

# THE STORY OF AN AFRICAN FARM

BY OLIVE SCHREINER

A TALE OF LIFE IN THE BOER REPUBLIC.

(Continued from last week.)

body curled up and drew close to the wall. He dared not disturb her. At last after a long time she turned. "Bring me food," she said. "I want to eat—two eggs and toast and meat—two large slices of toast, please."

Wondering, Gregory brought a tray with all that she had asked for. "Sit me up and put it close to me," she said. "I am going to eat it all." She tried to draw the things near her with her fingers, and rearrange the plates. She cut the toast into long strips, broke open both eggs, put a tiny morsel of bread into her own mouth and fed the dog with pieces of meat put into his jaws with her fingers.

"Is it 12 o'clock yet?" she said. "I think I do not generally eat so early. Put it away, please, carefully—no, do not take it away, only on the table. When the clock strikes 12, I will eat it."

She lay down, trembling. After a little while she said: "Give me my clothes." He looked at her.

"Yes; I am going to dress tomorrow. I should get up now, but it is rather late. Put them on that chair. My collars are in that little box, my boots behind the door."

Her eyes followed him intently as he collected the articles one by one and placed them on the chair as she directed.

"Put it nearer," she said. "I cannot see it." And she lay watching the clothes, with her hand under her cheek. "Now open the shutter wide," she said. "I am going to read."

The old, old tone was again in the sweet voice. He obeyed her and opened the shutter and raised her up among the pillows.

"Now bring my books to me," she said, motioning eagerly with her fingers. "The large book and the reviews and the plays. I want them all."

He piled them round her on the bed. She drew them greedily closer, her eyes very bright, but her face as white as a mountain lily.

"Now the big one off the drawers. No; you need not help me to hold my book," she said. "I can hold it myself."

Gregory went back to his corner, and for a little time the restless turning over of leaves was to be heard.

"Will you open the window," she said, almost querulously, "and throw this book out? It is so utterly foolish. I thought it was a valuable book, but the words are merely strung together. They make no sense. Yes—so," she said, with approval, seeing him fling it out into the street. "I must have been very foolish when I thought that book good."

Then she turned to read and leaned her little elbows resolutely on the great volume and knit her brows. This was Shakespeare. It must mean something.

"I wish you would take a handkerchief and tie it tight round my head. It aches so."

He had not been long in his seat when he saw drops fall from beneath the hands that shaded the eyes on to the page.

"I am not accustomed to so much light. It makes my head swim a little," she said. "Go out and close the shutter."

When he came back, she lay shivering.

ed up among the pillows.

He heard no sound of weeping, but the shoulders shook. He darkened the room completely.

When Gregory went to his sofa that night, she told him to wake her early. She would be dressed before breakfast. Nevertheless, when morning came, she said it was a little cold and lay all day watching her clothes upon the chair. Still she sent for her oxen in the country. They would start on Monday and go down to the colony.

In the afternoon she told him to open the window wide and draw the bed near it.

It was a leaden afternoon. The dull rainclouds rested close to the roofs of the houses, and the little street was silent and deserted. Now and then a gust of wind eddying round caught up the dried leaves, whirled them hither and thither under the trees and dropped them again into the gutter. Then all was quiet. She lay looking out. Presently the bell of the church began to toll, and up the village street came a long procession. They were carrying an old man to his last resting place. She followed them with her eyes till they turned in among the trees at the gate.

"Who was that?" she asked.

"An old man," he answered, "a very old man. They say he was 94, but his name I do not know."

She mused awhile, looking out with fixed eyes.

"That is why the bell rang so cheerfully," she said. "When the old die, it is well. They have had their time. It is when the young die that the bells weep drops of blood."

"But the old love life?" he said, for it was sweet to hear her speak.

She raised herself on her elbow. "They love life. They do not want to die," she answered. "But what of that? They have had their time. They know that a man's life is threescore years and ten. They should have made their plans accordingly. But the young," she said, "the young, cut down cruelly when they have not seen, when they have not known, when they have not found—it is for them that the bells weep blood. I heard in the ringing it was an old man. When the old die—listen to the bell! It is laughing: 'It is right, it is right! He has had his time. They cannot ring so for the young.'"

She felt exhausted. The hot light died from her eyes, and she lay looking out into the street. By and by stragglers from the funeral began to come back and disappear here and there among the houses. Then all was quiet, and the night began to settle down upon the village street. Afterward, when the room was almost dark so that they could not see each other's face, she said, "It will rain tonight," and moved restlessly on the pillows.

"How terrible when the rain falls down on you?"

