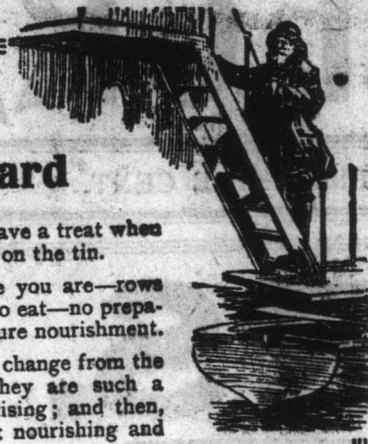


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"Skippers"

"Skippers" are Bred with Good Points.



"Love in the Wilds"

—OR—
The Romance of a South African Trading Station.

CHAPTER XXVI.
THE HOME OF WEALTH.

"To the right or left, signor," returned the man, an Italian. "It would have saved your friends an immensity of trouble, Sir Charles Anderson, if your fate had been gracious enough to give you brains," muttered Reginald Dartmouth. "Which door does the idiot mean? Had I not asked him to supper I might leave him to disentangle the knot his stupidity has tied, but as it is I suppose I must go back."

And with a frown he retraced his steps. The large saloon was empty. Not even a footman was in sight, and he was passing through it in the direction of the door at the farther end when the glimmer of a satin dress at one of the windows of the balcony caught his attention.

He stopped and, out of curiosity, walked toward the window. Before he had reached it he saw that the dress belonged to the Countess Vitzarelli, and that the lady herself was leaning on the balcony, with her hands clasped on her chin and her face turned toward the sky.

At that moment, as he stood watching her, she turned slightly but sufficiently for him to see her face distinctly.

He started with astonishment. It was white, anxious, wistful, and filled with pain or unsatisfied longing, and—yes, there could be no doubt of it—the pale cheeks were dotted with tears.

He drew back behind the curtain, and, waiting long enough only to hear a deep, long-drawn sigh and these words, "How long? How long?" he walked from the saloon. "So!" he muttered, as he stepped into his private cab; "Madam, the countess, has a secret and a mystery!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.
THE CAPTAIN TRIUMPHANT.

"No hand so lavish as the hand that spends Wealth got by false and thievish ends."

The squire had been resting in his grave only a month; but a great change had been wrought at the Dale.

Some astonishment had been felt and expressed by the country folks at the contents of the last will; and, its mysterious and sudden manufacture, together with the disappearance of

self with leaving his card in return for those of the Brandons and Wheatleys, but made an exception to the rule in favor of Miss Goodman.

But at the Warren he met with the most decided repulse.

When he drove over in his new, elegantly appointed brougham, and dressed in deep but very becoming mourning, he was met with the message that:

"Miss Rebecca was too unwell to receive visitors, and trusted Captain Dartmouth would excuse her," etc.

This puzzled him. He could not get at the reason of it. Granted that Miss Goodman feared and disliked him the problem was—Why?

He had done nothing—at least, that she or any one else could know of—to lose her esteem.

He had always tried to win her over feeling that she was too wealthy and powerful, and that the Warren was too near the Dale, to render the chance of her being useful to him a remote one.

What was the reason? He went up to town and took a house near the park.

It was a grand mansion, but Captain Dartmouth decided that it needed re-decorating and renovating.

He called in two of the principal decorators and upholsterers in London, and received them while he was at a mid-day breakfast.

One was retained to render the Park Lane house fit for him, the other was to repair to the Dale with an army of workmen and thoroughly renovate, decorate, and furnish that.

He had determined upon the styles for each, and in his languid way set forth what he wanted.

The two men, used as they were to lavish outlay and extravagant tastes, stared.

"It will be palatial!" one exclaimed.

"And the expense, my lord!" murmured the other.

"I am not 'my lord,'" retorted the captain, quietly. "But I am glad to hear you have such a good opinion of my taste. As to the expense, give me a rough idea of what you think the sum total will be."

