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**"Love in the Wilds"**

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

CHAPTER VIII  
 BURYING THE PAST.

"Ah, you're down in the mouth," said the settler, patting him on the back, "and looking through green spectacles. Wait a week or two, and we shall have you as light-hearted as the rest."

Laurence smiled quietly. "I'll not give you cause to call me kill-joy," he said; "trust me."

"I will far more than that," said the settler. "And now come upstairs with me."

Laurence followed up the rough, huge stairs, and into a small room planked round with deal and filled with guns, rifles, pistols, revolvers, saddles, other kinds of harness, ammunition—in fact, an odd medley of weapons of the chase and their accompaniments.

"This I call my armory," said the settler, with a laugh of pride. "Look round and take your pick of the long uns."

"Thanks," said Laurence, "but I have already a gun, which Jack, the runner, lent, or I might say gave me."

"Oh, that be hanged for an old thing!" retorted Mr. Stewart. "Look here; here's some I brought over from England. By the way, we had a deuce of a rough passage, how did you fare?"

"We had stormy weather," replied Laurence, smiling; but he said nothing of his heroic rescue of the man overboard.

"Ah!" said Mr. Stewart. "Well, look here, what do you think of this?" and he took down a good-looking rifle.

"If that is for me I have only one fault to find," said Laurence, gravely, "and that is that it is too good and expensive. I have only a few shillings in the world."

"Bah, man!" exclaimed Mr. Stewart.

"We find workmen their tools, not charge 'em for 'em. If that will suit, take it—and this," handing him a revolver. "Here's a knife, too, a bowie, which you'll find useful enough before long. I dare say. As for the powder and shot, et cetera, here it is always ready at your hand."

Laurence thanked him.

"And now for the mounts," continued Mr. Stewart, locking the door behind them and running down-stairs.

"Have you seen anything you fancy among the cattle?"

"I could desire nothing better than the black fellow I rode here on," said Laurence, who had taken a fancy to him on account of his fire and spirit.

"Oh, Jack gave you Black Hawk, did he?" laughed the settler. "Well, I suppose he wanted to try you. Oh yes, you can have him and welcome, for most of our fellows, though no muffs on an animal, fight rather shy of that beast!"

"I found him quiet enough after a little while," said Laurence.

"He's yours then," said Mr. Stewart; "and now I think I smell supper. By the way, I'll give you a regular rig-out in place of that sailor toggery if you will come into this room."

And he supplied Laurence with a thick pair of tanned-leather breeches, a coarse, strong-looking shirt, and a broad-brimmed felt hat—all new and after the pattern of the other runners.

Just as they were entering the long room, from which a most savory smell was wafted, he stopped and said:

"You haven't asked about the—the wages yet?"

Laurence colored. The word brought home to him for the first time the reality of his changed position.

"Wages!" he replied. "Give me plenty of work and something to eat, and I shall feel myself heavily in your debt."

"Bah!" said the settler, touched by his tone of sincere gratitude. "I should be a knave if I took you at your word. We'll talk the matter over after supper. Come along."

Laurence asked him to let him change his nautical costume for the clothes he had just received, and Mr. Stewart told him to go into the room and do so.

In a few minutes—for it did not take many to slip on the rough stockings, shirt, and trousers, nor to fill the heavy-belted belt with the revolver and bowie knife—Laurence entered the dining-room.

The long table was groaning beneath the weight of huge dishes of roast antelope meat, and beef, and a tankard of water—of course, there was no beer—glittered at intervals.

There were no knives and forks, each man sitting with his bowie knife in hand, and the plates were made of wood and horn, china proving too delicate and fragile for the rough, strong hands that used them.

A score of Hottentot slaves were handing round the plates piled up with meat, which three women, all old and ugly, were cutting as if for their lives.

Three men looked up as Laurence entered and scanned his huge, Non-like figure approvingly.

These men worshiped strength; here it was in all its glory.

Three or four of them "made room" for him, and Laurence, with a kindly "Thank you," dropped into one of the seats beside Jack.