He wondered what she meant, and they sat on in the still darkening room. She moved again.

"Will you presently take my cloak—the new gray cloak from behind the door—and go out with it? You will find a little grave at the foot of the tall blue gum tree. The water drips off the long, pointed leaves. You must cover it up with that."

She moved restlessly, as though in pain.

Gregory assented, and there was silence again. It was the first time she had ever spoken of her child.

"It was so small," she said. "It liv-

ed such a little while—only three hours. They laid it close by me, but I never saw it. I could feel it by me." She smiled. "Its feet were so cold. I took them in my hand to make them warm, and my hand closed right over them, they were so little." There was an uneven trembling in the voice. "It crept close to me. It wanted to drink; it wanted to be warm." She hardened herself. "I did not love it. Its father was not my prince. I did not care for it. But it was so little." She moved her hand. "They might have kissed it, one of them, before they put it in. It never did any one any harm in all its little life. They might have kissed it, one of them."

Gregory felt that some one was sobbing in the room.

Late on in the evening, when the shutter was closed and the lamp lighted and the raindrops bent on the roof, he took the cloak from behind the door and went away with it. On his way back he called at the village postoffice and brought back a letter. In the hall he stood reading the address. How could he fail to know whose hand had written it? Had he not long ago studied those characters on the torn fragments of paper in the old parlor? A burning pain was at Gregory's heart. If now, now at the last, one should come, should step in between! He carried the letter into the bedroom and gave it to her. "Bring me the lamp nearer," she said. When she had read it, then Gregory sat down in the lamp-light on the other side of the curtain and heard the pencil move on the paper. When he looked round the curtain, she was lying on the pillow musing. The open letter lay at her side. She glanced at it with soft eyes. The man with the languid eyelids must have been strangely moved before his hand set down those words: "Let me come back to you! My darling, let me put my hand round you and guard you from all the world! As my wife they shall never touch you. I have learned to love you more wisely, more tenderly, than of old. You shall have perfect freedom. Lyndall, grand little woman, for your own sake, be my wife!"

"Why did you send that money back to me? You are cruel to me. It is not rightly done."

She rolled the little red pencil softly between her fingers, and her face grew very soft. Yet—

"It cannot be," she wrote. "I thank you much for the love you have shown me, but I cannot listen. You will call me mad, foolish—the world would do so—but I know what I need and the kind of path I must walk in. I cannot marry you. I will always love you for the sake of what lay by me those three hours, but there it ends. I must know and see. I cannot be bound to one whom I love as I love you. I am not afraid of the world. I will fight the world. One day—perhaps it may be far off—I shall find what I have wanted all my life, something nobler, stronger than I, before which I can kneel down. You lose nothing by not having me now. I am a weak, selfish, erring woman. One day I shall find something to worship, and then I shall be—

"Nurse," she said, "take my desk away. I am suddenly so sleepy. I will write more tomorrow." She turned her face to the pillow. It was the sudden drowsiness of great weakness. She had dropped asleep in a moment, and Gregory moved the desk softly and then sat in the chair watching. Hour after hour passed, but he had no wish for rest and sat on, hearing the rain cease and the still night settle down everywhere. At a quarter past 12 he rose and took a last look at the bed where she lay sleeping so peacefully. Then he turned to go to his couch. Before he had reached the door she had started up and was calling him back.

"You are sure you have put it up," she said, with a look of blank terror at the window. "It will not fall open in the night, the shutter—you are sure?"

He comforted her. Yes; it was tightly fastened.

"Even if it is shut," she said in a whisper, "you cannot keep it out! You feel it coming in at 4 o'clock, creeping, creeping, up, up, deadly cold!" She shuddered.

He thought she was wandering and laid her little trembling body down among the blankets.

"I dreamed just now that it was not put up," she said, looking into his eyes, "and it crept right in, and I was alone with it."

"What do you fear?" he asked tenderly.

"The gray dawn," she said, glancing round at the window. "I was never afraid of anything, never when I was a little child, but I have always been afraid of that. You will not let it come in to me?"

"No, no; I will stay with you," he continued.

But she was growing calmer. "No; you must go to bed. I only awoke with a start. You must be tired. I am childish; that is all." But she shivered again.

He sat down beside her. After some time she said, "Will you not rub my feet?"

He knelt down at the foot of the bed and took the tiny foot in his hand. It was swollen and unsightly now, but as he touched it he bent down and covered it with kisses.

"It makes it better when you kiss it. Thank you! What makes you all love me so?" Then dreamily she muttered to herself: "Not utterly bad, not quite bad. What makes them all love me so?"

