," I replied, "that something was wrong, but I kept the opinion to myself. A few days ago, however, I tried to insure my life, and the medical officers of half a dozen companies rejected me. I then went to a first class man, was thoroughly overhauled, told exactly what was the matter with me and informed that I was one of the most extraordinary cases that had ever come under his notice. He gives me only six months."

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"What would you advise? Should I consult Sir John?" "No, no, no! Don't consult anybody."

Don't meddle with it, or you may spoil all.

"But perhaps a cure?" "Care, sir! Don't talk such sickly nonsense, or I shall begin to think it possible that you could do such a mean and dishonorable thing as to rob medical science of one of the most instructive, beautiful and striking cases that have ever enriched the literature of pathology."

"What, then, is the use of pathology if doctors are not to cure?" "Pathology, sir, treats of diseases, their causes, effects and symptoms. It is a branch of knowledge, an interesting abstract study, a recreation. It has nothing to do with treatment, cures and such like quackeries."

"But what may be sport to you is death to us?" "Why, we must all die, and what could be nobler than to die in the cause of science? By the way, you were speaking to me about my daughter the other day."

I shook my head in a melancholy manner. "Well, I have been thinking I spoke hastily. She is yours. I shall be proud to have you as a son-in-law. To watch the course of your complaint will be a privilege and a delight. Marry as soon as ever you like. I think you will find Dora somewhere about the house. See her and fix the matter up."

But Dora was not to be seen that day. She had gone to her room indisposed. When I called the next morning, the housekeeper told me that Miss Rodgwick had gone on a visit to friends at Brighton, but had left a note for me. I opened it and read as follows:

"I overheard your talk with papa, and am so very, very sorry for you. I do so hope that your state is not so bad as you fear, and that you will not lose courage and will soon get well."

"Of course everything must now be at an end between us. It would be madness to talk of marriage. I shall always think of you as a very dear friend, and I want you to believe that you will have my most sincere sympathy."

I put the letter in my pocket and went home. What a mess I had made of it! First I had gained the consent of Dora and failed to obtain that of her father. Now I had obtained the doctor's consent and lost the daughter's. Fancy her overhearing all that I said and thinking I was speaking the truth about the diseased state of my body! And yet, why should she have supposed I was lying?"

One thing was certain. I must find her out and explain all. Dr. Rodgwick knew the name of the friends whom Dora had gone to, but he could not tell me the address. He had been accustomed to allow her to go and come pretty much as she pleased.

A week passed, several days of which I had spent at Brighton, without anything being heard of her. One morning I strolled round to Dr. Rodgwick's to learn whether his daughter had written, when I saw an empty cab standing at the door.

"Miss Dora has just arrived, sir. I'll tell her you are here."

I stepped into the drawing room and waited. In a few minutes I heard the dear girl running down the stairs. My heart leaped with joy.

"How do you do?" she said, placing her little hand in mine and looking into my eyes with infinite pity. "I do hope you are better. You are looking pretty well."

"My dear Dora, I was never better in my life. That was all untrue about my illness. I am in perfect health."

"Untrue?" "All of it. I will explain it to you another time."

"Then you are not going to die in six months?" "I hope not, nor in six decades. Are you sorry?"

"Sorry? Of course not, but—" "I have your father's consent to our marriage. Darling, you will now be mine?"

"Impossible!" "How so?" "Well, the fact is—I am married!"

I sprang back amazed. "You see, I thought you were a doomed man. I heard it from your own lips. Marriage with you would have been mad, impossible. And papa's strange talk alarmed me, especially when he gave his consent. I was terrified and feared his anger. So I went away to friends at Brighton. There I met Captain Ainsworth. He was my first love, and I have never really lost my affection for him. He asked me to marry him, and—well, I did so at once, as he is going out to India. You really cannot blame me, can you?"

No; I didn't exactly blame her, but I cursed my fate, and I told Bligh that he was the biggest fool in his profession, for which he has never thoroughly forgiven me, though he says he has.—London Tit-Bits.

Napoleon's Advice About Hortense. Louis, who was governing Holland with reference to its own best interests, and ordering the affairs of his own family rigidly, but admirably, received a severe and passionate reprimand from the emperor for his economy. What was wanted was pay for the troops, plenty of conscripts, encouragement for the Dutch Catholics, and a giddy court, where men would forget more serious things and where Queen Hortense could make a display. "Let your wife dance as much as she wants to. It is proper for her age. I have a wife 40 years old, and from the field of battle I recommend her to go to balls, while you want one of 20 to live in a cloister, or, like a wet nurse, always bathing her child." —Professor Sloane in Century.

