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## "Love in the Wilds"

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

### CHAPTER XLIII. A DANGEROUS TASK.

Captain Dartmouth's apartments lay to the right; facing the door of the ante-chamber rose the narrow flight of stairs leading to the upper story, consisting of rooms used for lumber, and remaining in the same condition as when the squire owned the Dale.

The great extension of the old mansion by additional wings had rendered them superfluous, and the captain had had them locked up and left untouched.

These the secretary was to explore to-night for a means of communication with and observance of the boarder of the countess.

With a glance at the stairs as he passed, the secretary made his way to the ante-chamber of his master and, entering, stood listening.

"Asleep," he murmured; "asleep! How can he sleep, I wonder? One would think that his dreams would be deep and vivid enough to render sleep unbearable! Well, he sleeps soundly, dreams notwithstanding; so I can go on without fear of interruption. Now, whatever chance falls in my way Heaven give me strength to use it!"

So saying, he turned from the ante-chamber and stole up the narrow staircase.

At the first bend the fresh paint



### Will Morning Never Come

DOES this illustration picture your experience?

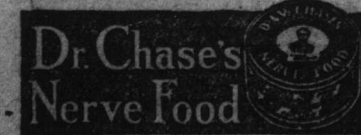
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Distributing Agent.

"Think not I forget. I remember all this, and more," she said, in her musical voice, and with a deep melancholy. "How should I forget when you do not fail to remind me nightly? You ask almost too much!"

The count paced the floor hurriedly.

"Do you imagine it costs me nothing thus arguing, Lucille?" he asked, brokenly. "Do you think that I do not partake of the sacrifice I ask you to make? Is it nothing to me that the being I love almost as a daughter has to leave me? Is it nothing to me that I shall be compelled to urge a Viscount to wed an ignoble Englishman? Oh, Lucille, I tell you it cuts me to the heart! If I could save myself and you this sacrifice by giving even my life I would lay it down gladly."

The countess sighed and, from the sound, had risen and walked to his side.

"I know it—I know it. But—ah!—but the pain is greater with me—I do not love him!"

The count turned sharply.

"Do you love any other?" he asked.

"Can you ask?" she replied, with a significance that made the listener start. "Can one without a heart love? Can I, who live for one thing only—save Italy—find a particle of soul for such a thing as love? Oh, you forget, sir, that my life is wrapped up in one thing, in one object, one longing—you forget!"

"No, no, Lucille," replied the count hurriedly, "I do not; but I had hoped that—that the purpose died out—expired—"

"Expired?" interrupted the countess, with fiery energy. "Not till I shall expire. Died out? It grows stronger each day. I can not rest, least of all love, till I find her."

"Her?" almost cried the excited listener, springing to his feet with forgetful indiscretion—"her? Is the countess's mystery a woman?"

"What is that?" exclaimed the countess. "I heard a noise."

The listener, realising the danger of the situation arising from his involuntary movement and exclamation, dropped down again and remained breathless and motionless.

"A noise up above?" said the count. "Do not look so alarmed. The house is old. It was the rustling of the wind or the rats."

"No; it sounded like a man's voice and the movement of feet," rejoined the countess, slowly.

"Tis nothing, Lucille. You are tired, too tired to listen to me to-night. I will go. Good-night! Heaven bless you!"

There was a dead silence, broken only by the sound of the count's footsteps as he left the room and walked to his own apartments.

The secretary rose to his feet and pushed the hair from his forehead, keeping his hand upon his puzzled brow.

"More mystery! Where is it all to end? For whom is the countess looking? What is the purpose which fills up her life and prevents her loving? Shall I do my master's bidding and find it out? No. What good will it do me? How far would it help my purpose? Ah! who knows? Link within link, they say; through this countess I may reach Reginald Dartmouth. Yet, I will do his bidding."

Arrived at this resolution the secretary took up his lamp and prepared to return, taking care to replace the board, and made his way over the

CHAPTER XLIV.  
FOR SIMPLE JUSTICE.

Something the heart must have to cherish.

Must love and joy and sorrow learn; Something with passion clasp or perch— And in itself to ashes burn.—  
LONGFELLOW.