Knocking there, rubbing softly, with his cheek pressed against the little foot, Gregory dropped to sleep at last. How long he knelt there he could not tell, but when he started up awake she was not looking at him. The eyes were fixed on the far corner, gazing wide and intent, with an unearthly light.

He looked round fearfully. What

did she see there—God's angels come to call her, something fearful? He saw only the purple curtain with the shadows that fell from it. Softly he whispered, asking what she saw there. And she said, in a voice strangely unlike her own: "I see the vision of a poor weak soul striving after good. It was not cut short, and in the end it learned, through tears and much pain, that holiness is an infinite compassion for others; that greatness is to take the common things of life and walk truly among them; that—she moved her white hand and laid it on her forehead—"happiness is a great love and much serving. It was not cut short, and it loved what it had learned—it loved—and—"

Was that all she saw in the corner?

Gregory told the landlady the next morning that she had been wandering all night. Yet when he came in to give her breakfast she was sitting up against the pillows, looking as he had not seen her look before.

"Put it close to me," she said, "and when I have had breakfast I am going to dress."

She finished all he had brought her eagerly.

"I am sitting up quite by myself," she said. "Give me his meat." And she fed the dog herself, cutting his food small for him. She moved to the side of the bed.

"Now bring the chair near and dress me. It is being in this room so long and looking at that miserable little bit of sunshine that comes in through the shutter that is making me so ill. Always that lion's paw!" she said, with a look of disgust at it. "Come and dress me." Gregory knelt on the floor before her and tried to draw on her stockings, but the little swollen foot refused to be covered.

"It is very funny that I should have grown so fat since I have been so ill," she said, peering down curiously. "Perhaps it is want of exercise." She looked troubled and said again, "Perhaps it is want of exercise." She wanted Gregory to say so, too, but he only found a larger pair and then tried to force the shoes—oh, so tenderly!—on to her little feet.

"There!" she said, looking down at them when they were on with the delight of a small child over its first shoes. "I could walk now. How nice they look!"

"No," she said, seeing the soft gown he had prepared for her; "I will not put that on. Get one of my white dresses, the one with the pink bows. I do not even want to think I have been ill. It is thinking and thinking of things that makes them real," she said. "When you draw your mind together and realize that a thing shall not be, it gives way before you; it is not. Everything is possible if one is resolved," she said. "She drew in her little lips together, and Gregory obeyed her. She was so small and slight now it was like dressing a small doll. He would have lifted her down from the bed when he had finished, but she pushed him from her, laughing very softly. It was the first time she had laughed in those long dreary months.

"No, no; I can get down myself," she said, slipping cautiously to the floor.

"You see!" She cast a defiant glance of triumph when she stood there. "Hold the curtain up high. I want to look at myself."

He raised it and stood holding it. She looked into the glass on the opposite wall—such a queerly little figure in its pink and white; such a transparent little face, refined by suffering into an almost angelic beauty. The face looked at her. She looked back, laughing softly. Doss, quivering with excitement, ran round her, barking. She took one step toward the door, balancing herself with outstretched hands.

"I am nearly there," she said.

Then she groped blindly.

"Oh, I cannot see! I cannot see! Where am I?" she cried.

When Gregory reached her, she had fallen with her face against the sharp foot of the wardrobe and cut her forehead. Very tenderly he raised the little crushed heap of muslin and ribbons and laid it on the bed. Doss climbed up and sat looking down at it. Very softly Gregory's hands disrobed her.

"You will be stronger tomorrow, and then we shall try again," he said, but she neither looked at him nor stirred.

So she lay all that morning and all that afternoon.

At last in the evening he bent over her.

"The oxen have come," he said. "We can start tomorrow if you like. Shall I get the wagon ready tonight?"

Twice he repeated his question. Then she looked up at him, and Gregory saw that all hope had died out of the beautiful eyes. It was not stupor that shone there. It was despair.

"Yes; let us go," she said.

"It makes no difference," said the doctor, "staying or going. It is close now."

So the next day Gregory carried her out in his arms to the wagon which stood "spanned" before the door. As he laid her down on the "korte" she looked far out across the plain. For the first time she spoke that day.

(Continued next week.)

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The readers of this paper will be pleased to learn that there is at least one dreaded disease that science has been able to cure in all its stages, and that is Catarrh. Hall's Catarrh Cure, the only positive cure known to the medical fraternity. Catarrh being a constitutional disease, requires a constitutional treatment. Hall's Catarrh Cure is taken internally, acting directly upon the blood and mucous surfaces of the system, thereby destroying the foundation of the disease, and giving the patient strength by building up the constitution and assisting nature in doing its work. The proprietors have so much faith in its curative powers, that they offer one hundred dollars for any case that it fails to cure. Send for list of testimonials. Address: F. J. CUMMIS & Co., Toledo, O. Sold by Druggists, 75c. Hall's Family Pills are the best.

