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## "Love in the Wilds"

—OR—

### The Romance of a South African Trading Station.

CHAPTER XIV.

**A FATHER'S BLESSING.**

Grace strained her ears and started back with a suppressed cry of horror. What was it she had heard?

Hugh—the dead Hugh—had brought it on his own head! What had he brought? Not death—oh, no, merciful Heaven, it could not be! The squire—Uncle Harry—had not killed his own son!

Frozen with the horror of the thought she remained white and cold, and strained her ear to catch more of the broken tones.

"He brought it on himself, Reg; brought it on himself. It wasn't a hard thing, may, it was for his own good. I meant it for his good, and he knew it. Was it a great thing to ask him to marry a good, honest girl, worth her weight in gold and ready, ay, more than ready, to love him with all her honest heart?"

His voice had grown louder, but at the last words sank again.

"No, he wouldn't. He gave me 'No' on my face, and called me—'villain!'"

The captain muttered something; still the old man took no notice.

"He seemed communing with himself rather than addressing the other."

"The Dale couldn't hold us both after that, Reg, and—and—well—well, it's past and gone forever, and there's no—no—good in crying over spilled milk. And so you're going up to London, Reginald Dartmouth, eh? You'd better stay down here, I'm thinking."

"Sir?" said the captain.

The squire turned his face to him—it was a wrinkled, weary, care-worn face—and it was rendered more worn still by the half-expressed look of doubt it wore at this moment.

"You'd better stay down here at the Dale, I said," he repeated. "You're fond of the place, you said, didn't you, eh?"

"I am—too fond of it," murmured the captain.

"You're fond of it, and the men are getting to take your word and mind ye. And, Reg, I'm an old man, an old man. Heaven knows how long it will be before the parson will have his last say over these old bones. I'm feeling tired—tired and worried with it all. And there's Grace. She's rough and wild, unfedged and awkward as for even a greater kindness than you a young thistle, Reg; what's to be—"

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**J. COCKER.**



ask you to give your consent to my wooing Grace. Uncle Darroll, you must have seen that we were more than friends; you must have seen the dear girl was everything to me; and therefore, I will not distress you by a string of lovers' explanations. I love her, sir, and I feel I could not be happy without her. Nay, more: I feel that I could not, in honor, stay longer at the Dale without getting my fate—for it is my fate—decided."

The squire kept his eyes fixed on the red-hot coals, but his face was working with some emotion, and there was an eager light in his eyes that told how greedily this subtle move pleased him.

Here were all his fears laid at rest. Grace married to Reginald Dartmouth the Dale would be in no danger of falling into a fortune-hunter's claws; the old, well-beloved home would remain in the family.

At that moment half the pain Hugh's absence had laid upon his heart had lifted.

He turned his face and held out his hand.

"Heaven bless you, Reg! Take her; she's only a girl—a rough, giddy young girl—but she's a Darrell, every inch of her; and she'll make you a good wife."

Grace heard the outburst of well-bred gratitude that flowed from the captain's lips indistinctly and in one blurred mass of sound.

She leaped from the cupboard and clutched the old carved bedpost like a stag driven to bay.

Was she dreaming or mad? Could it be possible that her uncle had given her to that smooth-faced, bad, wicked man?

Could it be possible? Ay, more than possible; for had she not heard him, with her own ears, declare that he had killed his own son? Ay, and for as light a cause as his refusal to marry where his father, the same old man, had bidden him?

Poor Grace! With white face and staring eyes she pondered over this slowly and in fragments, and then threw herself down upon her knees and grasped the bed-clothes with her two small hands, hiding her poor, tearful face against the bed.

For five minutes she remained thus; then she rose and sprang to the glass. It gave back a white face still, but not a terror-stricken one.

The fear had left it, and only the Darrell grimness, obstinacy, and determination remained.

In those few moments she had girded herself up for an effort—an effort for freedom.

