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**"Love in the Wilds"**

OR  
The Romance of a South African Trading Station.

CHAPTER XV.  
UNDER FOREIGN SKIES.

"Come, ain't any o' yer got any coin? I want one more hand."

Long Will rolled over from his back to his stomach and flung a coin on the grass.

"I'll take a turn," he growled.

"You've got all the luck, though."

They played more than one hand, of course, and the luck seemed to have changed.

Tim was losing.

The whole group of runners now became interested and drew closer to the two players, thoroughly enjoying the sight of Tim's discomfiture.

Long Will took his good luck with great composure, but the losing man seemed to be ugly.

It was unpleasant to lose the spoil after winning it.

Still, with the persistence of every gambler, he would play, and Long Will still won.

While they were playing Laurence passed by, with a lasso that he had been mending, on his arm.

He stopped a moment to watch the game, and at that moment a dispute arose.

"You played a queen," said Long Will.

"No, I didn't," said Tim, picking up the stakes.

"Yes, ye did," retorted Will. "Put the money down."

Tim grinned.

"When I wins," he said, with a sneer—he had lost his temper—"I pockets."

"But you don't pocket when you lose—leastways, not my money," said Will with a flash of the eye. "I played the king, and you threw the queen—the stake's mine—what d'ye mean by pocketing?"

"I tell you I played the king," said Tim.

There was a confusion of tongues directly and the men sprang to their feet.

Laurence, with a bitter smile, turned away—it was such scenes kept him out of their way. He preferred the beasts of the forest and the companionship of his horse.

"Hege, stop a minute, Laury," growled Will, clutching him by the arm.

"You was just behind my back and could see the cards. What was it I played, king or queen?"

"You played the king," said Laurence, releasing his arm, and turning away again.

"You know he didn't," snarled Tim. Laurence swung round and his hand fell upon the revolver in his belt, but as suddenly he dropped it to his side again and walked on.

The men murmured.

Tim, presuming upon his forbearance, sneered evilly:

"Are you always successful on baking day? Are your cakes light and spongy and your biscuits white and flaky? If not, let us help you with

**RUMFORD**

THE WHOLESOME BAKING POWDER

ground?" he growled. "One of us is safe to go over, and that'll mean—"

"Death," filled in Laurence, with a look of scorn. "Just so; and so would a bullet. You refuse? Your horse is as good as the black. You have boasted you could pull up within a yard. Here are three to do it in."

The scornful tone and contemptuous flash of Laurence's eyes roused the man more than the words.

With an imprecation he flung himself into the saddle.

"Down with you," he said. "I'm not afraid."

Without a word Laurence remounted and galloped toward the starting point.

The lookers-on stood grim and silent. They were too used to death to be much moved, but each felt a cold shudder run through him at this novel mode of suicide; for one false step and over horse and rider must go and be dashed to pieces on the hard rocks beneath.

Meanwhile the word was given, and the two horses were flying toward a fearful precipice like the wind.

Cecil, panting and breathless, came up just as they flashed past to what seemed to him certain destruction.

The youth uttered a loud shriek and swayed in the saddle, throwing one hand up before his eyes.

The horses tore on.

The watchers held their breath. Tim's face was as white as the death he was tempting. Laurence's was as calm, listless, and indifferent as usual.

Now they are nearing the awful chasm.

Another moment and a sudden report rang out crisp and shrill and, as Laurence pulled the black up, with a grip of steel, on the very line, Tim's horse leaped to the ground.

Tim rose to his feet, shaking as with an ague and white as a sheet.

Cecil rode forward with a revolver, from which the smoke still poured, in his hand and, flinging himself of his horse, fell half fainting to the ground.

The men crowded round, but Laurence picked the youth up as he would have done a child and, striding down the hill, said to Tim:

"Run you and get some water—and quick!—the lad's shot saved you"

Then he laid the youth on the grass and began unloosening the shirt at his throat, but before his fingers had scarcely touched it, Cecil came to and, pushing his hand aside, said, imploringly:

"Don't, don't! Oh, pray don't! I—I—am all right. I—Oh, how could you be so wicked?"

Something in the deep, reproachful eyes smote Laurence's heart.

And he, who had not turned pale when facing death, turned white and bent his eyes with a look of contrition upon the ground.

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bunch, and that bunch, when faded and withered, was carefully removed, dried, and stored away in the top drawer of the plain deal chest which stood in the room.

When the drawer was opened the scent of the dried flowers would steal out and fill the apartment with a subtle perfume—a perfume that Cecil would stand and drink in with strange delight.

On the night of the strange scene at the cliff Cecil had down to his room, after the half swoon, and remained there till all on the farm were at rest.

The incident had been a warning to him in more ways than one, and the result that followed was a determination to avoid for the future, as much as possible, the runner, Laury.

Thus determined, the lad sat by the window with his little dimpled chin on his hands and his dark, heavy-browed eyes scanning the horizon.

All on the farm were at rest, and it was time Cecil, if he meant to be clear-headed at his books to-morrow, was abed; but he sat thinking and frowning till the moon was up.

Then, as with a sigh he turned from the window, the sound of a horse's hoofs came to him.

"Oh, he is off again!" he murmured, peeping through the blind at the plainly revealed figure of Laurence Harman fastening the saddle girths of the black.

"How long will he be away?" mused the youth. "How long? A month, I suppose. Well, he can be away longer if he likes for all I care," he murmured, defiantly, but sighed nevertheless.

Presently, as he still watched, he saw the runner leap into the saddle and dash off.

Before he was out of sight, however, Cecil saw him pull up and turn back.

"Forgotten something," he murmured. "That's wonderful for him."

Laurence rode back faster than he had galloped away and, with that wonderful twist of the wrist, brought the powerful horse to a stand-still beneath the window from which Cecil was looking.

"What is it, I wonder?" he murmured. "Why," as foot-steps could be heard coming up the stairs, "he must be going to the armory for powder or bullets."

But, contrary to his surmise, the footsteps stopped at his door and Laurence knocked.

The youth flushed a bright crimson, then turned deathly pale, glancing at the key and pressing his hand to his breast.

(To be Continued.)

CHAPTER XVII.  
A STRANGE BOY.

The violets, cowslips, and the primroses Bear to my closet.—CYMBELINE.

Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no fibs.—GOLDSMITH.

Cecil's little room adjoined the apartments belonging to the two old women of whom we have spoken.

This room, a pretty little apartment, notwithstanding the extreme plainness of the furniture, was set aside exclusively for the lad, who had a key to it and kept it locked.

The cattle-runners slept in the hay-loft, or, in the warm weather, beneath the trees in the open air; but Cecil, who was allowedly superior to all of them, excepting, perhaps, Laurence Harman, was given the use of one of the cosiest little rooms in the house; and his bed, although of the ordinary kind, was fitted with snowy sheets and the luxury of curtains.

Cecil, among other little weaknesses, was fond of flowers—passionately, or "womanishly" fond, as Mr. Stewart had said—and a bunch of the gloriously colored and wondrously scented earth's jewels generally stood in a deep, brown jar upon the table of the little room.

Sometimes when Laurence Harman returned from one of his long trips he would bring the lively Cecil a bunch of some rare or particularly beautiful flowers and, with the same grave carelessness, throw them to him, as he had done the rug.

On such occasions the lad always crimsoned with pleasure and darted off to his room.

However fresh the flowers might be that filled the jar, they were always thrown-out to make room for Laury's

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