

# THE USURPER

Neville sighed. "I suppose you've heard that she's going to marry Sir Jordan," she went on, as she bustled in and out of the tiny bedroom she was preparing for him.

Neville nodded gravely, for of course he had heard of the engagement. Trale told him of it.

"Took us all by surprise, it did, Sir Jordan being so much older than Miss Audrey, not that he looks his age. I suppose you've seen him. Master Neville?"

"No," said Neville, and his tone caused Mrs. Parsons to stop with a pillow case in her hand and look at him.

"Oh, dear, dear me; yes, I remember," she said. "Well, it isn't every one as can get on with Sir Jordan. He's a very great man now, Mr. Neville, and we don't see much of him. The last time he passed I went out, and gave him a courtesy, but I don't think he remembered me, as was very natural," she added, as if in desire of explaining that she was not a complainer. "He wasn't my boy, you were, you know, Lor', how glad I am to see you. Now, if Miss Audrey was here we should be all complete, so to say. And you haven't seen her yet, Master Neville?"

"Not yet, Mrs. Parsons," he said. "And I wish to see no one, or be seen, just at present. You must let me be your nephew come home from sea, or something of that kind, for a little while."

The old lady nodded after a moment's pondering.

"Whatever you say is to be shall be, Master Neville," she said, with the implicit obedience of an old servant. "I did have a nephew as went off to sea, but I'm afraid he's drowned. Oh, don't you be afraid, Master Neville; I can keep my lips shut, as Mr. Trale knows."

The tiny bedroom up under the thatched roof was as clean as a new pin and as sweet as lavender, and Neville slept soundly for the first time for many a night.

In the morning he looked round the cottage and found a patch of what ought to have been garden, but was at present a weedy wilderness and he amused himself during the day, much to the grief and horror of Mrs. Parsons, by digging it up and putting it into something like order, and in the evening, with his soft wide-awake well over his brows wandered about the place, every spot of which was rich in associations of his boyish days.

He spent an hour or two with Trale, at the inn, talking over old times, and this was the programme that followed day after day for nearly a week.

If any one had asked him why he was dreaming away his time at Lynne he could not have told them, and every day he reminded himself that he must be off—somewhere.

His small stock of money was disappearing, if slowly, still surely, and he must go out into the world and get some more—somehow.

"After all," he said to himself, with a sigh, "I have seen the old place; it's very unlikely that once I've left it again I shall ever see it more. Why should I stay and make myself known to—Jordan and Audrey? I should only become an object of charity and pity. No, I'll be off. There must be work for a man with strong arms and a will to use them somewhere or other."

It was on Friday evening that he communed with himself after this fashion, and he was sauntering along the lane which led past the Grange to the Burrows.

He stopped and looked through the gate at the corner of the house, which he could just see, and thought of Audrey and then of Sylvia.

These were two women for whom he would willingly have laid down his life—especially now, when it seemed of very little use to him!—and he should in all probability never see them again.

"Dear little Sylvia!" he murmured. "I wonder where she is, and if she is happy. I wonder, too, whether she has forgotten me. They say that if you love a person ever so much you forget them when they're dead. I hope she hasn't quite forgotten me. I should like her to give a thought now and then to the old days at Lorn Hope. How happy we were out there in the wilds with old Muth and the 'claim,' and how pretty she used to look sitting there with that wonderful hair of hers falling into her eyes, as she sang like a nightingale, while I worked! Yes, we were very happy. I didn't know how I loved her then, not till we parted, never to meet again."

Something rose in his throat, and a mist gathered before his eyes, as he went on.

"Perhaps we shall meet; who knows? And she'll be among her titled friends, and—and will never guess that the seely-looking individual, who'll be sure to shamble out of her way is her old friend Jack, her brother, with whom she was so happy long ago. All the better if she doesn't. I'm a failure, a right-down failure, and it's only fit and proper that I should be spunged out. One more night and then good-bye to Lynne. I'll work my way back to Australia and have another try at it, though God knows I haven't the heart of desire for

ped outside the ring, and seemed to Neville, to be looking about cautiously.

