

Skippers
The Skipper comes aboard

“You know you are going to have a treat when you see the Skipper's jolly face on the tin.”
“Just open the tin, and there you are—fresh, delicious little fish all ready to eat—no preparation needed—waste not—eat all pure enjoyment.”
“Skippers” make a welcome change from the ordinary days of meals. They are such a variety of delicious and appetizing—Luscious and delicious—valuable foods you can eat.

“Love in the Wilds”

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

CHAPTER XXXVIII.
A TORTURED MIND.

Without the smile from partial beauty won. Oh, what were man? A world without a son.—CAMPBELL.

Whatever doubts and fears oppressed the mind of the successful schemer, at the sight of Rebecca and the old housekeeper he was able to dispel them with a contemptuous smile and the inward assurance that he was safe; and the remainder of the ride was spent in a brilliant display of plesantry and wit, charming and surprising the beautiful countess, who had hitherto considered Captain Dartmouth as rather a thoughtful and reserved gentleman.

The days rolled on.

The guests at the ball seized eagerly upon all the adjuncts to pleasure and boasted on the lawn, arched on the lawns, flirted in the drawing-rooms, gambled in the billiard-saloon, and amused themselves after their respective tastes to their hearts' content.

Meanwhile their generous host mingled with them but very little.

He, like his guests, had separate and private suites of apartments, and to these some days he was entirely confined.

Messengers—some foreign and distinguished by swarthy Italian faces—arrived and departed bearing dispatches to and from—long, important-looking dispatches, over which the old Italian count and Reginald Dartmouth bent eagerly and argumentatively for hours together.

Sometimes the lovely Lucille would join their councils, which were then always held in the count's room, and on these occasions a scene full of pleasure would light up the captain's acute, sympathetic face, and he always contrived to throw a glamor of romance and an undercurrent of devotion and esteem into the conference.

All was going well; he assured himself of this night after night.

His ambition—and how lofty, how great, he alone knew—his love, intense yet not unmingled with self-interest—both were going well.

But the man's heart? Well, for that he could not answer. Perhaps he did not put the question, but strove with might and main to forget the past and ignore the dark, terrible dreams that made night awful to him, and the lines of care and hidden dread which made the mirror a curse to him each morning.

Yes, outwardly all was going well with the new master of the Hall, but inwardly the demon dread, had already taken possession of his soul, and all else—love, ambition, the thirst

“Oh, that's easy enough!” said Sir Charles, rising and shaking himself. “Forsley must have the management of it; he is an old master of the fox-hounds, you know, and an authority. Sir Bois will steer his old hunter Willie Taunton has his own and will be only too glad—eh, Will!” turning to that young peer, who was flirting with Miss Goldbags.

“Eh? Oh, certainly; only too delighted!” replied the spendthrift, and then turned to his wooing.

“And you, Dartmouth—will you take a run?”

“Y-e-s,” said Reginald Dartmouth. “I'm rather heavy for that sort of thing, but—”

And he glanced at the countess, as if he would glean her wishes from her face; then, seeing a smile of interest added:

“Well, yes; I'll ride the chestnut.”

“And that's all, I think, excepting myself,” said Sir Charles. “Of course, I shall ride—and back myself to win, too, ladies. Countess, will you wager me a dozen of Gant's best—my size is seven-three-quarters—that I don't win? Oh by the way; we have not fixed upon the prize!”

“The prize?” replied the countess, with a smile. “A silver cup—no, let this be the prize.”

And with simple modesty she drew a ring of black pearls from her finger and held it up with a light laugh.

Reginald Dartmouth's face flushed and his eyes glistened.

“Ah, countess,” said Sir Charles, with a deep sigh. “I pity the poor horses now! Who of us will have pity on his beast when running for such a stake?”

“Come, you have not accepted Sir Charles's wager,” murmured Reginald Dartmouth bending over Lucille.

“Oh then I do!” she said. “A box of gloves, Sir Charles. But what an I to have, pray, if you lose?”

