

THE USURPER

"Not a bit of it," retorted Lavarick, airily. "I'd defy even Trale to see through this get-up. Good, ain't it?" and he chuckled and stroked the grey beard.

Jordan eyed him repellantly. "It is good until it is penetrated," he said, curiously.

"That's so," assented Lavarick, cheerfully. "I thought it best to come to the front door this time. Some one might have heard us talking in the room there—he jerked his finger over his shoulder—and, thinking it was burglar, raise a row. And now what's it to be, Sir Jordan? You've had time to think it over, and, like a sensible man, you've made up your mind to come to terms—eh?"

Jordan leaned back in his chair, his eyes downcast. "I have decided on my course of action in the matter," he said, slowly. "I will give you the money you ask—"

Lavarick snapped his fingers triumphantly and chuckled. "Thought you would," he said, nodding. "You're a sensible man, Sir Jordan. Another man might have played bluff a little longer—"

"On one condition," said Jordan, haughtily. "And that is that you place the will in my hands and a declaration that you saw my—Sir Greville burn it on the night of his death."

Lavarick stared and frowned. "What's the meaning of that, now?" he asked. "What's your drift, eh?"

Jordan looked up at him with an evil smile. "For a cunning scoundrel, Banks, you are singularly obtuse," he said, with a sneer. "You forget, too, a little incident in your past career. I refer to your conviction for forgery—"

Lavarick, still staring suspiciously, swore impatiently. "What's that to do with it?"

"Merely this," retorted Jordan, almost sweetly, "that I think it highly probable that in exchange for my money you would give me a forged copy of the will and retain a genuine one for another occasion."

A gleam of real admiration lit up Lavarick's face. "Pon my soul, you're cute," he exclaimed, under his breath. "That's what you'd have done, isn't it?"

Jordan smiled and cast down his eyes. "And I never thought of it!" muttered Lavarick, with honest shame and remorse. "I never thought of it, so help me! Sir Jordan, you're a clever man, and I admire you. And to prove it I say—done with you."

And he held out his claw-like hand. Jordan looked at it as if he would rather dance a snake than touch it.

"Good," he said. "That is my one condition. Give me that, and I am content. You may leave the country or—"

"Wait here till you've hit upon a plan for getting me safely lagged and sent back to jail," finished Lavarick, with a grin. "No, thank you. Once I touch the old country a little longer, and I want the man that ruined her worse!"

He stopped and his face darkened with an evil scowl. Jordan watched him.

"Whether you stay or go is your business," he said, coldly. "I have only to arrange for the exchange—"

Lavarick nodded. "I've thought of that," he said. "Bring the money—I'll take it in notes. Oh, I'm not afraid you'll stop them. You couldn't without causing an inquiry, you know. Bring the notes to Lynne Burrows on Friday night at ten o'clock. I'll meet you by the clump of trees."

"Why not bring it here?" asked Jordan, thoughtfully.

Lavarick smiled and shook his head. "No, thank you, Sir Jordan. I wouldn't trust myself with that precious document in my possession under your roof. You're so clever, you see. Think of your hitting upon the idea of my forging a duplicate! No, no. We're safe, both of us, in the Burrows."

Jordan pondered a moment or two. "Why Friday?" he said, sharply. "The will is not in your possession?"

"Do you mean do I carry it about with me? No, I certainly do not; I'm not such a fool, in fact. You don't carry the Lynne diamonds in your coat pocket, do you? Well, this will's worth almost as much to me as they are to you. I've got it hid away snug and safe, and I'll produce it on Friday, as I say. I'm not afraid you'll go back on me. You can bring Trale if you like. But you know better. What we both of us want is to settle this little affair between ourselves quietly and comfortably."

"Very well," said Jordan. "I have no more to say," he added, after a pause, and he glanced significantly at the door and laid his hand on the bell.

Lavarick took up the highly respectable hat, which formed part of his disguise, then, as if by a sudden impulse, stretched out his hand and motioned Sir Jordan not to ring the bell.

"Half a moment," he said, hesitatingly, and looking down at the thick Turkey carpet with a strange and curious expression on his face. "We've arranged one little matter, Sir Jordan; but—there's another matter I wanted to speak to you about."

"What is it?" said Jordan, impatiently, and rising as she spoke, as if the man's company grew more intolerable each moment.

Lavarick gnawed at his lip, and evidently made an effort to speak indifferently. "It's just this," he said, and his voice was thicker and huskier even than usual; "you might remember, Sir Jordan, that I—he paused—"that I've got a daughter?"

Jordan was standing in front of his chair, and as Lavarick spoke he seemed to grow suddenly stiff and rigid, then he turned to the letters on the small table beside him, so that his back was toward Lavarick, as he replied:

"Yes, I remember."

