

**"A GOLD LADEN DERELICT"**  
OR  
**The Impecunious Adventuress.**

CHAPTER XXVI.  
A PITIFUL LETTER.

"Yes, Kenneth, that was my dream—a strange one, was it not, since I loved you throughout its brief duration? You will answer, 'Such a dream would be improbable, inconceivable, to one who truly loved.' Well, I thank God that my love for you was too great to permit me to be guilty of such an awful crime against you as this, and so I hope that I have chosen the better way. Certainly it is the only one for me if I would escape a future of shame, misery, and degradation—a life which I have endured callously in the past, but which you, Kenneth, have made impossible for me.

"Now for the rest—because the least atonement that I can make is to help you and others to do justice where it should be done.

"Redman, Montagu, and Ashley are all members of the Sherrell gang, and so I need not tell you that the wife of Rayman Sherrell has also been their accomplice. They were mainly responsible—and fraudulently responsible—for your father's West Australian group of companies; and I—yes, Kenneth—I helped them, but I cannot bring myself to tell you how I have made what amends I could by sending ample proof of their guilt to Detective Burnett.

"I have had another reason for doing this. Arthur Ashley, as you know, had, of course by utterly false representations, persuaded Mr. Vanderveen to consent to his engagement to his daughter. I have saved her from a fate which might have been something like mine.

"I have one more sin against you to confess. Mercia Reynolds loves you, and, before I came to poison your heart, you loved her. Some day your old, pure love will come back. When it does, ask her to try and forgive me. Good-by, Kenneth. LILLIAS."

CHAPTER XXVII.  
AFTER THREE YEARS.

Messrs. Ashley, Redman, and Montagu had served nearly three years of the sentence of fifteen years' penal servitude, which they had so thoroughly earned, when one morning, at his chambers, Kenneth, now an eminent lawyer, and far on the way to fame and fortune, found the following note among his letters:

"My Dearest Ken: Now that your work for the term is over, I think that a fortnight at Scarborough would do you a great deal of good. Jack has got us a very nice house on the cliff, and Mercia is spending a week or two with us. We shall expect you in two days, at the least. Your loving sister, KATE."

Kenneth reread this systerlymissive, folded it carefully, and put it in an inside pocket. He smiled as he did so, for he was not by any means impervious to the subtle hint conveyed in the words: "Mercia is spending a week or two with us." He knew that his dear sister, whose loyal friendship for Mercia Reynolds had grown with the passing of time, had never ceased to plot and plan—secretly, of course, and with true feminine tact and zeal in such delicate matters—for the fulfillment of that hope. This latest message from Kate was only another proof of her interest and a sign to her brother that neither her own hope nor his, if he still cherished one, was abandoned or forlorn.

"Dear Kate; she is a torchbearer in the darkness," Kenneth said to himself, as he turned to glance over his numerous others letters. He opened

two or three and read them with that quick, mental grasp of details which was one of his strongest characteristics; but when he put them aside, intending to give them to Mr. Crudge to answer, his thoughts again turned to Kate and to her letter. "A torchbearer in the darkness," he repeated, pursuing his metaphor; "and doubtless her beacon shines for some good purpose, to light my pathway out of this gloom. My pathway? Truly, it has been beset with thorns, from the time when my feet first left the main highroad to follow a false phantom along the way. Kate always said I should find 'the right one' among the green byways and hedges, and now she offers me another chance to win her.

"But Mercia?" he questioned his hopeful soul. "Will she forgive me? Will she not tell me that since I left her side, drawn away from her by the magic of a siren's call, she has learned to love another?—some one more worthy of her devotion. There is that possibility to face, and I— But, no, something tells me that Kate wouldn't have written 'Mercia is spending a week or two with us,' if she hadn't intended to encourage me in resuming my quest! By Jove! I'd be a fool if I didn't obey the summons, especially as it's an opportunity which I really long for now, at least!—really and truly desire with all my heart!"

In the eagerness of this new-born resolve, he sprang from his chair, glancing quickly at his watch. He then pressed an electric button in the wall beside his desk, pressed it so excitedly and so rapidly that Mr. Crudge himself, wondering what could be the cause of such unwonted disturbance of the silence in that yet busy office, came running Kenneth's sanctum.

"I—I believe you rang for me, sir," he gasped, heedless of the absurdity of his remark. "I thought something might be—"

"No, nothing's the matter with me, Crudge, except that I'm in a great hurry. Is there a time-table in the office? No? Well, then, please send Tom out to get me off. Wait! Better telephone the station and find out when the next train leaves for Scarborough."

