

The Overton Claim.

CHAPTER XI.

Vance was a true prophet. When it came out that no permission, no counsel, could win Major Overton to accept Allen Fauntleroy's surrender...

To think that now the major could be so selfish, could set his own foolish notion of right and honor above the music of jingling gold in both pockets—Hawkins' pockets! Clearly he ought to be reminded of what he owed to the disappointed attorney...

All the way he told himself over and over the story of his wrong, his deserving. By the time he came into Major Overton's presence he was so full of wrath as to lose sight of discretion.

The major sat at ease within the narrow front portico listening to the county news which Dare read in scraps from the local papers. Through the long hall came the drone of manny's wheel from the back piazza.

Hawkins looked at all of it with a contemptuous eye—it was so poor and rough, poverty stricken almost, beside his gorgeous imaginings of what might so easily be in its stead. Very deliberately he flung his reins over the flank of a near maple, got down and walked to the unwhewn stone steps, paused with a foot upon the lowermost one and said in deepest chest tones:

"Good day, major. I'd like a little talk with you this morning. Will you come out with me, or shall I come in?"

"Good day, sir. Be seated," Major Overton said, rising courteously to welcome the guest, at sight of whom Dare had vanished.

Hawkins climbed the three steps in front of him with the ponderous tread of an angry man and sat heavily down in a big splint chair, dropped his hat upon the floor and said, brushing over his mustache a fine, scented cambric handkerchief:

"You are surprised, I know, to see me, major, but my surprise is that I haven't come before."

"Indeed! Then you must have urgent business?"

"I have," said Hawkins, uncrossing his legs and setting both feet firm on the floor. Leaning forward, he continued:

"The fact is, major, you haven't used me well in this last turn of affairs. You know, for I sent you word through Hil-dreth, how I stand regarding this sale, yet just for a chimera you set yourself against everything. If it meant nothing to anybody but yourself, I'd agree you had a perfect right to act—well, the fool if it suited you. But taking money out of my pocket is another thing. Do you think it is quite square, considering all you owe me?"

"The last words were spoken very low, but Major Overton caught their full meaning. He sat up very straight, and lightning began to play under his pent-house brows. Gripping hard the wooden arms of his chair, he said, not loudly, but with a ring of defiance:

"No doubt, Mr. Hawkins, right and honor are to you but chimeras, not a feather's weight in the scale against hard cash. Unfortunately for you, I see differently. As to any obligation that I may be under, if money or material advantage can discharge it, then it does not exist."

"Hawkins rose up in white fury. 'Do you mean to say that I lie?' he roared. 'Wouldn't you have paid all more than all you were worth to keep people from hearing that your only daughter willfully, knowingly, ran away with a married man? By the Lord, sir, they shall hear it, with proof, too, such proof as cannot be pushed aside, unless you listen to reason. I've been easy with you, your friend so long, you forget, didn't you, how I could cut your pride? Now make your choice and be quick about it. I'm not in the humor to stand any more of your airs.'"

Both men had risen and stood face to face. Major Overton's jaw was like iron, his eyes deadly, but his hands hung at his side, his tone was low and even as he said:

"Under my roof, Mr. Hawkins, you say what you please. Repeat your threats away from me, I will answer them as they deserve."

"You shall suffer for this," Hawkins said, turning upon his heels. "No, you will," said Allen Fauntleroy, who had come unheeded of either contentant and stood a bare three feet away.

him in a hard grip, shook him as a dog shakes a rat and said through set teeth: "You hound, you hound, to threaten an old man in this dastard fashion! Go now, but take this word with you—the minute you dare to speak of anything in that miserable post you sign your own death warrant! It touches me, too, remember. I will shoot you with as little compunction as I would a mad dog."

As Hawkins reeled down the steps Allen turned to Major Overton. "Forgive my intrusion, sir," he said; "or at least hear my errand before you punish it. You warned me fairly of the risk I ran in coming, but in spite of it I felt that I must see you here at once again."

