

THE STORY OF AN AFRICAN FARM

BY OLIVE SCHREINER

A TALE OF LIFE IN THE BOER REPUBLIC.

(Continued from last week.)

"At last they turned to go, and I walked after them. When they got out of the gate, he helped the ladies into a phaeton and stood for a moment with his foot on the step, talking to them. He had a little cane in his hand, and an Italian greyhound ran after him. Just when they drove away one of the ladies dropped her whip.

"Pick it up, fellow," she said, and when I brought it to her she threw sixpence on the ground. I might have gone back to the garden then. But I did not want music. I wanted clothes and to be fashionable and fine. I felt that my hands were coarse and that I was vulgar. I never tried to see him again. I staid in my situation four months after that, but I was not happy. I had no rest. The people about me pressed on me and made me dissatisfied. I could not forget them.

"Only one day something made me happy. A nurse came to the store with a little girl belonging to one of our clerks. While the maid went into the office to give a message to its father the little child stood looking at me. Presently she came close to me and peeped up into my face.

"Nice curia, pretty curia," she said. "I like curia."

"She felt my hair all over with her little hands. When I put out my arm, she let me take her and sit her on my knee. She kissed me with her soft mouth. We were happy till the nurse-girl came and shook her and asked her if she was not ashamed to sit on the knee of that strange man. But I do not think my little one minded. She laughed at me as she went out.

"If the world was all children, I could like it, but men and women draw me so strangely and then press me away till I am in agony. I was not meant to live among people. Perhaps some day, when I am grown older, I will be able to go and live among them and look at them, as I look at the rocks and bushes, without letting them disturb me and take myself from me, but not now. So I grew miserable. A kind of fever seemed to eat me. I could not rest or read or think, so I came back here. I knew you were not here, but it seemed as though I should be nearer you, and it is you I want, you that the other people suggest to me, but cannot give."

"It has been a delightful journey, this journey home. I have walked on foot. The evening before last, when it was just sunset, I was a little footsore and thirsty and went out of the road to look for water. I went down into a deep little 'kloof.' Some trees ran along the bottom, and I thought I should find water there. The sun had quite set when I got to the bottom of it. It was very still. Not a leaf was stirring anywhere. In the bed of the mountain torrent I thought I might find water. I came to the bank and leaped down into the dry bed. The floor on which I stood was of fine white sand, and the banks rose on every side like the walls of a room. Above there was a precipice of rocks, and a tiny stream of water oozed from them and fell slowly on to the flat stone below. Each drop could hear fall like a little bell. There was one among the trees that stood out out against the white sky. All the other trees were silent, but this one shook and trembled against the sky. Everything else was still, but those leaves were quivering, quivering. I stood on

the sand. I could not go away. When it was quite dark and the stars had come, I crept out. Does it seem strange to you that it should have made me so happy? It is because I cannot tell you how near I felt to things that we cannot see, but we always feel. To-night has been a wild, stormy night. I have been walking across the plain for hours in the dark. I like the wind, because I have seemed forcing my way through to you. I knew you were not here, but I would hear of you. When I used to sit on the transport wagon half sleeping, I used to start awake because your hands were on me. In my lodgings many nights I have blown the light out and sat in the dark that I might see your face start out more distinctly. Sometimes it was the little girl's face who used to come to me behind the 'kopje' when I minded sheep and sit by me in her blue pinafore. Sometimes it was the elder. I love both. I am very helpless. I shall never do anything, but you will work, and I will take your work for mine. Sometimes such a sudden gladness seizes me when I remember that somewhere in the world you are living and working. You are my very own. Nothing else is my own so. When I have finished, I am going to look at your room door."

He wrote, and the wind, which had spent its fury, moaned round and round the house, most like a tired child weary with crying.

Eu woke up and sat before the fire, rubbing her eyes and listening as it sobbed about the gables and wandered away over the long stone walls.

"You have many letters to write," she said.

"No," he answered. "It is only one to Lyndall."

She turned away and stood long before the fire looking into it. If you have a deadly fruit to give, it will not grow sweeter by keeping.

"Waldo, dear," she said, putting her hand on his, "leave off writing."

He threw back the dark hair from his forehead and looked at her.

CHAPTER XXV. GREGORY'S WOMANHOOD.

