"Love in the Wilds"

—OR—

The Romance of a South African Trading Station.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A STOLEN KISS.

"And sitting beside a sick man in a solitary hut neither," said Laury, nodding. "I'm a bad hand at speech making, lad, or I'd tell you something of my gratitude."

"A good thing you are," retorted Cecil; "for I hate talkative men. Now I'm going to water the horses, and you had best get a nap."

But Laurence shook his head and, as soon as Cecil had gone, proceeded to pack the skins, including the antelope's which the youth had shot, and prepared for the return trip.

When Cecil came back he found Laurence waiting at the door with saddles ready for slipping on and the reins tied up.

"What now?" he asked.

"Home," said Laurence, resolutely. "Not a word, Cecil! I am quite recovered and determined."

Cecil, seeing that remonstrance would be useless, helped saddle the horses, and the two stood at the door while Laurence fastened them.

Before he closed it he looked in with a strange smile.

"The little den looks cheery, lad. I shall always like it after this."

And he sighed.

Cecil turned rather pale and sighed, too.

"Yes, we have not been altogether unhappy, Laury—you and I—and I am rather sorry to say good-bye to the den,' as you call it."

And they mounted and, with the horses fresh and eager for a scamper after their long rest, set off for the long gallop toward home.

A change came over them both as they came near the farm.

The old cloud loomed and settled on Laurence's brow; the old, stern, reserved expression grew about his eyes.

Cecil, glancing at his face, grew silent and almost sad, and thus speechlessly they rode up to the door of the station.

"Hello!" said Mr. Stewart, staring with a relieved smile. "Where have you been to? And"—with a look of astonishment as he saw the scar upon Laurence's forehead—"and what in the name of thunder have you been up to?"

Laurence frowned.

He disliked demonstrativeness, especially when displayed upon his account.

"We have had a tussle," he said; "a mere nothing, in which I alone, I am glad to say, was scratched."

"Oh, that's all, is it?" said Mr. Stewart. "Well, I'm glad it's no worse. You look all the better for the trip, Cecy," he added, as the lad dismounted.

"I'm glad of it," said Cecil. "I feel all the better, and so will the books, I hope."

"Ain't you coming in, Laurence?" asked Mr. Stewart, seeing that Laurence did not offer to dismount, and had thrown the skins to one of the negroes.

Laurence shook his head.

"No, thanks," he said. "I will go and see who has next run and join in."

Cecil turned back when he saw Laurence was not following, and caught the last words.

He turned crimson and caught the settler's arm.

"Don't let him—oh, don't let him!" he whispered, eagerly. "He's been ill, very ill; down with fever; and—and—pray don't let him go!"

Mr. Stewart looked down at his anxious and troubled face with a sharp laugh.

"Don't let him, by George! I should like to know whose to prevent him if he's taken it into his head to go. Here, you go and try." And he jerked his head toward the door.

Cecil ran down the stairs, but turned again with a cry of vexation.

Laurence had already reached the stables.

We have said Laurence was a favorite with the runners, but popularity is the veriest straw, as every one knows, and the wind that lifts it, dancing joyously to the heavens, may swerve round and drive it, broken and crushed, into the roadside dust-heap.

Laurence's popularity was on the wane.

The runners, who had been at first rather pleased with his grim taciturnity and reserve, were growing tired or dissatisfied at it.

Several of them, led on by Tim—who had never forgiven him the affair of the race—still growled in their beards at his coldness and stand-offishness and, with a curse at his pride, asked each other who he was to show such airs.

A small flame is easily fanned into a blaze.

From grumbling and growling at his pride, as they called it, they persuaded themselves into the belief that they were much wounded and hurt at the evident favoritism Mr. Stewart displayed for the suddenly obnoxious Laury.

"Who was he that he should be thought such a tarnation deal of? He was no better than the rest of them. He was paid like the others to do his work, and he ought to do it. Suppose any of them," growled Tim, with malignant indignation—"suppose any of them took to galavantin' across the runs for a week at a time what 'n'd the guv'nor say to it? Why, they'd hear of it, sharp, and get it hot into the bargain. But here was this chap allus doin' what he pleased, shootin' and trappin' fur, and reg'lar galavantin' about as if he was master. We ain't agoin' to stand it—leastways, I ain't," said Tim, viciously.

And thus challenged, the others, like a flock of sheep, declared that they would not either, and they went about the farm or on the runs with black looks, their hands fidgeting at their knives, airing their imaginary grievances after their own choice and amiable manner.

A group of them, Tim among the number, was in the stables as Laurence entered.

He was accustomed to a hearty greeting, and rather feared and expected a volley of questions, but to his surprise they fell into a dead silence as he entered, and—beyond dark and anything but friendly glances—took no notice.

He bid them good-even.

One of them growled out something in reply, the rest remained silent.

He sent a sharp, scrutinizing look at the calcontents, and then, without the slightest change of countenance, led the black into his stall and get to grooming and feeding him as usual.

The men, after a few minutes, walked out and, growling among themselves, disappeared behind the trees.