"Will you come within to speak?" Major Overton said, with grave courtesy, leading the way to the small office Allen remembered so well. The old man was spent and shaken in spite of his iron nerve. He sat down heavily, with a long sigh, and said as though speech were painful:

"Since our last meeting, Mr. Fauntleroy, my opinion of you has changed, though unluckily fate has put it out of the power of either of us to change our course of action."

"You mean we can never be friends? Believe me, Major Overton, if I had known everything I would never have dared to thrust my presence upon you. When I came to know all the wrong you had suffered, suffer yet, I felt that it must henceforth be the purpose of my life to help you to your own."

The old man looked at him with a long, farseeing gaze, saying: "It is my own—justly, honorably my own—but I must prove it. I will. I can take it on no man's sufferance. I would not lift a finger to take it all, save that I must do it to clear my father's name."

"Do you not care for fortune?" young Fauntleroy asked. The major touched his white hair. "Why should I?" he said. "I am old. Could fortune bring back one year, one day even, that it has lost me? Hon-

ly enough, seemed years younger after the marriage. "No doubt you think I am wandering, garrulous. Wait till I am through, then judge if it be so. Though my parents always treated Jincey with the utmost kindness, I am sure she hated them, with the wild, unreasoning hate of passionate ignorance. If, she reasoned, they had not brought her away from the old home, Bob would be her husband instead of that hated yellow girl's, though no doubt, had she married him, she would have been glad after a little to cast him aside. It was the thwarting of her passion that gave it force and constancy. God forgive me if I wrong her, but I believe my mother died at her hand of some subtle, sudden poison; my young brothers and sisters as well. I am sure, too, that her hand took away our deeds, of course by connivance of those outside, who made away with the records."

"So I have believed for years. Latterly I have found a clew, faint, but tangible enough to give hope of development. You see, I speak frankly to you, my enemy, for I pay you the compliment of feeling that it is safe to do so."

"Surely," said Allen. "Else why should I be here? It must be as you say. Is this woman still living?"

Major Overton nodded. The other went on: "Yesterday the humor seized me to go through my grandfather's secretary. Did you know him, sir? He must have been near your age."

"He was six months younger," Major Overton said. "We played together in short frocks and got our first trousers at the same time, but he did not come out until after my father's death. Naturally, then, we met only in the courts."

"I remember him well, a slim, tall man, of whom I was very much afraid, but one who impressed me always as the soul of honor," Allen said reflectively. Major Overton's mouth hardened. "No doubt he was, as he read such things," he said, "but men of his stamp see all things through the medium of their own inclinations. He was hard, selfish, grasping, so much so that it seems impossible you can be his grandson."

"Was his father like him?" asked Allen. The major shook his head. "No. He was a weak, good natured, obstinate man, who needed always to have his mind made up for him, though once it was made up heaven nor earth could change it."

"Do you think he was deceived into claiming land to which he had no title?"

"No, but that he was cheated into paying for land that belonged to another man."

"Then, in your judgment, both sides were victims. Have you any idea how it came about?"

"Ideas! Plenty, but no proofs." "Then perhaps this may be of value," Allen said, holding out a packet of yellow papers covered with faded script. "Here are some letters betwixt my great grandfather and his Tennessee lawyer, detailing the purchase of the land and giving the original locator's name."

"Let me see it. Quick, quick!" Major Overton almost shouted. Allen laid a finger upon one blurred line, saying: "There it is—Bruce Stirling!"

"What!" Major Overton fell back, gasping. "Bruce Stirling," Allen repeated. "Do you know him? Did you ever hear of him?"

"Bruce Stirling! I see it all now. Yes, I have heard of him. Nothing to his credit. Why, he was said to have been one of the Murrell gang. He was known to be gambler, blackguard, spendthrift, wholly without principle. No wonder he entered the land in Mr. Fauntleroy's name. If this had appeared, the fraud would have been patent to everybody that knew him. Plainly he conspired to sell what he did not own, got the Fauntleroy money, then forged and stole to put them in possession of another man's property."

"But how?" asked Allen. "It seems to me the most foolhardy villain would not take such risks of instant and certain detection."