All there seemed equal, and it would have been difficult to detect from their manner that they were the hired servants of one man, for he was dressed as they were, and addressed them and was addressed by them with easy familiarity. Yet every man there knew that the sturdy settler would be obeyed, and also that he would be obeyed at all cost. There were some of them who could recollect a certain scene between a refractory, insubordinate runner, which had ended in a swift bullet and a short shift, and they knew with all Mr. Stewart's easy, good-natured way he was quite ready to give another bullet to the man who dared set him at defiance. It was a severe, merciless law, but it was the only one capable of being applied in that out-of-the-way African cattle station, and the men acknowledged and respected it.

They were a silent, rough, yet not brutal, set of men.

When he spoke it was to the purpose, but they eschewed all chat and gossip.

This taciturnity accorded with Laurence's frame of mind very well indeed, and he finished his supper with as little talk as they. After supper every man wiped his bowie knife on the sleeve of his shirt, stuck it in his belt, and took out his pipe.

Laurence accepted a pipe from Jack, and with the rest of the men strolled out onto the prairie.

Here he made the acquaintance of several of the runners—Black Will, Red Ned, and Andy—and learned from them that a gang of runners were expected in that night, and that on their arrival the gang now at home would mount and ride away.

"You hunt up the cattle and drive them home?" asked Laurence.

"Yes," said Andy.

"Are there any more stations than this?"

"Not for two hundred miles," said the runner. "There's one or two out-stations belonging to us, small huts for one to sleep in at night—they're about thirty or forty miles apart, in a sort of circle like. We shall beat up toward one to-morrow most like. You'd best stick close to me for a turn or two in case you should get lost."

Laurence agreed to this, and asked him a few more questions, which he or one of the others answered readily.

While they were talking there came a sudden, indistinct sort of sound, like the hum of a far-off multitude.

"There they be," said Jack. "Hi, hi!"

This called the slaves to hand, and the men, followed by them, sprang upon their horses, and forming a semicircle—Laurence in the middle—flew like the wind toward the sound.

In five minutes an enormous multitude of cattle, sturdy men, and buffaloes came in sight, driven by the runners, who were covered with dust and looked as if they had ridden far.

The semicircle broke and, maneuvering with skillfulness, drove the herd into the open, then turned to welcome, with a kindly grunt, the wearied new-comers.

All night various herds came in. Laurence raised his head from his bed of hay several times, and lay to listen to the dull roar of their feet and the hoarse "Hi, hi!" of the negroes.

So ended his first night as a cattle-runner.

A week later and who would have recognized in the stalwart horseman flying over the plain, with his bare, browned chest exposed to the sun and his luxuriant hair flowing in a silken mass on his neck, the heir to Dale?

It was a wonderful change; and yet scarcely a change so much as a completion, a perfecting of the strong, graceful, youthful form.

The sea-trip and the glorious life he was living had put the finishing touch to Laurence and made him the very pattern of nature's greatest work—a man.

See him as he bends—as supple and graceful as the horse—and shades his eagle eyes with the strong, well-formed hand, to scan the horizon. See the grace with which by a bend of his steel-like finger he turns the flying horse to the right and, with compressed lips, makes for the tiny spot which his keen, practical eyes have detected in the far horizon. See him again as the cattle are speeding in a massive column before his long whip, the odor and the brightness of the flowers beneath his horse's hoofs, the bright blue sky above his head, the light, joyous air filling him with strength and health, and hear him exclaim: "Ah, this is life, freedom, happiness!"

Yet see him once more as the moonlight falls through the open door of the solitary hut, forty miles from human ken, and rests his noble form, lying motionless upon the tiger-skin he has torn from a beast of his own slaying, and as you watch the weary light in his large, sad eyes, as you see the tired drooping of his lips, acknowledge that even here, where all is beautiful and life is one long hunting day, there is not happiness.

Yes, the weary yet sleepless eyes of the lonely cattle-runner are looking past the dim forest outline, past the looming range of hills, past the deep stretch of ocean, and gazing at a small country village far, far away.

Patience, Laurence, patience! The time is drawing nigh when the desolate, despairing heart you carry within your bosom shall leap into life with a new sensation, with a new hope, with a new passion—love! For even now in that far-away village the ingredients of the magic elixir are seething and bubbling in the cauldron of fate.

(To be continued.)

**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.

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