“A dozen boxes, countess, and my life—if it be of any service to you,” responded the baronet gallantly.

Reginald looked up.

“Charlie, your confidence has inspired me. I will back the poor old chestnut against your favorite for, say—for five hundred, and give you odds.”

“No; no odds,” said Sir Charles, with his usual open-hearted generosity. “All level betting. I take you, Reg! Now, ladies, for the gloves.”

And with the most impressive earnestness he pulled out his neatly-clasped memorandum-book and proceeded to book bets of gloves with them all.

The rest of the gentlemen followed the example, and then turned to bet among themselves.

Reginald Dartmouth stood aloof from this wholesale book-making, and after talking over a few of the preliminaries, begged the countess to give him some advice as to the placing of some ferneries upon the terrace and bore her off for the inspection.

As soon as they were out of ear-shot he said, bending over her, in that tone of deep respect and devotion which he always adopted when he addressed her:

“Will you let me look at the ring for which we are to ride, countess?”

“Certainly,” she said, glancing up at him with a slight look of interrogation and slipping the precious trifle from her long, tapering finger.

He took the ring and looked at it, then held it between his finger and thumb and, turning his eyes upon her with an almost mournful gaze, said:

“It seems too precious a thing to be set up as a prize for a steeple-chase—a mere chance. Men have died—would die—for less than this.”

She flushed slightly; but her calm, thoughtful face resumed its self-possession in an instant, and she held out her hand for the ring.

“Men risk their lives for very little then, captain. This trifle is not worth a thought, and I would not have offered it but that I heard you praise it the other evening.”

“Ah!” he said, eagerly; “I praised it and longed for it. You would not give it to me—I dared not ask it. Can I dare I hope that you have permitted me to win it?”

She turned away her head and a half cloud settled, or, rather, drifted over her fair brow.

“It is he who wins it,” she said. “I meant it only for the winner.”

His face flushed and then grew stern with resolution.

“This mine already,” he murmured, fervently. “I must—I will win.”

Before she could reply the count came down the steps toward which they were approaching and, thrusting his arm through Reginald Dart-



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mouth's with an elated look, said: “Welcome me, Dartmouth; I bring good tidings.”

Reginald Dartmouth turned eagerly; the countess raised her eyes.

“The two corvettes we dispatched—I should say, rather, which you, my dear Dartmouth, dispatched—”

“No matter,” burst in Reginald Dartmouth, with simulated earnestness.

“Have succeeded in getting an interview with Mazzini and—His! some one is approaching. Come to my room, Lucille; bring me the plan you drew out last night.”

Almost dragging them, in his excitement and delight, the old Italian led the way to his room, where they could discuss the news in security.

Meanwhile the party of pleasure hunters, who had driven the count to his apartments, set to work preparing for the steeple-chase.

It having been suggested by some one that jackets would be needed for the riders, Miss Goldbags courageously suggested the feasibility of the ladies themselves setting to work and making the silken tunics, and, fired with the ambition of proving themselves able needle-women, they all trooped off to purchase the required silks and set to work.

Then Charles Anderson and Bois were deputed to look over the ground and lay out a course. With an ardor only matched by that of the ladies, they mounted and galloped off to make the survey, soon returning, however, with the information that the race could not be possibly run till the morrow, as the hedges were not high enough nor the brook wide enough to suit such hard riders as Bois Bolton and Reginald Dartmouth, so say nothing of Sir Charles, the hardest rider of them all.

(To be Continued.)

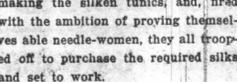
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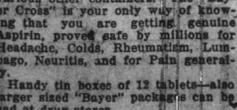
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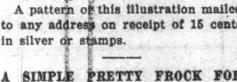


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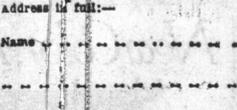
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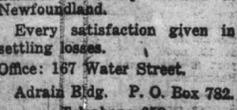
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