"You do not know him," Major Overton said. "He would have risked hell the next hour for money that he wanted to spend in this one. And old Isaac Jincey's husband, had belonged to him. Yes, and I remember now it was said that every week of his life the negro tramped over to see his worthless ex-master. Apart from his knavish tendencies, Stirling hated my father, who, as a county magistrate, had once sent him to jail. This was his revenge, a bitter one indeed. Tell me, is there more than one reference to him in these letters?"

"Several, I think. It is, I know, mentioned that he has gone to Texas, so cannot testify. He is mentioned only in the deeds under the disguise of an agent and attorney. My great grandfather refers, too, to his 'disinterested services' as a reason for sparing him all annoyance in the matter. So I fancy Stirling had been at some pains to cover his track."

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THOUGH LOVE BE SLAIN.

Forget?—But that I cannot, though you plead With me by Letha's brink till close of day;

No waves of dull oblivion, dear, can wash The mem'ry of our happy dream away.

The rose of love hath shed her velvet leaves, And all our life of joy is dispossessed: Yet still I claim the sacred right to wear The shrunk and withered blossom on my breast.

Ah! say not when the silver lyre is hushed, "Remember not the tune wherewith it thrilled!" It is our sweetest pleasure to recall His song, when death the singer's voice has stilled.

—Madame.

FIVE BLACK MARKS.

"The most miserable time I ever had in my life," said Dr. Macpherson one day as we sat chatting in his cosy drawing-room, "was spent in a gunboat off the coast of Guinea. I began my professional life as a surgeon in the navy, you know."

I did not know, but as the Doctor seemed intent on telling the story I did not interrupt him by saying so. "We had been cruising about in the Mediterranean," he went on, "when we were unexpectedly ordered to the Bay of Lagos to overawe some miserable little tribe near the coast which had been behaving itself as a properly regulated little tribe under the protection of the British empire ought to do. Kakoga's tribe, it was called, and Kakoga came in for a good share of honest abuse from the officers and men of the Dragon Fly, when our orders came. The worst of it was, as far as the officers and men were concerned, that we were not at unity among ourselves. The engineer, called Lashton, had been disappointed in love, and was naturally morose in consequence. What made him more so was the fact that his successful rival was the sub-lieutenant, an awfully nice fellow, and the only man on board that I cared for, Lieut. Gilby had met Miss Callan at Malta, and had become engaged to her without the least idea that the engineer had intentions that way, not that it would have made any difference to him if he had, I suppose. Lashton's unconcealed enmity against him made life on board pretty unpleasant, and divided us into two cliques. The Lieutenant's clique, consisting of himself and me, certainly had the liveliest time of it, for the successful suitor of Miss Callan was the merriest fellow on earth, and while we were in the Mediterranean we suffered very little from the engineer's hostility. But directly we steamed off for Lagos a most remarkable change came over my friend, and he turned as taciturn as Lashton himself."

"It puzzled me to discover the reason, for though all were sorry to leave the Mediterranean, still it was not like Gilby to sulk over it. He could not see less of his fiancée than he had been doing for two or three months, and we had the prospect before us of a small fight, for which he had been wishing. Lashton suggested to me in his sinister way that it was the prospect of fighting which caused the change in my friend, and though I answered the suggestion in the tone it deserved, still it seemed the only explanation."

"Gilby said, when I asked him, that it was the weather, and the irritation with which he answered prevented me continuing my inquiries and made me more than ever convinced that it was 'funk,' and a very severe form of the disease, too. In fact, he took very little pains to conceal it."

"I hope to goodness that I shall not have to go on shore," he said, when we had nearly reached our destination. "I wish the commander would lead the party and leave me here to look after the ship."

"It is not likely," I answered, gruffly, and I was glad that Lashton was not about to overhear him. I answered his next suggestion more gruffly still. "I suppose you would not like to certify that I ought to be on the sick list, would you, Macpherson?" he asked me, hesitatingly.

"I refused, flatly. "If he had told me the true reason of his fear I might have acted differently, for he looked ill enough, poor fellow. His face had grown quite white and was since we started."