With a sigh and a strange hesitation the secretary bent his ear to the opening, murmuring:

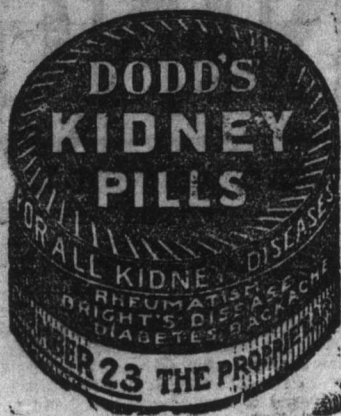
"Let me not forget my purpose. I do this not for you, but for justice, Reginald Dartmouth."

After a few moments he grew accustomed to the low tones of the speakers and caught every word, recognizing the voices of the count and countess.

The count was speaking, and in a low, supplicating tone.

"Lucille, let me implore you! Think how much this man can help us. Remember how much we need help. Our lives are pledged to Italy. I would give mine gladly. Can you refuse—can you hesitate to make this sacrifice? Nay, why should I call it by so hard and unpalatable a name? He is young, handsome, and ah! how rich—"

The countess interrupted him with a sigh which was profound enough to reach the attentive ears above.



chest and lumber carefully and noiselessly.

After locking the door he stood for a moment with uplifted lamp, gazing round him, the same sad expression upon his pale face.

Then he moved toward the stairs; but suddenly, as if actuated by an irresistible impulse, he turned and proceeded along the disguised passages, casting sad and curious glances at the closed doors on either side.

One especially seemed to attract him, and for a moment he felt inclined to unlock it; but the key would not open it, and, holding the lamp close to it, he murmured:

"Oh, screwed up still!"

Then he turned with a sigh; but, again moved by the same unaccountable feeling, retraced his steps and stood before the closed door.

"The screws are half out. I could unfasten them in a few moments. I seem drawn to the room. Why should I not see it?"

Strengthened in his desire and curiosity by the self-asked question, he turned back to the room he had first entered, took up a chisel, which he had noticed among the lumber as he passed out, and going back to the fastened door commenced unscrewing it.

With the last screw in his hand John Stanfield paused.

An expression of dread, or some other intense emotion, passed over his face, and he leaned against the door-post to wipe the perspiration from his face, removing the disgusting spectacles for that purpose, and disclosing a pair of beautiful but startled, frightened eyes.

Fully three minutes passed. Then, as if with an effort, he gathered up courage and, with a hand still quivering and cold, turned the key.

A damp current of air rushed out to meet him as he opened the door, chilling his blood still further and almost extinguishing the lamp.

But carefully guarding his flickering light, and overcoming his dread, John Stanfield crossed the threshold and entered the room of Hugh Darrell.

For a moment the dim light served only to increase the darkness, as it seemed; but after awhile the silent figure could see that, unlike the other neglected rooms, this was a properly furnished bed-chamber, with all the appearance, notwithstanding a number of articles of wearing apparel and such like scattered about, of recent habitation.

Indeed, save for the musty atmosphere, the trembling secretary might have imagined the grim, dark bed occupied, and the clothes lying on the chair beside it still warm with the warmth of their wearer.

It was a strange sight, but there was not so much of curiosity in John Stanfield's face as of an expression of dread, fearful expectation, which dwelt in his eyes and upon his quivering features.

Staring at the bed and upon the scattered articles lying about the chairs and floor, he seemed unable to move from the center of the room.

Presently, however, he ventured to draw near the bed, and started with a cry of amazement to find it in his order.

The cry awoke him from his half-conscious state, and, turning from the bed, with a quivering hand he raised the lamp so that its bright light might fall upon the wall.

As he did so his eyes fell upon a picture hung on the wall opposite him.

It was a portrait—dim and distained.

John Stanfield, with wide-opened eyes, raised the lamp still higher and drew nearer.

As he did so he uttered a cry that ran through the room with a ghostly reverberation, and, with his eyes still fixed upon the picture, dropped the lamp and fell full-length upon the floor, uttering the one word as he fell—

"Laury!"

(To be continued.)

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