A Bond. "Yes," said the Cumminsville sage, "I don't doubt that having fought in the same regiment is calculated to bind men together firmly, and so is a membership in the same lodge, but for real, heartfelt sympathy gimme two fellows who have the same kind of rheumatism." —Cincinnati Enquirer.

GUIDES TRAINS IN SAFETY.

A Young Woman of Kansas With Important Matters on Hand.

Miss Byrd Watkins of Topeka has the distinction of being the only female train dispatcher, on a single track, in the United States, and the responsibility of such a position attaches no little importance to the young woman who holds it.

Miss Watkins is stationed at Junction City, on the Kansas division of the Union Pacific railway, a through line between Kansas City to Denver and its branch the Junction City and Fort Kansas City branch, from Junction City to Lawrence and Belleville; the Solomon City branch from Solomon City to Beloit, and the Salina and southwestern branch between Salina to McPherson.

Miss Watkins is one of the "shifts" working eight hours each, and is on the second "trick," as the business between 4 o'clock in the afternoon and midnight is called. She is in full charge of the office during that time. Her duties as dispatcher on a single track are materially from those of a double track dispatcher, as meeting points made for all trains going in opposite directions.

She is a Kentuckian by birth. Her father, who was a lawyer, died in 1860, leaving a wife and three daughters, of whom Miss Byrd is the eldest. She is just past 23, and her progress in the work she has chosen has been rapid. Her first situation was that of operator for the Union Pacific at Deer Creek, Colo. From that place she went to pika and was employed by the railroad there for four years, until 1894, when she was promoted Junction City as train dispatcher.

Few women have the clear headed steady nerve required to fill such a position. Miss Watkins is a nice looking girl, with a tall, slender figure, blue eyes and light brown hair, in a manner is pleasing and refined.

"When I first went into the office," she said, "the superintendent thought that I should be accomplishing as much as I learned to be a train dispatcher without swearing. I must confess I have more sympathy with men's scores, but when I feel obliged to let out for my feelings I just get up and walk round and round the table, and had no accidents since I began to direct even a narrow escape."

Miss Watkins said to be the best dispatcher on the road. The West Railway Record publishes a graph complimentary to the young woman and an official of the road is quoted as saying, "I would not give her any man dispatcher on our system Kansas City Star."

Don't Use Slang. Bishop Potter's word at the Alumnae association, at its luncheon recently, deserves accentuation. He dealt with the abuses and claims of another tongue, "Slang," said he of other things, "is one of the greatest jergs to which our tongue is subjected. Just as a coin is debased, so is language, and in this connection I think that the dialect story, with all its earnestness and pathos, is of double necessity to avoid the danger of which felt sure every woman present was conscious, that of giving vigor to the tongue by the aid of slang." He also, too, of the risky stimulant to the slang among young women from the fact that such words on their lips are laugh among men. "Believe me," the bishop earnestly, "that on the many of young men themselves never no charm greater than that served cultivated, choice speech, your eye, your mind, your lip, but the great tongue, Shakespeare's, which we all inherit."

Mrs. Blinn's Idea. A reception was given recently by Mrs. Nellie Holbrook Blinn of Oregon at the equal suffrage headquarters, Portland, Or. Mrs. Blinn said that the political parties of her state were the Democratic had endorsed the thing woman suffrage amendment resolutions or planks in their platform. Mrs. Blinn thought that the attention of vast rolls of suffrage papers had better be discontinued. She said work of securing them was tedious and burdensome, and no attempt should be made to them. What is needed is to cate men into the understanding of suffrage for women will benefit both well as women, and then the attention will cease.

Lady Wilde's Masterpiece. The recent death of Lady Wilde in London recalls the fact, says a famous paper, that it was she who wrote the famous leading article, published in Alea Est, "in the Dublin Nationalist constituted the chief cause of the indictment for high treason against the editor of that journal, who is Charles Gavan Duffy, an excellent literary recluse at Nice. The question was published at the revolutionary fever in sample of blood stirring English collections, and especially so on the other side of the Atlantic."

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