"Very well, sir. Are you going there this morning, Mr. Markham?"

"Yes, if there's a train. Likely as not there'll not be one before this evening. Our British railway systems seem to be run even less for the convenience of the public than they are in America!—which is saying a great deal! Witness our insular British Sundays—no trains at all! Well, I'm going to Scarborough to-day, if the powers that be will permit me. Is there any case that will prevent?"

"No, sir. Sprague versus Redwell comes on early next week. I'm working on the brief for that case now, sir."

"That's not important. I mean the case itself, Crudge, not your excellent brief. You know, I'm thinking of letting Burton and Hobbs take that case. They'll be glad of such an edible crumb from our table; neither Sprague nor Redwell will object, under the conditions which I've already explained to them; and, besides, it's my private opinion that you, Crudge, need a holiday as much as I do. What do you say?"

(To be Continued.)

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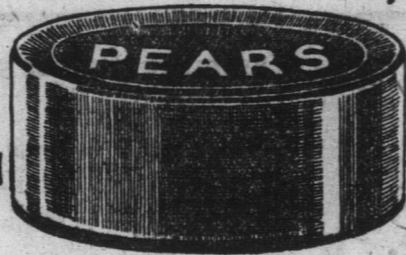
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**"Love in the Wilds"**

—OR—

**The Romance of a South African Trading Station.**

CHAPTER I.

AFTER FORTY YEARS.

"Passion is fierce and bends to no control, It robs the reason and usurps the soul."

As the summer sun sank like a dying king in the mass of crimson clouds that lay at the back of the village of Dale, two laborers, bent with toil 'neath the self-same sun, under whose beams they had labored for three-score years, trudged wearily across the fields and along the lane that led from the Dale House to the little village that lay at the foot of the hill.

They had finished their day's work and, with their hoes across their shoulders, stopped to wipe their brows and look back.

"It's a fine even," said one. "We'll have some rain, maybe, though, 'fore the morn."

"That's like enough, the other; 'an' 'ull do no harm, neither."

"Ain't thee a-nigh done that three acre yet, Will?"

"Ay," replied Will, "a'most. What are they goin' on to-morrow?"

"I dunno," said the other. "I mayse go up to the Dale an' see."

"I don't envy thee," remarked Will, with a short laugh.

"I dunno why thee shouldst," retorted John. "I would rather face the old un than come across Maester Darrell."

"Hum!" said the other. "Didst see him to-day?"

"I did," replied John, "as ill luck'd have it."

"Why didn't 'ee ask him then?" "Ask him?" echoed John. "It 'ud 'n been more'n my head were worth. I was a-diggin' the acre when he come oop, black as thunder, swearin' like mad, an' 'thwackin' the old mare as if he meant to kill un."

"What ailed him, man?"

"How do I know?" retorted John, with a shake of his old gray head. "An' what's more, 'tain't like as do any one else. He war in one of his tant-

rums, I s'pose. He's a brute, he be."

"Thee'd better tell him so," remarked his companion, with a grin. "I believe he'd kill 'ee."

"It's most like," answered the other, wearily. "Not as I think o' tryin'. Has thee seen Maester Hugh to-day, Will?"

"Yees," replied Will. "I seed him a-comin' from the hoose. He were as black as thunder, too."

"Ah, ay," said the old man, John. "They 'a' been a-tiffin' again there. Poor Maester Hugh! I do pity him. Will, I'm thinkin' these rich folks ain't got so easy a life on it as some o' we poor folk do think, look 'ee. But where will 'ee find a handsomer hoose an' a grander than the Dale? An' whar's the squire in the country as 'as got such a sight o' money as the maester? Where, too, will 'ee find a uprighter lad than Maester Hugh? He's one o' the good sort, mark 'ee; yet I'm thinkin' the poor lad ain't more happier than old soft Tom, down village. He's got his fill o' meat an' drink, an' his hosses an' dawgs, but— Hist! what's that, man?"

The old laborer's lecture on human happiness was brought to a sudden close by a rustling of the leaves and the sudden apparition of a handsome, stalwart form that, with a bound, and followed close by a pair of splendid greyhounds, cleared the hedge and alighted at the startled laborers' feet.

The athlete—for no other than an athlete could have so cleanly cleared the hedge—was a tall, strongly built youth, with a handsome, well-cut face that struck one more by its expression of stern nobility than by any regularity of features and by a certain air of proud earnestness that spoke out plainly in the dark-brown eyes and well-formed lips.

(To be continued.)

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