"Well," Lavarick paused again, and seemed as if he found it difficult to proceed—"she—she was my only child. She was like her mother." He glanced at

Sir Jordan as if he expected him to sneer, and meant to resent the sneer if it came; but Jordan looked steadily at the carpet. "Her—her mother was a good woman, a—better wife than I deserved, and it was a good job she died before—I was very fond of my little girl, Sir Jordan. You laugh, I dare say, and you think that such as I am haven't any right to feelings."

"It was not laughing," said Jordan, quietly, and without raising his eyes. "Go on."

"Well," resumed Lavarick, huskily, "my girl was all the world to me, and—and if anything would have kept me straight, she would; but I'm one of those who can't go straight. I suppose there's something in the blood that drives a man to the devil whether he will or won't. I'm a bad lot, I know; but I was fond and proud of my girl, and the worst part of the business when I was sent off was the thought that I was leaving her all alone and without any one to look after her."

He paused and cleared his throat. "It was the dreadful longing to see her that drove me to breaking out of good. I thought if I could get away and take her to some place on the other side of the herring pond, she and me could make a fresh start. Well, I got out, he continued, with a touch of pride in his tone, "and I risked everything to come down here and see her. I knew I was running into danger, just putting my head into the lion's mouth, as you'd say, but I risked it. And when I got down here I found—"he stopped and turned his head away—"I found that my Rachel had gone."

Jordan still gazed at his boots, outwardly calm and indifferent, but his heart was beating nineteen to the dozen, and his brain was hard at work.

"She was gone. That was bad enough, but there was worse behind. My girl had fallen into bad hands. Some villain had—had played her false, and she'd gone off with him."

His harsh voice trembled, and Jordan, glancing up, saw that he was shaking as if with ague.

"That's what I could hear. I nearly drove me mad. I couldn't make inquiries; I dare not stop and try and find her. I had to bolt as you know. But I swore I'd come back and find out who it was that ruined her and—well, I've come back. But I'm as far off as ever. No one of course—know anything more than that she went off with some one, and that she's not been seen in Stoneleigh since."

He dashed his hand across his eyes with an oath at the emotion which he could not conceal, and looked out of the window.

"It occurred to me," he went on, after a pause during which Jordan remained silent and watchful, "that you might have heard something; that you might know who it was that led her astray. You see, you're a magistrate and the local squire, and—things generally come to the ears of a man in your place. I want to find her. He stammered hoarsely. "I don't care what she's done; she's my girl, my Rachel still, and I want her. I want the man that ruined her worse!"

I've sworn—look here, Sir Jordan, most good men like myself, for instance, and he laughed, grimly, "say their prayers at night, I'm not 'good' anyway, and, instead, I've sworn each every night before I've laid down that I have my revenge on the man that robbed me of my girl. And if he's alive and I can find him, I'll keep that oath!"

He raised his clenched hand as he spoke and swore fearfully.

"That's all I wanted to ask you," he said. "Just answer it, and I'm off. Just tell me anything you may have heard—anything might give me a clue. Why, look here—"and he struck the small table so that the letters danced and he rather lost the money I've got from you than give up my hope of revenge upon the villain that ruined my little girl."

It was at that moment that an inspiration visited Jordan. It came as a flash as most inspirations do, and its suddenness sent the blood to his pale face.

"You will get into trouble, my good Banks," he said, gravely. "You had better forget your daughter and put yourself beyond the reach of the police."

Lavarick laughed, a gruesome kind of laugh. "You think so. Well, look here; if the man I want was standing with a policeman on each side of him I'd fly at his throat and as I choked him I'd say 'I'm Banks, the father of the girl you ruined!' and I'd kill him and be hanged for it afterward."

Jordan turned pale, and his eyes hid themselves under their thick lids.

"I—I scarcely know what I should be justified in telling you," he began, hesitatingly.

Lavarick turned upon him eagerly. "You know something!" he exclaimed. "What is it. Tell me!"

Jordan bit his lip softly as if still considering, then he said, slowly: "I cannot refuse a father's appeal."

"Burst that!" he said, hoarsely. "Out with what you know!"

Jordan rose and looked down at the carpet pensively.

"You say that your daughter's name was Rachel?" he said.

"Rachel," assented Lavarick, huskily. "What is it? What do you know?"

Jordan sighed. "Heaven knows whether I am acting wisely in—telling you what I know," he said, "and if I do so in the hope that I may aid you to recover your daughter—not that you may wreak your vengeance upon her betrayer. I think I saw her but once or twice as I passed through the town. I should not remember her if I were to meet her again—"

"Go on!" broke in Lavarick, impatiently.

"You must let me tell you in my own way," said Jordan, rebukingly. "Did you know my half brother, Neville?" he asked, as if with painful reluctance.