"A tramp!" he said. "I'll wait and see what he will do. If he takes to Mother Earth for a bed, the ants will make it lively for him. I don't wish him any harm, but I should rather enjoy seeing him jump up."

The man came back to where he had first stood, struck a match and lit a small piece of candle.

This rather startled Neville.

"Tramps don't usually care much about a light to go to bed by," he thought, and he looked down at the man curiously.

He had not much of the appearance of the common tramp, but was, indeed, rather well dressed in a plain suit of black, and looked to Neville, who had seen many and diverse types of mankind, like a respectable clerk, say a solicitor's. He was an elderly man with a gray beard that gave him rather a venerable look, and Neville was puzzling at the problem why a respectable clerk of his time of life should think fit to come to Lynne Burrows and light a candle, when the man gave him another surprise by unbuttoning his frock coat and taking from under it a small hand trowel.

Neville could scarcely refrain from laughing. If this had been Australia, and say, a digger's camp, a performance of this kind would not have been astonishing for all sorts of curious things occur in such places; but this was England, Lynne Burrows, and what on earth could a man of this kind want at this hour of night with a piece of candle and a hand trowel?

Then it flashed upon him. This individual was one of those harmless lunatics who amuse themselves by moths and insect hunting. That was it. The man was a naturalist in search of some rare specimen of the flying or crawling tribe, and was going to dig or scratch for it.

To plump down his probability, or even speak, would in all probability give the poor old fellow a fit, Neville thought, and he decided to remain where he was until the man had finished his search and gone.

The man stuck the candle on the ground by the simple method of pouring some grease from it and standing the candle in it; then, with his back to Neville, paced slowly from the tree, counting as he went.

He made the measurement twice, as if to be certain of its accuracy, then went down on his knees and began to dig quickly.

Every now and then he paused and looked round and listened, and once as he did so a bird, awakened by the noise and the light, flew out of the trees; the man extinguished the candle at the instant, as if frightened, and Neville could hear him breathing hard as he waited and listened.

Then he relit the candle and fell to digging again.

Neville wondered what it could be the man was in search of, and ransacked his brain trying to think of some insect or animal that hid itself under the solid earth, but did not succeed.

Suddenly the man uttered a low, suppressed cry of satisfaction, as if he had found what he had been looking for.

Consumed by curiosity, Neville stretched himself along the branch, and leaned over at the imminent risk of tumbling down, and saw what the curious animal was.

CHAPTER XXVI

What Neville saw as he leaned down from the branch was a round tin canister, such as cocoa or coffee is packed in, lying at the bottom of the hole which the old man had dug.

The man took up the box, forced open the lid and drew out—not a bag of gold or a string of jewels—but a roll of paper. This he placed carefully in his breast pocket; then flinging the empty tin into the hole, he filed in the dirt, stamped it down and strewed some of the dead leaves and twigs over the spot.

Then he sat down, lit a pipe and smoked meditatively. After a few minutes he, with a shake of the head, drew the paper from his pocket and looked around.

As his eyes approached Neville's he looked down himself up to a higher branch and so escaped detection.

The man went up to the tree and carefully placed the paper inside one of the hollows, thrusting in his hand to see how deep the hole went.

The paper was thus well within Neville's reach if he stretched out his arm. The old gentleman then returned to his seat at the foot of another tree and smoked with patience and contentment.

Neville was far too curious and interested now to discover himself, and making himself as comfortable as possible, he, too, waited and watched.

Presently the man took his pipe out of his mouth and listened with his head on one side, then he knelt and laid his ear to the ground.

This action startled Neville as much as anything the man had done, for it reminded him of his digger days, and the way in which the scouts of a party listened to the approach of footsteps. How did it happen that a respectable, elderly clerk should know a trick of the backwoods?

The man got up, resumed his seat and relit his pipe with an evident air of satisfaction, and a few minutes afterward Neville heard some one approaching.

Now, Neville was the last man in the world to play the part of eavesdropper, and he was about to speak to the man and descend when a tall figure entered the thicket, and Neville recognized with Jordan his brother Jordan!

Jordan had got on a dress Inverness, with the collar turned up, but Neville knew him in a moment.

