

"Love in the Wilds"

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

CHAPTER VIII.
BUYING THE PAST.

At first the country was more open, but soon it became rockier, and at last, towards evening, the dark outline of another forest appeared in view.

"That there is the Black Forest," said the runner. "We shall have to skirt a little for deer—those rascals have run short, they tell me. If you've a mind to try your luck with a hundred-yarder, p'raps you'll come along."

Laurence accepted eagerly, but said, with regret, that he had no gun.

"Here, Tim, bring the hundred-yards," said the runner, and a little Hottentot boy galloped up with a gun which the runner handed to Laurence.

"We allers bring a good supply," he said, passing him some ammunition, "for we don't know as we sha'n't want it."

Laurence thanked him, and, following his directions, paired off with two of the elder natives, going toward the east, while the runner bore to the west.

As they entered the forest the natives tied the three horses to a tree and, carefully noting the place, crept along, with Laurence at their heels, examining the ground at every foot.

Presently the foremost one held up his hand and then fell flat upon the ground.

Scarcely had Laurence time to follow his example—the other native dropped at the same moment—when a peculiar crackling of the branches and underbrush was heard and suddenly, like the vision of a fancy, a herd of antelopes came flitting through the deep glade.

With the quickness of lightning he raised his gun and marked the foremost one. There was a sharp crash, echoed all round the vast wood, and the graceful beast gave a leap in the air.

Laurence was about to spring forward, but the natives held him back, whispering:

"Sh, 'sh, massa! Him not dead enough. Him rip massa up—him rip massa up. Massa go to him d'rectly."

Laurence waited a few minutes, that seemed ages, and then, with his knife ready in his hand, ran to the fallen game. He was dead, but to make certainty doubly sure he plunged the knife in the noble neck, and then, assisted by the natives, carried the prize to the open.

There they found the runner with a fine buck, which he had shot, and slinging the two across two of the spare horses, they went on their way.

The runner seemed rather surprised at Laurence's good fortune, and evidently thought more kindly of him, for he grew somewhat more talkative and inquisitive.

When they alighted in a clear space, after having ridden thirty miles, and the natives had set about preparing dinner, the runner stooped to examine the antelope which Laurence had shot,

and said, curtly: "That's a good shot."

"I'm glad you think so," said Laurence.

"And you can ride, too," said the runner. "What might be your name?"

"Laurence Harman," was the reply.

"Oh," said the runner, "one of 'em ul do for us fellows! L-or-ence—how do you spell it?"

Laurence spelled it for him.

"Ah," said the runner, "it's a gim-crack name! But you can't help that, can yer? A chap doesn't give himself his own name, more's the pity sometimes. My name's Jack. Long Jack I'm called; that's short if it ain't sweet."

Laurence nodded.

"It's both," he said, "and a better one than mine, which you can alter for any other you like."

"Thankee," said the man. "Maybe I shall. Now, then, you rascals"—addressing the natives, and eliciting a chorus of "Yes, massa"—"where's the grub?"

The steaks were soon done, and proved very acceptable. Laurence enjoyed his portion none the less for having earned it.

After dinner the runner, Jack, offered his pipe to Laurence, but he refused to deprive him of it, and Jack, taking the refusal in good part, smoked it himself, eyeing Laurence with an increased interest, for a man who could refuse a pipe was a curious piece of humanity in his eyes.

On they went, as before, until night-fall, when, instead of one camp-fire, half a dozen were formed in a circle round horses and men.

Laurence did not need long to ponder over the why and wherefore of this, for, as the darkness grew, the stillness of the night was broken by the roar of the tiger and the laughing of the hyena. As he grasped his gun, with a thrill of excitement, he thought: "I am at last on real hunting ground."

Toward the close of the sixth day the cavalcade approached its destination.

The towering hills and thick forests gave place to miles of springy, emerald pasture, upon whose soft, velvety bosom grew a wealth of many-colored flowers, here and there bent down by the tread of many herds of cattle and the wheels of the heavy wagons.

Laurence noticed all these appearances attentively.

"We are near home now," said the runner, looking to see if his company was in proper order. "Away, my boys!" and, with a deep-sounding crack of his long whip, he urged the horses on a flying pace.