When he had finished with the black, Laurence made his way to the house, and found Mr. Stewart in the long room with a cigar in his mouth, as usual.

"Ah, so you haven't started!" he said. "Sensible for once in a way. Supper's over, but they're getting a bit for you and Cecil."

Laurence thanked him.

"I'll get a crust of bread from Martha as I pass through, sir," he said. "I may as well be off."

"What in the world are you in such a hurry for?" asked Mr. Stewart, testily.

"I am in no hurry," said Laurence, quietly. "You forget I have had four days' holiday."

"Which you are welcome to," said the settler, "and you know it."

"I know it, and am grateful," said Laurence. "Can you tell me the next run? I meant to ask at the stables, but the men sem to have caught a tongue fever. I got no good-night from them."

"Ah!" said the settler, looking troubled. "What's the matter with them, Larry, do you know?"

Laurence shook his head indifferently.

"They have been like a set of bears with sore heads for the last few days. That Tim's been slouching and growling about. I don't know what ail's 'em."

"Nor I," said Laurence. "Has anything happened here since I have been away?"

"No, nothing," said the settler. "Nothing whatever—at least, that I know of. To tell you the truth, Larry," he continued, hesitantly, and eyeing Laurence askance, "I fancy they have a grudge or grievance against you."

Laurence frowned and drew himself up.

"I think you must be mistaken," he said. "I know of no cause for either. Against me? I see little of any of them and avoid all."

"That's it," muttered the old man, inaudibly, but added aloud: "Well, I can't make it out, and I suppose it wouldn't be much use if I could. You'll take care of yourself, I know—"

Laurence smiled grimly.

"Yes," he said, simply.

"And so shall I," said the old man, touching his revolver, with a sharp laugh. "Not that they've quarreled with me," he added, quickly; "but it's as well to be prepared. These boys are not sucking doves or spring lambs."

Laurence made no reply, save to ask the route, and receiving it bid his master good-night.

Half an hour afterward he rode away, passing a group at the trees, which cast a volley of black looks after him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE WATCHER.

Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel; but, being in,
Bear it that the opposer may beware of thee.—SHAKESPEARE.

The next morning Cecil returned to his work in the armory with a strange sensation of wistful longing in his heart, and flew at the work with an eagerness born of the desire to lose his thoughts in the stock accounts.

At dinner-time he asked Mr. Stewart to send his plate up to him to save him coming down, and the settler, thinking that he might prefer to take all his meals in the office, gave instructions to the office woman to serve them there, telling one of the pickaninnies to wait upon him.

This piece of favoritism gave fresh offense.

Eager for some excuse whereon to hinge their dissatisfaction and ill temper, the runners seized upon this, and growled still more deeply.

The settler was puzzled and annoyed, but as he made it a rule not to notice anything short of open rebellion, he took no head of black looks and muttings, and went about humming and whistling as usual.

Cecil, upstairs, of course, knew nothing of the state of affairs.

At night a detachment, led by Tim, starting for a run, and Mr. Stewart hoped their work would dissolve the mischief which their idleness alone might have bred and fostered.

(To be Continued.)

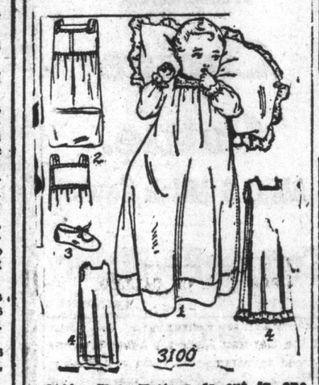
Fashion Plates.

A JAUNTY DRESS FOR THE GROWING CHILD.

Pattern 3229 is used to make this attractive model. It is cut in 4 Sizes: 8, 10, 12 and 14 years. A 12 year size will require 4 yards of 44 inch material. Blue or green linen with facings of white pique or pipings in a contrasting color, could be used for this design. As here shown, plaid gingham was employed, with linen embroidered in colors for collar and other trimmings.

A pattern of this illustration mailed to any address on receipt of 15c. in silver or stamps.

A PRACTICAL SET OF INFANT'S CLOTHES.



3100. This Pattern is cut in one size. It comprises a Dress, a Petticoat, a Barrie-coat or Pinning Blanket and a Slipper. Muslin, lawn, cambric, batiste, nainsook and silk are suitable for the Dress. The Petticoat may be of cambric or lawn. The Barrie of flannel or flannelette with band of cambric or muslin. The slipper of kid, satin, suede, felt or elderdown. It will require 2⅝ yards of 36 inch material for the Dress, 1¼ yards of 27 inch material for the Petticoat with 2 yards of embroidery for the ruffle. The Slippers will require ⅝ yard of 18 inch material and the Barrie-coat ⅝ yard of 27 inch material for Band, and 1 yard 40 inches wide for the Skirt.

A pattern of this illustration mailed to any address on receipt of 15c. in silver or stamps.

No. .. ..

Size .. ..

Address in full:—

Name .. ..

.. ..

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NOTE:—Owing to the continual advance in price of paper, wages, etc., we are compelled to advance the price of patterns to 15c. each.