Could it be possible that his brother, the Right Hon. Sir Jordan Lynne, had come to Lynne Burrows to meet this man with the piece of candle and the tin canister? It seemed incredible.

The whole business wore a grotesque and unreal air which almost made Neville doubt the evidence of his own senses. From the way in which he looked round him—very much as the elderly man had looked—before he entered the circle of trees, and the fashion in which he kept the high collar of his dress cape coat round his face.

It was like the scene of a melodrama, Neville thought, as he stared down at his brother pale face and tall thin form.

Jordan made his way to the other man, who remained seated, puffing his pipe, evading Jordan's looks, and Jordan in a tone of impatience and hauteur, said:

"You are here. Let us get this business over quickly, please."

The man looked at him with an easy, insolent grin.

"What are you afraid of, Sir Jordan?" he retorted. "We're quiet enough here."

At the sound of his voice Neville's heart leaped, and the blood rushed to his head. Was the mad or dreaming, or was that Lavarick's voice?

He shook and trembled so violently under the emotion aroused by the man's voice that he almost fell from the branch, and he had to set his teeth firmly to keep himself from crying out.

Lavarick here, and in collusion with Jordan! Surely he, Neville, must be dreaming! His heart beat so fast and furiously that it made a singing in his ears so that he could scarcely hear the voices of the two men below him, near as they were.

"I am here, very reluctantly," said Jordan, haughtily. "And I am desirous of completing this business and returning as soon as possible."

"Right," said Lavarick, curtly. "Did any one see you on the way, do you think, Sir Jordan?"

"I think not," replied Jordan. "But some person, some tramp, may come upon us at any moment, and—"

"You'd rather not be seen holding conversation with a stranger at this hour of night, eh?" said Lavarick, as coolly as before. "Well, I dare say you're right. It would look singular, wouldn't it, if you were seen? People would begin to ask themselves queer questions. But, there you'd have some explanation cut and dried for 'em, wouldn't you?"

"You can't put the Right Hon. Sir Jordan Lynne in a hole easily," he laughed.

If Neville had entertained any doubts as to the identity of the man it would have been dispelled by the laugh.

It was the laugh he had heard in the tent on the night he had ransacked Sylvia, the laugh that had rung in his ears as he saw he borne away across Lavarick's saddle. And the sound of it now filled him with almost irresistible desire to spring upon the scoundrel and knock the life out of him. But he restrained himself with an awful effort that caused him to break out into a fit of perspiration. That there was some villainy hatching between these two was evident, and if he could only learn its nature he might be able to thwart them.

"It is your nature to be insolent," said Jordan. "When you have finished you will be good enough to proceed to the matter which brings me here. As I said, I came reluctantly, and it will not require much provocation to induce me to leave you."

Lavarick rose and emptied his pipe.

"You've got the notes?" he said.

"I have the notes," replied Jordan, coldly.

Lavarick held out his claw-like hand.

"Pass them over, then," he said, curtly.

Jordan sneered.

"Excuse me," he said. "I brought them for an exchange, not a gift."

"Lavarick swore."

"We don't trust each other much," he said, sarcastically.

Jordan remained silent.

"What's to prevent me from knocking you on the head and helping myself to the notes?" said Lavarick, with engaging frankness.

"A regard for your own safety," replied Jordan, calmly. "Before I left the court I told my servant that I was going for a walk on the Burrows, and that if I did not return in an hour he was to drive here for me. If you murdered me—as I have no doubt you would like to do—"

"Well, I should!" assented Lavarick, with cold-blooded calmness.

"You could not conceal the evidence of your crime and escape in time." He looked at his watch as he spoke. "As it is, the time is passing rapidly, and my man will be here soon."

"You'd better give me the notes first," said Lavarick.

"Absolutely!" retorted Jordan.

(To be continued.)

refreshment, glanced along the display of pies and said:

"Give me a piece of this huckleberry."

"That ain't huckleberry," said the waiter girl, waving her hand over the pie: "it's custard."