Lavarick started. "No," he said. "He was at college, I suppose, when I was at home here. I never saw him. What—why?"

"Wait," said Jordan, almost gently. "Wait here for a moment."

He went out and returned after a minute or so with a letter in his hand.

minute or so with a letter in his hand. down with the gate, and, indeed, the expression of a tiger thirsting for blood, stopped and gazed at him.

"What's that?" he asked. Jordan held the letter firmly. "I do not know, as I said, whether I am acting wisely in showing you this. I am not convinced that it—er—brings home the guilt of your daughter's betrayal to the person who received this letter, but I cannot withhold my sympathy from you, or refuse to help a father in the search for his lost child."

Lavarick eyed him with savage incredulity and suspicion. "What's that?" he said hoarsely. "What is it?"

"I will tell you," said Jordan, gravely. "You taunted me that night with being the cause of the quarrel between my father and my half-brother Neville. It was an ignorant and unjust accusation. The cause of the trouble between Sir Greville and Neville, who was his favorite son, was—your daughter."

Lavarick started back, gasping. "What!" he said, almost inaudibly, his eyes fixed on Jordan's face.

Jordan shook his head gravely. "What I tell you is true," he said. "It came to my father's ears that Neville was—well, well—being seen too frequently with your daughter Rachel, and my father taxed Neville with his intended perfidy, and bade him give up his designs upon a young and innocent girl. But I am ashamed to say that my half-brother Neville was as willful and obstinate as he was vicious. He persisted in his evil course; a stormy scene ensued between my father and him, and beyond the reach of my vengeance, I fear that he persuaded my unhappy daughter to accompany him."

Lavarick stood white and trembling. "Is this one of your lies?" he got out at last. "Is this a dodge of yours to come over me?"

Jordan shook his head. "You do right to distrust me, Banks," he said, "but I am telling you the truth. Why should I concoct this story? My brother Neville is doubtless dead, and beyond the reach of my vengeance; but, if I did not think so, I should not have told you, for I bear him no ill will."

Lavarick's trembling lips twisted into a sneer. "You hate him," he said, hoarsely. "But that's nothing to do with me. Give me proofs. What's that in your hand?"

"The proof you ask for," said Jordan, and then, as if reluctantly, he handed Lavarick the paper.

It was an old letter which had apparently been partly burned. The date and the commencement were destroyed, but the body and the signature remained.

Lavarick seized it and examined it, then he glared up at Jordan.

"It's—it's her handwriting!" he said; hoarsely. "It's her name—Rachel!" and he dashed his hand on the signature.

"You recognize it?" said Jordan, gravely, almost pityingly. "It's a heartrending letter; the appeal of a helpless girl to the man who ruined and deserted her."

"Where—where did you get it from?" demanded Lavarick, wiping his eyes as if the sight of the familiar handwriting had blinded them.

"I found it in my brother's room when I was cleaning it out after his death," said Jordan, quietly. "It was lying among some burned papers. Will you return it to me, please?"

Lavarick folded it and thrust it in his pocket, his eyes fixed on Jordan's face with an awful and terrible gaze.

"Return it! Not! I'll return it to him! I'll return it to him when I'm killing him! Oh, my God!" and he seized his head with both hands and held it as if he were going to have a fit. "My poor girl—my poor girl! Dead—dead—say she's dead! He's alive! He's alive! I'll find him! I'll—"

He seized a carafe from a side table and gulped down a glassful, then stood breathing hard and staring vacantly at Jordan.

Jordan stood, rather paler than usual, but with his eyes fixed on the carpet.

"For your own sake," he said, "I trust you will not commit any rash deed. For your own sake."

Lavarick stopped him with a gesture at once defiant and savage. "Leave that to me!" he said, brokenly; then he laughed a horrible laugh, and only told me this, that he gave me this letter last night, I'd have let you off the money."

Poor Jordan started, and a gleam of regret crossed his face.

Lavarick laughed again. "And my revenge, too. Curse you both; curse every body by the name of Lynne! It's you and the likes of you that drive us to the devil. My girl—my pretty, innocent girl—" He broke down again, but recovered himself as if he had a suspicion that Jordan, for all his grave face, was enjoying the sight of his misery. "I'm going," he said, breathing hard. "Friday, remember! I'll have the money. It will help me to find him. Your brother won't trouble you after I've done with him, Sir Jordan."

He went to the door, but his hand shook so that he could not turn the handle.

"Open it!" he said, roughly. Jordan obeyed and accompanied him down stairs and to the hall door.

"You will take care of the papers, Mr. Smith," he said, blandly, for the benefit of the footman in the hall.

But Lavarick, as if he had forgotten his assumed character and part, strode down the steps and along the drive with bent head and white, distorted face, his hand clutching the pocket in which he had thrust the letter.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A wise maxim maker has asserted that there can be no love between two women when both are young and pretty. As is usual with maxim makers, he was wrong, and Sylvia and Audrey proved him so.