"I looked whiter still next day when he had to go in command of the landing party, which I accompanied, of course. "When we were fairly embarked on the enterprise his one idea seemed to be to get it over with all possible speed, and the haste with which he advanced to Kakoga's country would have been impossible if the men under him had not themselves been so anxious to get into action and introduce a little change into the monotony of life on a gunboat."

"However, the change was less than the majority of the blue jackets hoped for, the miserable little tribe did not show fight, and our business was soon accomplished. In five days from the time we left the Dragon Fly we were back again, none the worse for our trip, except that we were all worn out by Gilby's forced marches."

"The Lieutenant seemed more exhausted than any of us, and as soon as he had received the congratulations of the Commander he retired at once to his berth. What surprised me was that his spirits did not show any improvement after the chance of fighting was at an end. It seemed to me as if he were still expecting some calamity to happen to him, and I began to wonder whether there might not be something seriously wrong with his health to account for all that had surprised me in his manner. This explanation which had not occurred to me while there was any real danger, struck me forcibly, now that we were safe on the gunboat, and, as soon as I had enjoyed the luxury of a bath after my five days of dis-

comfort, I strolled down to the Lieutenant's cabin to have a look at him in the new light of a patient. "The door of my friend's cabin was ajar as I had approached it, and when I glanced into the room before knocking I was surprised to catch sight of Engineer Lashton standing by the side of the Lieutenant's bunk."

"The fact of Lashton's enmity for my friend was so undisputed that at the sight of his figure in his enemy's cabin I felt quite justified in watching what was going on before making my presence known. Gilby was lying across his bunk, half undressed and apparently fast asleep. The engineer was standing over him with a bottle of some black fluid in his hand. While I watched, he made five small marks with it on the sleeping man's arm. The operation seemed such a mysterious one that I watched him till he put the cork back into the bottle, without moving a step to interfere with the man, but I pounced upon him as he turned to leave the cabin."

"What on earth have you been doing?" I asked unceremoniously, and the fellow seemed rather taken aback. "It is only a practical joke," he said, with a feeble attempt to smile unconcernedly.

"Joke or no joke, I demand to see what is in that bottle," I said authoritatively, my mind full of mysterious poisons, and the engineer handed it over tamely. "The bottle contained nothing but ink."

"Ink?" I exclaimed when the great brain specialist reached this point in his narrative, and Macpherson smiled in a peculiarly quiet way he has when he has perfectly mystified a hearer. "Yes, ordinary ink," he went on. "The discovery naturally made me feel rather foolish, but not so much as it would have done if I had not been convinced still that his action was in some way a malicious one. What his idea could be, however, it was impossible for me to divine and I felt so curious about it that I should have roused my friend at once to inquire how five black marks on his arm could possibly affect his happiness if he had not looked so thoroughly worn out and in need of sleep. As soon as Lashton had gone I left the cabin at once for fear of disturbing the sleeper, without stopping even to try and remove the ink stains, a piece of stupidity at which I have not ceased to wonder. You see it was impossible for me to guess how desperately serious the plot was that the engineer had formed against the man whom he considered his rival. I retired to my own cabin, opposite Gilby's, keeping the door open to make sure that Lashton did not return to do more mischief, but I made a poor sentry. I was tired out, like the young Lieutenant, through not having had my proper amount of rest for four nights, and I fell asleep, still wondering about the five black marks."

"When I awoke, I do not know how long after, it was to find Gilby standing in my room, half undressed, as I had seen him in his bunk, but with his shirt sleeve buttoned up over the ink stains on his arm. I was too full of sleep, however, to notice the fact at the time, or even to remember for the moment anything about what I had seen. Sleepy as I was, I could not help noticing the look of complete misery and despair on my friend's face. He was standing at the side of my bunk, holding an envelope, and when I started up, rubbing my eyes, he put it into my hand."

"I am glad you are awake, Macpherson," he said, in a strangely constrained tone. "I wanted to ask you to do me a favor. Will you give this letter to Miss Callan personally when you see her? I do not want to take the risk of sending it by mail."