Slowly over the fat came a cart. On the back seat sat Gregory, his arms folded, his hat drawn over his eyes. A Kafir boy sat on the front seat driving, and at his feet sat Does, who now and again lifted his nose and eyes above the level of the splash board to look at the surrounding country and then, with an exceedingly knowing wink of his left eye, turned to his companions, thereby intimating that he clearly perceived his whereabouts. No one noticed the cart coming. Waldo, who was at work at his carpenter's table in the wagon house, saw nothing till, chancing to look down, he perceived Does standing before him, the legs trembling, the little nose wrinkled and a series of short, suffocating barks giving utterance to his joy at reunion.

Em, whose eyes had ached with looking out across the plain, was now at work in a back room and knew nothing till, looking up, she saw Gregory, with his straw hat and blue eyes, standing in the doorway. He greeted her quietly, hung his hat up in its old place behind the door, and for any change in

his manner or appearance he might have been gone only the day before to fetch letters from the town. Only his beard was gone, and his face was grown thinner. He took off his leather gaiters, and the afternoon was hot and the roads dusty and asked for some tea. They talked of wool and the cattle and the sheep, and Em gave him the pile of letters that had come for him during the months of absence, but of the thing that lay at their hearts neither said anything. Then he went out to look at the kraals, and at supper Em gave him hot cakes and coffee. They talked about the servants and then ate their meal in quiet.

She came and sat on a footstool near him.

"Do you wish to hear anything?" he asked.

She whispered, "Yes, if it does not hurt you."

Yet he lay quiet for a long time. The light through the open door showed him to her, where he lay, with his arm thrown across his eyes. At last he spoke. Perhaps it was a relief to him to speak.

To Bloemfontein, in the Free State, to which through an agent he had traced them, Gregory had gone. At the hotel where Lyndall and her stranger had staid he put up. He was shown the very room in which they had slept. The colored boy who had driven them to the next town told him in which house they had boarded, and Gregory went on. In that town he found they had left the cart and bought a spider and four grays, and Gregory's heart rejoiced. Now, indeed, it would be easy to trace their course, and he turned his steps northward.

At one desolate farm the Boer had a good deal to tell. The lady had said she liked a wagon that stood before the door. Without asking the price the Englishman had offered £150 for the old thing and bought open worth £10 for £16. The Dutchman chuckled, for he had the "Salt-reim's" money in the box under his bed. Gregory laughed, too, in silence. He could not lose sight of them now, so slowly they would have to move with that cumbersome wagon. Yet when that evening came and he reached a little wayside inn no one could tell him anything of the travelers.

The master, a surly creature, half stupid with Boer brandy, sat on the bench before the door smoking. Gregory sat beside him, questioning, but he smoked on. He remembered nothing of such strangers. How should he know who had been there months and months before? He smoked on. Gregory, very weary, tried to awake his memory; said that the lady he was seeking for was very beautiful, had a little mouth and tiny, very tiny feet. The man only smoked on as sullenly as at first. What were little, very little, mouths and feet to him? But his daughter leaned out in the window above. She was dirty and lazy and liked to loll there when travelers came to hear the men talk, but she had a soft heart. Presently a hand came out of the window, and a pair of velvet slippers touched his shoulder, tiny slippers with black flowers. He pulled them out of her hand. Only one woman's feet had worn them; he knew that.

"Left here last summer by a lady," said the girl, "might be the one you are looking for; never saw any feet so small."

They might have come in a wagon and spider; she could not tell. But the gentleman was very handsome, tall, lovely figure, blue eyes, wore gloves always when he went out; an English officer, perhaps; no Afrikaner, certainly.

Gregory stopped her.

The lady? Well, she was pretty, rather, the girl said; very cold, dull air, silent. They staid for, it might be, five days; slept in the wing over against the "stoep;" quarreled sometimes, she thought—the lady. She had seen everything when she went in to wait. One day the gentleman touched her hair. She drew back from him as though his fingers poisoned her; went to the other end of the room if he came to sit near her; walked out alone; cold wife for such a handsome husband, the girl thought. She evidently pitied him, he was such a beautiful man. They went away early one morning, how or in which way the girl could not tell.

Gregory inquired of the servants, but nothing more was to be learned, so the next morning he saddled his horse and went on. At the farms he came to the good old "ooms" and "tantes" asked him to have coffee, and the little shoeless children peeped out at the stranger from behind ovens and gables, but no one had seen what he asked for. This way and that he rode to pick up the thread he had dropped, but the spider and the wagon, the little lady and the handsome gentleman, no one had seen. In the towns he fared yet worse.

