

"Love in the Wilds"

OR
The Romance of a South African Trading Station.

CHAPTER VII
AT SEA.

The man, a thick, burly fellow, dressed in a loose linen shirt, open at the chest, and a pair of rough-tanned skin breeches, in the middle of which stuck a revolver and a large, formidable-looking bowie knife, paused in his examination of a horse's foot and shook his head.

"What is't, a station?" he asked.

"Yes," said Laurence, seating himself on a block of wood and looking at the horses with a critical eye.

"Well, I guess I don't remember," said the cattle-minder; "but most like one of the niggers will," and picking up a whip which lay on the ground he clacked it.

In an instant, as if by magic, a dozen black fellows started from out-of-the-way holes of cotton, and crowded round.

"Where be Stewart's Corner, Sam?" asked the man, stooping down to the horse's hoof again.

The Hottentot opened his mouth very wide, and then took to staring at Laurence, seemingly forgetting the question as soon as it was asked.

Not hearing him answer, the horse-man looked up and caught him a sharp cut across the bare shoulder.

"Hi! Darn your sleepy head, wake up, will you? Where be Stewart's Corner, you woolly-headed lunatic?"

"Hi, hi!" screamed the Hottentot. "Stewart's Corner am by the Hartbeest River. Un gen'l'man want am go?"

"Yes," said Laurence, interested and amused at the strange race and strange manners. "Yes, I do."

"Well, am go to Massa Stewart's Square in the corner there; and wait 'till Massa Stewart's horses come up from the country."

Laurence did not understand, and looked as if he did not.

"That woolly-headed idiot means that you will have to wait at that rail there," explained the man, pointing to another inclosed space, "until Stewart's man arrives. He's coming up with horses to pick up cattle and men, I suppose, to-day. Eh, Sam?"

"Yip, yip!" said the Hottentot, showing his teeth.

"Thank you," said Laurence. "What's the matter with the horse? Something in the frog?"

"Spect so," said the horse-man. "I can't see as well as I could one time. This blamed climate is enough to roast your eyes completely out some times."

"Let me look," said Laurence, and he knelt down beside him. "Oh, here is the mischief!" he exclaimed, pulling out a small thorn.

"Thank ye, thank ye," said the man, with rough gratitude, and, made more friendly by Laurence's kindness, he pulled out a flask from his belt and held it out with this curt explanation: "Brandy!"

Laurence just wet his lips; as he knew better than to refuse, and bidding him good-day walked over to the other inclosure, the group of slaves following at his heels until a vigorous smack of the whip brought them back to their old places like a pack of Berkshire pigs.

CHAPTER VIII
BUYING THE PAST.

"Then farewell, England, fog-begirted isle! In fairer, softer climes We'll rest ourselves awhile."

Laurence seated himself upon one of the thick blocks of wood, prepared to wait the arrival of Mr. Stewart's man.

He had not long to wait. Before he was half tired of watching the odd groups of people that passed him—stout, well-to-do colonials, rough, skin-clad, revolver-wearing cattle-runners, and gangs of Hottentots and slaves—a cloud of dust in the distance attracted his attention, and, watching it until it resolved itself into a long string of splendid and valuable horses, he was agreeably surprised to find the horse-man at their head pull up his steed at the foot of the inclosure.

Instantly half a dozen Hottentot slaves leaped from the horses in the rear and, joined by their lounging brethren, clustered round their chief, waiting for orders.

Twisting the long thong of his whip round the handle, this individual gave some commands to one of the negroes and then turned to look at Laurence with a look of inquiry.

"I was directed to wait here for Mr. Stewart's man," he said, in answer to the glance.

"I'm one o' Stewart's runners," replied the man, jerking up his trousers and glancing at the well-built form and broad, bronzed chest of the speaker with critical eye. "What might you want?"

"I want to see Mr. Stewart," said Laurence.

"Oh!" said the runner. "Well, the station is six days' trot from here. I'm up here to get the mails and pick up some men. I go back to-morrow, though, and you can come along an' so be ye likes."

Laurence accepted the offer with thanks.

"What time shall I be here?" he asked.

"We start at sunrise," said the runner, then added, roughly, "P'raps you've just come off board?"

"I have," said Laurence.