"But you will see her yourself as soon as I shall," I said in surprise at the request, and Gilby did not reply. Instead, he turned and walked out of the cabin, leaving me staring at the letter in my hand and wondering what it meant. I was so stupid with sleep still that it took me two minutes to think of any explanation at all. When I did I was out of my bunk and running across to the opposite cabin in a second. Just in time, too, for Gilby was in the act of locking his door when I burst it open and rushed in without ceremony. The fact that the young Lieutenant's revolver and a couple of letters, one of them addressed to me, were lying on the table, served to assure me that my fears were not ungrounded. The first thing I did was to secure the revolver. Then I turned to my friend.

"What the devil are you going to shoot yourself for?" I demanded, bluntly. "Gilby made no attempt to deny his intention."

"I am sorry you have disturbed me, Macpherson," he said, with perfect coolness, "because it cannot make any difference."

"And the reason?" I asked, with interest, for the Doctor had paused to light another cigarette. Macpherson blew a whiff of smoke from his mouth, and continued his story. "I suppose you have never heard of a disease called 'Guinea madness?' " he asked, and when I shook my head he went on: "Neither had I until Gilby told me about it, although I am a doctor. It is one of those strange diseases that limit themselves luckily to a particular district, and is only found among a few tribes along the coast of Guinea. It is generally thought that Europeans cannot take it, but the idea is an erroneous one, or, at any rate, there are exceptions, for Lieut. Gilby's father died of it when my friend was a boy of 10. His father was captain of a trading vessel and the Lieutenant was accompanying him on a voyage when they called at the Guinea coast. He therefore saw his father in all the indescribable agony of the disease, which seems more like hydrophobia than anything else, although it is infectious. "The slight made a great impression

on him, and, since his constitution was quite similar to his father's, he had always suffered from an almost superhuman terror of the Guinea coast. He was quite persuaded that if he ever went ashore there he would catch the disease and die like his father. Lashton, it seems, was aware of this monomania of his, for it almost amounted to mania."

"And he had really caught the disease?" I asked. Macpherson smiled. "He thought he had. The first symptom is the appearance of small dark marks on the arm or leg."—Fall Mall Budget.

English reviewers have suggested both Herbert Spencer and James Bryce as the possible authors of the anonymous reply to Max Nordau, entitled "Regeneration."

Stephen Crane now announces that his first book, "Maggie, a Girl of the Streets," was not refused by a long list of publishers, for the reason that he never offered it to any of them, but published it himself.

Clinton Scollard has resigned his professorship of English literature at Hamilton College, and intends to devote more time to writing. He has written an epic of the American Indian, which will be printed in the autumn.

The fact that Dr. Conan Doyle is going to the Sudan for a London journal has astonished many people. Conan Doyle, however, says that the delight of newspaper work are equal to anything that successful novel-writing brings.

George W. Cable explains that his story, "Madame Delphine," was written in response to a request from a quaker who had read "Tite Poulet" and that he would present the case of quaker women more clearly, and "tell the whole truth."

As a sister volume to the handsome "Song of Songs," Elbert Hubbard, of the Philistine and the Roper's printing shop in East Aurora, N. Y., bringing out "The Journal of Kabbalah: Being a Reprint of the Book of Ecclesiastes: With an Essay."

The London Times is suing the Central News Company, charging that the dispatches regarding the Japanese which were supplied by the Central News were in some cases entirely fabricated, and in other cases largely altered and expanded, and that by publishing them the Times suffered in reputation.

The Societe des Gens de Lettres has made with an advertising agent a contract, by the terms of which French books are to contain several leaves of advertisements of all sorts. These are to be bound in the back covers of every volume. The money earned from the contract by the society is to be applied to its authors' pension fund.

John Bonner gives this as the language of a British officer lately returned from India: "Kipling? Oh, yes, I know him very well. Dirty little blackguard! Used to go up to Simla which was full of army men and officials of the civil service, and used to hang round the billiard tables and veranda to listen to everything that was said and printed it all in a dirty little paper of which he was a reporter—a snivel and an eavesdropper; a dirty little blackguard. You never could tell a secret among his friends that he did not ferret it out and print it. And he drew us so that the portraits were unmistakable, by Jove. A dirty little blackguard, sir; a chee-chee."