The two men laid their heads together.

"The Park Lane villa will cost over ten thousand pounds, my lord—I should say, sir."

"Good! And the Dale?"

"More, sir—fifteen, perhaps."

"So much? Very good. Carry out my plans and ideas in their entirety and I shall not complain."

The two men backed out, as if from royalty, and Captain Dartmouth went on with his chocolate, muttering:

"Twenty-five thousand pounds. It is not bad for a start. Well, I am no fool; money is to be enjoyed, not hoarded. I have won the stakes; it is fitting I should spend them."

For a month, while the lawyers were at work preparing the statements, Captain Dartmouth remained quiet, drawing plans for the two residences, purchasing carriages and horses, and in other and various ways preparing for the life of luxury he meant to live.

He was always one of the men club fiddlers and military do-nothings look up to, even when a comparatively poor man—they worshipped him now and courted him at every opportunity.

Stories, more or less colored, of his lavish expenditure, his enormous estate, fabulous wealth, his houses, carriages, horses, jewels, and retainers were circulated through the regions of ton daily.

Eager mothers with marriageable daughters looked anxious and excited when he came near them.

He never entered ball-room, theater, concert-hall or dining-room but whispered "Captain Dartmouth, of the Dale—richest man of the season," etc., was sent round the circle.

He gloried in it. It was his reward and he reveled in it.

The slattery, the fulsome adulation, the golden-calf adoration of the masses was as honey to him, and in the atmosphere of the world's beaming smile he sunned himself and was almost happy.

Ah, almost—it is like the dreadful words "but" and "if."

Almost happy!

The world, gazing admiringly at his calm and serene face, lighted up at rare intervals with the flush of the feet smile, would have declared him the happiest man in Christendom; but it never saw him without the mask.

It lost him when the lights went out and the music ceased.

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If it could have followed him he could have penetrated the thick doors of his be-silked and be-satined bed-chamber, and stood to gaze even for a moment upon the sleeping face, not still, calm, and smiling then, but heavy and working, with cold drops of perspiration upon the white forehead, and tight, care-worn wrinkles round the eyes and mouth—to be smoothed away with careful solicitude when he awoke—if it could have seen the long, white hand, clinched as if with rage, passion, or worse, a dreadful fear, and heard the stifled groan with which he started from the heavy, terror-fraught dream, the world might have altered its opinion and said, with a fashionable sigh, that even the possessor of twenty thousand a year, youth and a handsome face, was not perfectly happy.

But the world saw and knew nothing of this.

Captain Dartmouth's nights were for himself; and whatever horrors and visions and dreams attended his sleeping hours he bore them uncomplainingly and in silence.

Perhaps he took them as part of the bargain, as a necessary accompaniment of his great fortune, reckoned them as a portion of the price he had paid for his wealth and position.

The month passed, and while looking round for some other excuse for expenditure, he met and had the conversation with Sir Charles Anderson that has been recorded.

From the park he had gone—still the same cold and seemingly purposeless man—to the Countess Vitzarelli's.

From there he had reached home changed, and that most utterly.

A touch of the magic wand had awakened him to the consciousness that his heart still lived; ay, more, that it throbbed with a new hope and a new purpose.

(To be continued.)

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Pattern 3154 is here shown. It is cut in 4 Sizes: 4, 6, 8, and 10 years. Size 6 will require 2 1/2 yards of 36 inch material. As here illustrated, striped seersucker and chambray were used. Serge and plaid suitings would be a good combination. Silk, velvet, linen, voile and other lingerie materials also, are suitable for this style. Braid, veining, stitching or embroidery, forms a suitable trimming.

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A SIMPLE STYLE.



Pattern 3150, cut in 4 Sizes: 4, 6, 8, and 10 years, is here illustrated. Pongee in a natural shade with embroidery in bright colors; gingham, lawn, voile, poplin, repp and challie are good for this model. An 8 year size will require 3 1/2 yards of 27 inch material.

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