"Oh, you'd better come along o' me!" rejoined the runner. "You're a stranger in these parts, and mayn't be up to the ways. If you like to share with me to-night, I can take you to a comfortable sup and a shakedown in some hay."

This offer Laurence accepted gratefully, and, after seeing the horses led away to a lot of hay thrown down some little distance off, the runner, accompanied by Laurence, went on to the quay.

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Having found no men to suit his taste, he repaired thence to a small public house, half cottage, half hut, and, as he had promised, shared his supper and hay with Laurence.

At sunrise he was awakened by the barking of countless dogs, the clacking of the long whips, and the chattering of the Hottentots.

Hastily washing himself at a small stream, he hurried to the inclosure and found his friend, the runner, already whipping marshaling his cortege and whipping down the exuberant spirits of his black followers.

It was a splendid sight, that long line of handsome animals prancing and pawing the ground, throwing up their shining heads and shaking their flowing manes.

Laurence's heart for the first time for a long while stirred within him, and he longed to leap on the back of one of them and gallop away—anywhere from the bitter past and his own sad thoughts.

"Hello!" said the runner. "Wondered where you'd got to. We're ready, you see. Here, Tim, bring the black round," and he pointed to a tall, powerful-looking horse at that moment on its hind legs.

"Can you ride?"

"Yes," said Laurence.

"Well, here's a critter as can carry you," said the runner, throwing a thick rug across its back.

Laurence sprang across it and grasped the bridle with a flash of delight.

It did not last a second, but the runner noticed it and nodded approval. "All right," he muttered; "you'll do."

Then there ensued a terrific din: shouting, yelling, barking, whips cracking, and at the last moment the six Hottentots leaped on their horses and the cavalcade started.

Unencumbered by heavy saddles, of splendid breed, and used to running swiftly for long and weary distances, the horses seemed to fly.

Cape Town was quickly left behind, an open plateau reached, and then a dense wood with but a small path cut clear for the Indian file which the horses instantly and without any instructions formed.

Here the most glowing vegetation, the most beautiful and vivid perfumes, and, above all, the most delicious bird-

melody he had ever heard greeted Laurence.

He was delighted. It seemed fairy-land. His companion, riding on in front, took the scenery and its delights as a matter of course, and Laurence caught himself wondering at his indifference. He little thought how soon he likewise would view the loveliest of nature's handiwork with indifferent carelessness.

At eight they left the forest and pulled up at the foot of some rocks.

Here the slaves lighted a fire and set to work cooking some deer steaks, the runner standing by with his long whip under his arm and viewing the operations with the air of a prince.

Laurence leaned against his horse and gazed round him and upon the group beneath his eyes with the most acute interest.

From his reverie he was awakened by the runner, who clapped him on the back and invited him to sup.

Nothing loath, Laurence threw himself down on the soft, springy grass and ate his share of the juicy steak with relish; then, declining the draught of brandy which the friendly runner offered him, he rose and lent a hand at securing the horses for the night, which was done by tying the bridles to small pickets driven firmly into the ground.

Then, as the moon rose above the trees, he curled himself up in his rug beside the fire and listened to the snoring of his companion.

He could not sleep himself, for his brain was too busy. At this period he seemed to need more than a double quantity of brain and a double pair of eyes to see and understand all the wondrous sights of this new and strange land.

Looking round at the dusky outlines of horses and Hottentots, at the grand range hill, listening to the swift whir of the deer as they fled through the forest, and the sharp cry of the wolves, he could scarcely believe he was awake, scarcely refrain from assuring himself that it was all a dream, and so, puzzled and confused, but with a sad, weary heart still, he fell asleep.

On the morrow, at sunrise, after a breakfast that was but a repetition of the last night's supper, they were on the gallop again.

(To be continued.)

Fashion Plates.



A Dainty Frock for Mother's Glee.

Pattern 3123, cut in 4 sizes: 4, 6, 8 and 10 years, was used for the model here shown. White batiste with lace and insertion, or linen with embroidery would be effective. Silk, crepe, taffeta, satin, voile and poplin are also attractive for this style. It will require 4 yards of 27 inch material for a 10 year size. The sleeve may be finished in wrist or elbow length.

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



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2921—This model will make a very pretty dress for "best" or party wear. One could use batiste, lawn, mull, organdie, cashmere, taffeta, or a combination of silk and velvet. The overblouse or jumper could be of contrasting material.

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