The London Chronicle prints the following extraordinary statement: "I had not thought that it would ever be our unpleasant duty to deal with Mr. Robert Buchanan personally in the columns. A letter, however, which I addressed recently to the Star concerning this paper compels us to make a brief, but we think, sufficient comment. Mr. Buchanan's letter, so far as it relates to our criticism of 'Jude the Obscure,' is a lie from beginning to end. Having characterized Mr. Buchanan's letter, we beg him to understand that our columns are not open to him for an expression of opinion upon this or any other matter. The only method of communication in future between ourselves and this gentleman will be through our solicitors."

Whirl Asunder," the critic says: "The author brings together a strong, many-well-poised young Englishman, who engaged to a homely English girl, and a capricious Californian, whose will her law, and who has never been crossed in her wishes and whims. She falls in love with the Englishman, of course, and he with her; but loyalty survives and the girl lacks, at the last moment, the courage to win him by the means which Arabella employed to win John. All this happens under the California redwoods, and more or less under the auspices of the Bohemian Club of San Francisco, which we do not hold responsible, however, for this whirl asunder, and still less for the whole together that preceded it."

When one says of anything that it is "not worth a straw," one means to imply that it is worthless. The old saying was "not worth a rush," and this brings out the origin of the phrase. In the days before carpets it was a custom to strew the floor with rushes. When guests of rank were entertained, rushes, green, fresh and sweet, were spread for them; but folk of lower degree had to be content with rushes that had already been used, while still better persons had none, as will even be worth a rush.



"I will shoot you with as little compunction as I would a mad dog."

estly, now that I find what stuff you are made of, I am sorry that I cannot leave you in peaceful possession, even when I remember whose son you are."

"You forget your grandchild," Allen said, halting ever so slightly over the word.

The major shook his head. "No, but what can a girl do with money? It is oftener than not a curse to her, makes her the prey of fortune hunters, drives deserving lovers away. Believe me, young man, the trouble of the world comes through and to women. Why, there is, in my judgment, a woman at the bottom of this disagreement of ours."

"Indeed! Tell me who she is or was?" Allen said, with a great start. "You forget I have yet to hear what brought you to me this morning," Major Overton said, looking keenly at the other.

"Let me speak after you," Allen replied eagerly. "It may be one story will illuminate the other."

CHAPTER XII. "I dare say you think I mean my mother. I know it has been said she was the prime cause of this feud. But she had nothing whatever to do with it, though I believe she declined the honor of becoming your grandmother," Major Overton said, sinking wearily back in his chair. After a minute he went on: "I was born in Carolina; was a stout lad of 8 when we came over the mountains, so I remember very well how Jincey, my mother's maid, moaned and wept on the way, and how the other negroes laughed and said tauntingly that she was crying for her sweetheart, who had been left behind, though my father tried hard to bring him. Bob's master was willing to part with him, but Bob himself, it seems, had another string to his bow. At any rate, he declined to leave Carolina for a new, unknown country, and six months later some one wrote my mother that he had married the yellow maid of his young master's wife. Jincey was just 18 then, a slim, supple, stealthy thing, quick as a flash in all her movements. When my mother told her the news that Bob was married, she got ash and staggered against the wall, but said no word. The next Saturday night she was married to old Isaac Bell, the most famous conjurer in the country, a hideous, toothless old fellow, who looked all of 80. My mother tried in vain to change her purpose. Jincey swore that she loved him; had no use for young niggers. So she had her way, and old Ike became a nightly visitor, his master's plantation lying broadside to ours. Soon Jincey became so slow and careless about her duties that my mother said to her, 'If you cannot do better, I must put you to spinning.' 'Dat's what I want,' she said sullenly, and from that day forward she spent her time in her cabin. She was a swift worker when she chose. Often her task was done by noon. Afterward she roamed woods and fields, staying away sometimes till after midnight. The other negroes stood in mortal terror of her; said she was a worse conjurer than her old husband, who, odd-

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Miss Laura A. C. Hughes, who was recently graduated from Tufts college, has been a noted hospital worker in Boston and has had charge of a dispensary in that city.