They were drawn toward each other by a mutual sympathy which sympathy was equal force. Sylvia had gone through the furnace through which Audrey seemed now to be passing. But though Sylvia saw that something was troubling her newly made friend, she did not ask for Audrey's confidence, and Audrey did not give it. But notwithstanding this, the two girls had fallen in love with each other with that quiet fervency which evidences something warmer, deeper, and more lasting than a transient fancy.

The day after their meeting in Sylvia's room Audrey drove round to Bur-

street and carried Sylvia off to Grosvenor Square.

Lady Marlow at first received her with a mixture of kindness and reserve, but before an hour had passed, Sylvia had made her way, unconsciously and without any effort on her part, into her little ladyship's heart, and the viscount, happening to come in to lunch, was as promptly captured and enslaved.

The two girls went out for a drive together, and Audrey promised on their return to call at Sylvia's abiding place on the following afternoon, and take tea with her, and afterward accompany her to the theatre.

Audrey came the next afternoon, and the girls sat and talked over their tea, as women who are fast and loving friends delight to talk. Audrey was resplendent in her evening dress, and Sylvia was laughingly admitting her, and holding up a hand mirror that Audrey might survey herself when the maid-servant entered.

Sylvia, thinking she had come to remove the tea service, paid her no attention; when Audrey, who was trying to put aside the mirror, suddenly uttered a cry and half rose.

She dropped the glass and ran forward with both hands outstretched, exclaiming: "Lord Lorrimer!"

He took her hands and held them so tightly that she could not draw them away; when Audrey, who was trying to put aside the mirror, suddenly uttered a cry and half rose.

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Libby's Vienna Sausage

You've never tasted the best sausage until you've eaten Libby's Vienna Sausage.

It's a sausage product of high food value. Made different. Cooked different. Tastes different and is different than other sausage.

Libby's Vienna Sausage, like all of the Libby Food Products, is carefully prepared and cooked in Libby's Great White Kitchen.

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Libby, McNeill & Libby, Chicago.

THE ENGAGED MAN.

Flancon's Loyal Sisters Flee as From the Plague.

The behavior of the newly-engaged often affords the looker-on much food for amusing reflection, but far more interesting is the attitude which the family assumes toward the happy pair during the period of probation. If they enter a room together every one flies from it immediately, as if they had the small-pox. If you come upon them in a library you may not so much as pause to find your book, but must precipitately retreat, taking care softly to close the door.

The man does not always seem to like these conditions. He, perhaps, is not a fluent talker, and may even enjoy the society of his own sex, says The New York Evening Sun. He may think regretfully of the times when he had interesting little chats with "her" sisters, or, rather, when they were willing to chat with him. Or he may be so cold-blooded as to anticipate the time when he and his wife will have almost too much of each other's society.

When they go out to walk or ride, he thinks he could enjoy the company of her elder sister, who is a good horsewoman, or of the younger one, who is sketched; he may fancy the singing of one, or the wit of another, possibly the jokes of a third. But he is made to feel it would be high treason to yearn for strange gods.

Sisters who are loyal to one another would consider it shocking. The man is bound to one, and one only, and it is almost melancholy to witness the stampede which takes place at his coming.

EGOTISM THE MAN'S HANDICAP.

(By John A. Howland.)

Youth claims title to buoyancy and venturesomeness because of two things. First, perhaps, are the promptings of an excess of mere animal spirits; second, lack of a sobering, qualifying experience. Why is it, then, that in the face of this statement, which few people will challenge, one of the most hampering characteristics of the young man in business comes of his showing in his business relations a marked evidence of the quality to which youth is the most logical heir?

An employer will overlook a serious blunder of a young man's on the ground that the boy is young yet. Fellow workers, discovering that in a quiet, sober industriousness the young man has made an error and is in a tight place, will turn willingly to help him out. But that young man who has brought a breezy, pushing optimism into a staid, conservative house full of old employees will discover, if able to sense it, that ex-cuses are for others than himself.

"He's too fresh," is the colloquial diagnosis of his case when his back is turned; or if in the opinion of the young offender's fellows he has exceeded prescribed bounds, one or more of these fellow workers may make the diagnosis of the young man's especial benefit.

Two widely diverging points of view

Prisoner—One of our team swatted out a three-bagger and brought in three runs, making the game a tie.

Policeman—The next second he jumped onto the diamond and assaulted the umpire.

Prisoner (excitedly)—The umpire called that three-base hit a foul, Judge.

Judge (an old fan)—The prisoner is discharged. Officer, I reprimand you for your injudiciousness.—From the May Bohemian.

Blame Government Ownership.

Incidentally Japanese statesmen are complaining that it