"Up with the lark" is a poetical expression for early rising. Up with the fly would be stronger if less poetic. The lark doesn't compel you to get up, but the fly does. Besides, the lark is an English bird, but the fly is a bird that knows no nationality. If the fly would go away and let you sleep till the lark gets up you would have less cause for complaint.

"What were we children we were taught to believe that fly's foot was a wonderful part of creation—that when it was placed flat upon the ceiling the weight of the fly pulled it away in the centre and made a tiny vacuum and that the pressure of the atmosphere around it, in accordance with a law of nature, held the fly from falling. Several 'human flies' broke their necks trying to do the same trick with artificial flies' feet before it was discovered that if flies kept their feet clean they couldn't walk on ceilings.

"Flies believe that mankind was created for their amusement, and it has always been a question with me which gave a fly the more solid enjoyment—to buzz around your nose and make you get up a few hours earlier in the morning than you want to, or to water you in the daytime until you rage around the room with a paper slapper in your hand while she watches you from behind a door-ledge."

LONDON CLUBS.

They Are Peculiarly Social—the Old Ones, That Is.

As everybody knows, our oldest clubs were developed out of the original coffee houses nearly two centuries ago, and the newer clubs, as they were formed from time to time, consisted in the first instance of many members experienced in the older, and so the good tradition was kept up. This applies at least to the really social clubs, like White's or the Garrick. It does not apply in the same degree to the large, ceremonious, more stately clubs like the United University or the Oxford and Cambridge, where a member probably knows only a small proportion of his fellow-members, or to an eminent political club like the Carlton, where a man is elected for services to his party. And it does not apply at all to those clubs which are merely large proprietary concerns for convenience, and which are generally and very rudely known as "pot houses"—I had better not give instances—where admission is swift and easy and where the membership largely consists of very young men who have not had time to get into a better institution. But a really social club even though new has the advantage of old experience.

Thus the Bachelors, a comparatively recent club, has a character very like that of White's, which is one of the very oldest. The tone of the really social club is that of an easy familiarity. A member going in for his snack or dinner drops naturally into a seat close to another member and starts a conversation. In the more ceremonious club, or in the "pot house," if he has not arranged to meet some one or invited a guest he probably sits solitary. In the latter sort men do not sit alone and isolation; in the former there is a general hum of "Hullo! how are you?" and "When did you get back?" and "Seen Tommy lately?" and so forth—and incidentally it is difficult to write your letters or read your newspaper undisturbed. These are the real clubs, as the English society of a hundred years ago, which was like a great family party, understood them, and they are the hardest to imitate. The others may confer some assurance of position, like the Athenaeum, or confer nothing except more or less dubious comfort, like the never mind, but they have not the essential quality and can be imitated anywhere, more or less.—Town and Country.

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THE DOMESTIC FLY.

Timely Facts and Speculation Concerning an Interesting Creature.

"The common domestic fly," said a man who is no scholar but has managed to pick up many interesting facts, "is altogether too common and too domestic. She is one of the most interesting animals."

"You don't mean 'animals,'" a listener broke in; "a fly is not an animal."

"Then she must be a vegetable or a mineral," said the first speaker. "Call her which ever you please, but she is one of the most interesting creatures extant."

"An industrious female fly lays about 3,000,000 eggs. There are no indolent flies and few males. The fly does not set after laying; if she did she would be retired from her wonted activity during longer or shorter periods of incubation. Her eggs hatch without motherly attention, and it is seldom that one falls to hatch."

"The fly has so many eyes," the man who is no scholar went on, "that she can see in all directions at once without turning her head or rolling her eyes. That's why it is so hard to hit her. A fly time poet sang:

Now doth the little busy fly  
Buzz in a fellow's hair,  
But try to smite her hip and thigh  
And, lo! she isn't there.

"The intelligence of flies is an interesting and expasperating study. One of the ordinary ways of trying to kill flies is to fold a newspaper in the shape of flat pad and whacked at them with it when they are sitting still.

"Now, the fly is familiar with the scientific fact that if she sits perfectly still the descending paper will make an air cushion in front of it that ninety-nine times out of a hundred will protect her from being crushed. The concussion momentarily stuns her and she falls to the floor apparently dead, but in a few minutes she has recovered and is again on the job.