Before she would be handed over, body and soul, to Reginald Dartmouth she would die, that was settled as firm as a rock within her breast; but there was a chance to be taken before things came to that pass, and that chance was—flight.

Hastily wrapping her cloak round her and tying on her hat, she took a little box that had belonged to her mother, and thrusting into it all the money she possessed—only a few pounds—and all the trinkets the squire had given her, she put it in her pocket, and then, with cautious step, stole to the door.

They were still talking, the wicked men, and her eyes flashed fire as she glanced at the door.

Should she go now? No one had seen her come in. They fancied her still at the Warren. Yes, she would chance it; and plucking up all the courage her by no means faint heart possessed she sped with the lightness and silence of a mouse down the huge, polished stairs and out of the house.

Now, Laurence Harman, if, sleeping or waking, you feel a sudden start within your heart's pulse, keep all your senses on the alert, for as one blind gropes in the dark with hands outstretched, so has fate started in the winding maze of life to seek thee.

CHAPTER XV.

**UNDER FOREIGN SKINS.**

The loss of wealth is loss of dirt, as sages in all times assert. Give me of health and with a flow, And freely let the money go.—SIR H. WARTON.

Eventide at Algos Bay.

An English ship was just in. The quay was crowded with shippers, sailors, negroes, and colonists.

Here, chattering like magpies, a gang of slaves rushed to and fro with baskets of cotton, fruit, and merchandise; there a tall, sun-burned looking settler bartered his corn for farming implements just landed, and elsewhere and everywhere the motley crowd hurried backward and forward,

chattered, shouted, and bought and sold with the greatest ardor.

On the gangway, which had been wheeled from the landing place to one of the large lading boats, stood the captain of the newly-arrived ship surrounded by a few sailors, to whom he was paying their wages. At his elbow stood a slimly-built youth, dressed in semi-nautical clothes and looking round him with wondering and particularly bright and beautiful eyes.

His complexion was startlingly clear for a man, and would have been almost feminine were it not that it was of a dark shade and was rendered apparently darker by the heavy eye-brows that nearly met on the clear forehead.

He stood gazing round him and waiting patiently until the captain was disengaged.

Then, when the last sailor had rolled off to spend his money in red Cape wine and fery brandy, the youth turned and asked a question—a question that, seemingly, considerably puzzled the captain, for he scratched his head and pulled his chin and went through the usual antics of his class when they are puzzled and nonplused.

While he was considering thus, the youth still standing and waiting patiently, a cloud of dust rose in the distance, the slaves set up a shout, the colonists stopped their bargaining for a moment, and everybody turned his head to see what was coming.

The cloud of dust grew denser and heavier, and presently the crowd on the quay parted and scampered out of the way to admit a cavalcade of ten Cape horses, five of them ridden by slaves, four unsaddled, and the tenth bestriden by a magnificently built man clad in the orthodox runner dress and sweeping down upon the quay at the head of his cortege with the air and bearing of a prince.

His face was handsome, tanned by the sun and marked by a stern and reserved expression that distinguished it from the weary or sharp look of the colonist, as a thoroughbred is singled out from a ruck of cart horses.

"Ha, ha! Massa Wild Laury!" grinned the negroes, leaving their bundles and rushing up to hold the bridle and cluster at a respectful distance from the horse's head.

Three or four of the traders nodded to the horseman, several taking off their hats, with a half friendly, half respectful greeting.

With a reserved, cold nod to the whole he waved the negroes aside and rode up to the gangway, his black retainers clustering together in a heap at the back and chattering with their brethren on foot.

The captain nodded eagerly and stepped forward. He had forgotten the youth for a moment in the prospect of trading.

"Good-morning, he said. "Mr. Stewart's man?" he added, conciliatingly. "I am," was the curt reply. "Have you iron on board?"

"Tools?" asked the captain, with a smile.

"Yes," was the reply.

(To be continued.)

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

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3237

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