Soon the tracks on the grass grew thicker and more frequent, and presently the station came in sight.

Laurence uttered an exclamation of delight, for before him lay an earthly paradise—green grass, bright flowers,

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studded by cattle, horses, and sheep in thousands, backed by a distant range of tree-covered hills, and, like a small scrap of canvas cut from an artist's picture, a picturesque farmhouse, built of wood and rough white stone, rearing its head in the middle of the plain, and sheltered by a group of noble trees.

At its side a silver, bubbling brook; around it rose majestic hayricks, and everywhere horses and cattle were to be seen—the wealth of the squatter.

At the sound of the horses' hoofs, pattering over the rough, beaten road, a small crowd of Hottentots ran, shouting, to meet them, followed more leisurely by half a dozen men, runners, built and dressed on the order of Jack.

Laurence looked round with deep and heart-swelling emotions.

"This is Paradise!" he exclaimed. "It be Stewart's Corner," grinned Jack, and, with a final crack of his whip, he leaped to the ground before the door of the homestead, the natives rushing at each other with questions and welcome, and hastily unfastening the horses and heading them off.

Laurence, still looking round him, dismounted.

"Where's the gov'nor?" asked Jack of one of the men.

"Here I am!" exclaimed a voice which Laurence recognized at once, and the owner of the station stepped out of the house.

He started with astonishment as he saw Laurence.

"By the living Jingo, young sir," he exclaimed, "I did not expect to see you so soon!"

"I trust I am none the less welcome on that account," said Laurence, with his grave smile.

"Not a bit—not a bit. More, more!" retorted the settler, shaking hands. "Here, come aside, will you?" he added, as the group of men were staring with curious eyes and listening with all their ears.

Laurence followed him into a large, plain room, with great beams across the high ceiling, and furnished with rough, strong deal tables and chairs.

There was an exquisite perfume pervading the place, which was wafted in through the open windows from the flowers that shone and glittered in such profusion without.

The settler pointed to a chair and, throwing his hat upon the table, reached a large, black bottle from the cupboard.

"First of all, let me do the hospitable," he said. "There man, drink to

the new land and the new life!"

And, setting the example, he lifted one of the horn cups, which he had filled, to his lips with a cheery smile.

Laurence, with a grave smile, wet his lips and put his cup down.

"Now let us hear all about it," said Mr. Stewart. "Here, have a cigar," and he handed one.

Laurence lighted it and, feeling more at ease at the first puff, said:

"Mr. Stewart, I did not think when I listened to your description of your station that I should so soon visit it."

And the poor fellow sighed.

"Well," said the settler, with a meaning smile, "I did."

"You did?" repeated Laurence, with his swift frown. "Why?"

"Well, no matter," replied the settler. "Here you are, you see, Mr. Darrell."

Laurence Harman lifted his head quickly, with a sudden flush.

"Not that name, please," he said.

"If I remain here, and I came here with the intention of asking you to give me employment, you must promise me to forget, as entirely as I do, that there is such a place as the Dale, or that such a person as Hugh Darrell"—he faltered at the name, but went on, almost sternly—"ever existed."

Mr. Stewart held out his hand.

"That's a bargain," he said. "Mr.—" "Laurence Harman, without the 'Mr.', please," said Laurence, firmly.

"I have left the Dale and the old name for good, and, with your permission, will not trade upon the past. I am, here and elsewhere, plain Laurence Harman, cattle-runner, herdsman, what you will," and he shook his head with a somewhat bitter laugh.

"Very well, Laurence," said the settler, who could guess at what had occurred between the fiery squire and his son, and was inwardly blessing the bad temper of the one and the wilfulness of the other for sending such a fine, stalwart servant.

"Very well, it's a bargain, as I said before. We'll forget the past and go in for the future, and that's not such a bad exchange as you might think, Laurence."

"I care not, bad or good," replied Laurence, indifferently. "Give me enough to eat, and plenty of hard work to keep memory at bay, and I shall not complain. Nay, I will even be grateful."

(To be continued.)

Celery tops can be used in soups. Keep the stove shut up when not in use.

Fashion Plates.



A Dainty Frock for Mother's Girl.

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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