"That's why when you strike at a fly hard enough to spatter the butter all over the walls she is able to reappear so quickly on the rim of the sugar bowl.

"When out not for food but merely for the fun of tantalizing you the fly knows when she has had enough. Then she sits down on a dark spot in the carpet and watches you prance around the room looking for her on the walls.

"A very good way to catch flies is to distribute fly paper and platters of poison on the tables and window sills. No matter how thick the flies are where this is done, their number will be quickly reduced. You can easily prove this by counting the flies you have caught. It is a great comfort, when there are a few million flies in the air and more coming, to count up your catch and know that a dozen or so will never pester you any more.

"This method of getting rid of flies is often employed in restaurants. It was the method used in the railroad restaurant where a passenger hurried in for

MOTHER FOX'S CUNNING.

Her Ineffectual Plans to Divert Hunter's Attention From Her Den.

Hunters found a den of foxes in the hills south of Hagerstown and unearthed five little ones about as large as well grown cats. The mother fox escaped before the hunters reached the den, which was lined thickly with soft grasses and feathers. Instead of running away she kept within sight while the hunters worked with their shovels.

She apparently understood what they were doing, for she endeavored by every means to attract them away from their work and toward herself. She approached quite near and acted as if lame and distressed. She would lie down on her side and writhe along the ground, uttering whines and moans. Then she would limp off as if very lame, going very slowly and halting frequently.

The hunters were not to be drawn away from the work in hand by such tactics and finally, after much digging, came upon the den where the five pretty little fellows were huddled. They made no resistance, and seemed rather to like the handling and petting they received. All of them were taken to a farmhouse where they are confined. They will not be released, but will probably be painlessly despatched. Growl foxes do not get along with their neighbors in farming communities. Hunters say it is very rare for mother foxes to leave all their young in one place. It is their cunning habit to scatter the family, one and two in widely separated retreats. It is said that foxes will not rob roosts close to their dens, but will go miles away for food and carefully hide their trails.—Hagerstown correspondence Indianapolis News.

Often the Case.

Ruggles—What horse-power is your new automobile?  
Ramage—Two, I guess. That's the horse-power it took to haul it to the repair shop when it broke down on a country road the other day.—Chicago Tribune.

Many a true word is spoken by accident.

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Prepared by J. C. Dodd, Lowell, Mass.

SOLDIERS' UNEXPECTED ALLY.

How a Holy Man Came to the Rescue of Regiment.

Sir D. C. Drury-Lowe, who recently died a veteran of Crimea, the Madaya, the Zulz and Egyptian wars, was one of the leaders of the forced march to Cairo, which made its way for sixty-five miles across the desert and consummated the victory of Tel-el-Kebir. A curious incident is told of this campaign. The story illustrates the absolute and superstitious devotion of the Arabs to their religion. Arabi Pasha had concentrated his forces near the English camp. The British soldiers were a queer looking set in their rough, loose jackets, dusty and muddy, their greying beards, their dirty belts and helmets; but the strictest discipline was maintained. The men were steady, cheerful, patient to endure the scanty food, filthy water and the heat and dust.

A canal ran close to their line of entrenchments, from which they got their water. Arabi damned this canal and cut a deep drain by which he intended to let out the water into the valley and so make it impossible for the British to get their supply.

A few days before the final battle the British engineers were astonished to find the water in the canal rising. The tendency before had been a rapid decrease from consumption and evaporation. As every one knew the canal was dammed, they supposed the only solution of the mystery was that the rising of the Nile had filled the canal and raised the level of the dam and that the water was pouring over it. The increase was availed of at once; the lock was opened and the level of the water raised. The true solution of this increase of water never entered the European mind. Later it was discovered. Arabi Pasha had cut the dam. A dervish, or holy man, much venerated, had come to the camp. He had heard of the building of the dam and pronounced it contrary to the faith. He declared that although the British soldiers were infidel dogs they were still God's creatures and should not be made to suffer, and that the divine blessing could be expected only if the water were set free.

Arabi was a devout Moslem, and he instantly complied with the dervish's decision.—From the Youth's Companion.

The bones for those who come late—Latin.