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"Love in the Wilds"

—OR—

The Romance of a South African Trading Station.

CHAPTER XXXVI.
THE UNSOLVED ENIGMA.

As the summer sun generated the shinks of the black velvet curtains and threw the patterns of the lace screens upon the thick Turkey carpet, it showed up the handsome face of the man to advantage. The white forehead was, perhaps, a little more wrinkled, and the mouth a trifle sterner and more impassive than when we first saw them in the smoking-room of the Hermits, but the wrinkles and the hard curve of the lips may have been produced by the things he was gleaning from the note within his hand and not by time and remorse.

"Idiot!" he exclaimed, letting the note fall from his long white hands upon the mass of papers already lying on the desk, rising as he spoke to pace the room. "Idiot! How could they fail? There is some knavery here. The money was sent—a precious five thousand—the arms were delivered. I saw the receipt myself! They should have taken the confounded place or perished. All wasted—wasted!" and he ground his teeth. "Not that I care! Italy is no more than the Cannibal Islands, and the miserable idiots who boast it much less; but—but—what will that white-haired plotter say? And what will she think of the failure of the scheme, upon the success of which I had pledged myself—she, Lucille? Oh, Heaven, that I could free myself from the charms she throws around me! Lucille—beautiful, glorious Lucille! I love thee—I love thee; and must win thee if all the Dale gold, which I



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the remonstrance or refusal which the count seemed to dread, said, quietly: "How much do you require of me this time, my dear count?"

Count Vitzarelli seemed taken aback by the cool tone of submission and, with a certain hesitation, said: "This failure of our scheme has entailed serious expense. Fresh men, fresh arms, money to ransom and free the prisoners, and the other consequent claims, will necessitate an expenditure of fifty thousand, of which ten thousand must be immediately produced."

Reginald Dartmouth's face never changed a muscle. He looked the Italian conspirator in the eyes with the same quiet, meditative expression until he had finished; then he rose and, walking to a small cabinet, unclosed a drawer and took therefrom a small, gilt-bound book.

"Count," he said, reseating himself, with his white fingers between the pages—"Count Vitzarelli, let me ask your attention for a moment while I run over a few facts and figures for your consideration. You ask me for ten thousand pounds. Before I give them let me remind you of your past demand and my past gifts. Three months ago I joined—you need not fear," he broke off, as the count glanced toward the curtain with nervous apprehension. "The room is sound, tight, and no one can hear the slightest murmur. To proceed: three months ago I became a member of the secret society of which you are the illustrious and noble chief."

The count nodded, and, after waiting a moment, Reginald Dartmouth went on, keeping his eyes fixed upon the listener's face: "Your purpose—"

"Buy our, my dear Dartmouth," interposed the count, softly, but with a significant smile.

"Our purpose, then, my dear count, if you prefer it," said Reginald Dartmouth, with a peculiar glitter of his eyes. "Our purpose is the liberation of the Italian states from their present bondage. This purpose is to be attained by legal, illegal, or, indeed, by any means. To this purpose we have consecrated villainy of every kind: forgery, murder—"

"Hush—hush!" exclaimed the count, turning pale and rising, with an alarmed countenance.

Reginald Dartmouth smiled evilly behind the hand raised to stroke his mustache, and in exactly the same tone, and with a malicious twinkle in his keen, eagle eyes, resumed: "Let me assure you, once more, that we are in no danger from eavesdroppers. This room is constructed—at an enormous expense—to be entirely sound-proof. Were an assassin's hand at your throat and your shrieks rose thick and fast from your dying lips, not one of them could penetrate the barrier of these curtains and the subtly contrived walls behind them."

The count shuddered.

"Well, well, my dear captain; but still, may I venture to suggest that some less offensive, less repulsive words—"

"Bah!" retorted Reginald Dartmouth, with a polite smile. "You shall choose your own terms wherewith to designate the poisoning of the Italian ambassador and the stabbing of the dual minister in the ante-chamber of the palace. I call both deeds murder; and let me add, our judges would punish them as such. But, to go on," he continued, after waiting to watch with a fierce enjoyment the fleeting expression of anger and fear his

words had caused upon the count's face: "our purpose is to be advanced by legal or illegal means. We have all pledged ourselves to aid the rebels and unseat the present Italian government. Our money, our talents, our lives, must be vested and spent, if need be, in our sacred cause. All for Italy and freedom!"

The deep sarcasm with which he pronounced the last words brought a flush of crimson to the listener's face and he started to his feet; but before he could give utterance to his indignation or other passions that filled him, the soft voice went on: "I am not an Italian, count, but an Englishman and a man of the world; and, though I can understand your enthusiasm, I can not be expected to share it. Now, you are an Italian, and being such can be satisfied with your patriotism as a reason for such rebellious conspiracy and life-risking. But you are also a man of the world and should know—nay, must know—that I, who am not an Italian, must needs have some other motive than patriotism for spending my money and risking my life."

As he finished the Italian's face went pale and his lips trembled with a commingling of fear and passion.

He had been deceived—he, the clever man of the world, the genius of Italy—by a captain of dragoons. But with a great effort he controlled his passion and with as good an imitation as he could produce of the captain's quiet and easy smile, said: "Grant all you say, my dear Dartmouth, and what follows but to ask you to divulge the motive that prompted you to give us your valuable aid?"

"Valuable aid?" repeated Reginald Dartmouth, thoughtfully. "Yes, yes, count; you may say that truthfully. Let me see"—here he glanced at the book which he had in his hand—"here are set down the sums I have handed to the secret council for the furtherance of their designs. Glance at them, my dear count, and tell me if I am correct in stating the amount at twenty thousand pounds?"

The Italian took the book with trembling fingers and nodded.

"It is a large amount, my dear Dartmouth, I admit."

(To be Continued.)

Fashion Plates.

FOR HOUSE OR PORCH DRESS.

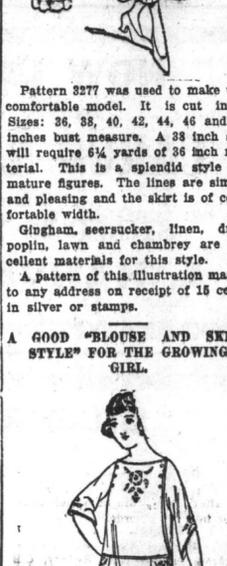


Pattern 3277 was used to make this comfortable model. It is cut in 7 Sizes: 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46 and 48 inches bust measure. A 38 inch size will require 6 1/4 yards of 36 inch material. This is a splendid style for mature figures. The lines are simple and pleasing and the skirt is of comfortable width.

Gingham, seersucker, linen, drill, poplin, lawn and chambray are excellent materials for this style.

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A GOOD "BLOUSE AND SKIRT STYLE" FOR THE GROWING GIRL.



Pattern 3278 is portrayed in this model. It is cut in 4 Sizes: 8, 10, 12 and 14 years. A 12 year size will require 6 yards of 36 inch material for the blouse and skirt of one material. The skirt alone requires 3 yards of 36 inch material.

This will be effective in plaid suiting for the skirt, and pongee for the blouse. Linen, jean, wash silk and chambray are also good for the blouse, while the skirt may be of serge, gabardine or khaki.

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