Once indeed hope came to him. On the "stoep" of a hotel at which he staid the night in a certain little village there walked a gentleman, grave and kindly looking. It was not hard to open conversation with him about the weather, and then— Had he ever seen such and such people, a gentleman and lady, a spider and wagon, arrive at that place? The kindly gentleman shook his head. What was the lady like? he inquired.

Gregory painted—hair like silken floss, small mouth, underlip very full and pink; upper lip pink, but very thin and curled. There were four white spots on the nail of her right hand forefinger, and her eyebrows were very delicately curved. The gentleman looked thoughtful, as trying to remember.

"Yes, and a rosebud tinge in the cheeks, hands like lilies and perfectly seraphic smile."

"That is she! That is she!" cried Gregory.

Who else could it be? He asked where she had gone. The gentleman most thoughtfully stroked his beard. He would try to remember.

(Continued next week.)

NERVITA PILLS. Restore Vitality, Lost Vigor and Maskeed. Cure Impotency, Night Emissions, Loss of Memory, all wasting diseases, all nervous debility, excess and indigestion, nervous prostration, and all the ailments of youth. By mail \$1.00 per box, 6 boxes for \$5.00. With our bankable guarantee to cure, or refund the money paid. Send for circular and copy of our bankable guarantee bond.

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Army of Paupers. The department of public charities of those divisions of the city of New York that are distinguished as the boroughs of Manhattan and the Bronx, during the three winter months, admits about 40,000 persons to the numerous public institutions for the relief of the poor. In the same period nearly 12,000 individuals are assisted by the out-door, poor department. If we are to add the figures for the three other boroughs of the city, and to include the number of persons who are entirely or partly supported by philanthropists other than public, we would have an aggregate of not less than 100,000 paupers in the great metropolis.—Leslies Weekly, New York.

For Sale. One black shire stallion, registered well bred, fine individual shire, young and good action. Will give bargain if sold before April 15th 1900. Address, W. J. D. Counts, University Place, Neb.

The selection of Dr. P. L. Hall, of Saunders, and W. M. Cain, of Butler, to be respectively chairman and secretary of the department of the relief of the poor, vice Dahlgren and Herdman, resigned, is well received by the fusion forces generally. Dr. Hall's friends know him to be one of the best informed men in Nebraska on economic questions, and both he and Mr. Cain have undoubted ability as organizers. Without the least disparagement of the services rendered by Messrs. Dahlgren and Herdman, the democratic party of Nebraska never had a more efficient chairman and secretary than at present.

Mammoth Pekin Duck Eggs. I have a stock that is up to date. Drakes weigh up to 11 lbs. Prize winning stock—2,000 lbs of mixed feed will grow 500 lbs of young ducks (not to mention nice downy pillows). Well fed Pekins will dress 5 lbs at ten weeks old. Young ducks are better and cheaper than pork. Every farm should have its flock. Eggs well packed 10 cts each. E. E. SMITH, Lincoln, Neb., Box 456. Mention Independent.

NOT DUKES ENOUGH FOR ALL. Husbandless American Women Are Barred From Queen Margherita's Court. The queen of Saxony, lately, when the American minister to Italy was presented to her, broke forth vehemently: "Ach, Himmel! Mein Herr! Haf American wifes no husbands at all? They come in dozens to meet in court. Ebery one must be presented; ebery one must be asked to a state dinner. Ebery one must go in to dinner mit a duke! I haf not dukes enough to go around! What kind of wifes are they I would like to know." So flagrant is the scandal of our swarming mateless women in Europe that even Queen Margherita, most good-humored of sovereigns, has been forced to draw in the lax lines of her court. No married American woman can be presented now at the Quirinal unless accompanied by her husband.—April Ladies' Home Journal.

Through First Class Pullman Sleepers Between Chicago and San Francisco. Via Denver and Salt Lake City will be inaugurated Feb. 25th by the Great Rock Island Route, leaving Chicago at 10 p. m. daily, Omaha 1:30 p. m. The Colorado Rockies and Sierra Nevada are crossed by daylight in both directions, making this the grandest scenic trip in the world. The cars are Pullman's finest Broad Vestibled Sleepers and are carried on limited trains with Dining Car Service through and Buffet Library Cars. Direct connections to and from Southern California. See your agent for berth reservations and folders, or address E. W. Thompson, A. G. P. A., Topeka, Kan.

\$115 For Letters About Nebraska. The passenger department of the B. & M. R. R. offers thirteen cash prizes aggregating \$115 for letters about Nebraska. Particulars of the contest, which is open to all, can be had by addressing J. Francis, G. P. A., Omaha.

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