## SMOOTH BROME GRASS.

Rapidly Establishing Itself in Favor in the North and Northwest.

Smooth brome grass has within the past two or three years been widely tested throughout the dry region of the west and northwest, as well as elsewhere, and has proved probably the most valuable of recent introductions among grasses for hay and pasture. It quickly forms a thick, firm turf and appears to grow with equal vigor in Canada and in Tennessee, remaining green throughout the winter season in the latter state. It is the strong perennial character of this brome grass and its unusual drought resisting qualities which recommend it particularly for the semiarid region. It will thrive on loose, dry soil, but of course the better the soil the greater the yield.

All kinds of stock eat it with relish, and while some investigators pronounce its nutritive value comparatively low, others claim that chemical analyses show it to be rich in fresh forming ingredients, much more so than timothy, and stockmen give excellent accounts of it. It is also especially recommended as a grass for reseeding worn meadows or pastures.

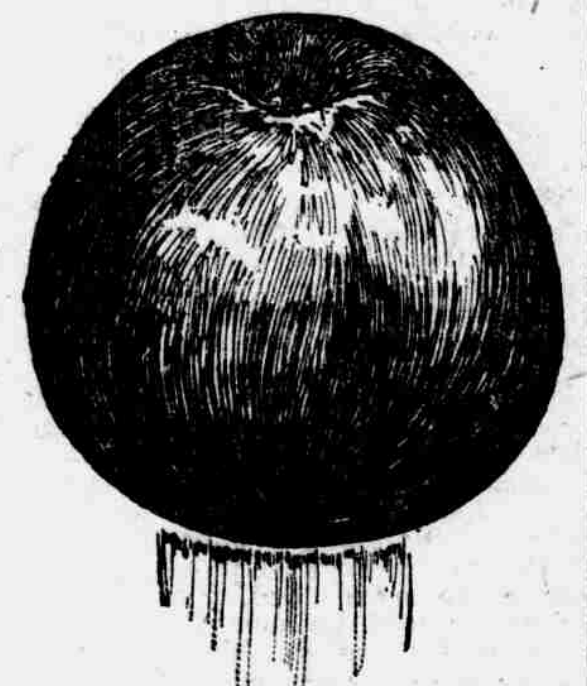
The wonderful rapidity with which it grows, producing heavy crops and luxuriant pasture, and its thoroughly permanent character make very promising the value of smooth brome to the "dry farmer." One authority on grasses says of it: "It is very hardy and not injured by severe spring and fall frosts when once established. As it starts to grow very early in the spring before any of the grasses upon the native prairies show any signs of life and remains green and succulent far into November it will supply the long felt want of early spring and late fall pastures."

Smooth brome grass will withstand changes in the temperature without injury. Its ability to produce good pasture during long periods of drought far exceeds that of any other cultivated variety. In Canada, where it had been exposed to a temperature of several degrees below zero and not covered by snow, it was entirely uninjured. Without doubt it is the grass for the semiarid regions of the west. From the reports received it is evident that it is very little influenced by the changes of climate. It does well in California, Kansas, Montana, North and South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Wyoming and all parts of Canada.

In California, Washington and Oregon smooth brome will succeed with or without irrigation. In Colorado it retains its fresh green appearance until December, affording excellent pasture. During the severe droughts in Kansas, Montana and Nebraska it lies down and appears dead, but as soon as rain falls it becomes green again. It is now well established in the Dakotas and is grown extensively both for hay and pasture. In Indiana and Ohio it is said to make about the same growth as orchard grass, but withstands dry weather much better.

## The Ben Davis Apple.

"The Ben Davis apple in many ways has given pleasure to thousands and brought dollars to hundreds, but no



BEN DAVIS APPLE.

one knows who Ben Davis was or where he lived or died. All that is known of his history is that it came into favor with orchard planters in the southwest, and the name traveled with the tree. In the markets of Philadelphia there are probably more of this variety offered for sale during December and January than any other. Its ruddy cheeks on a pale yellow ground are tempting, and its eating qualities are by no means poor, yet it could not be classed as especially fine, but as an all round good variety it has popular points. And then it is a good tree for the marketman in this, that it does not take as many years to come into bearing as some kinds, like the Northern Spy, for instance, and is a regular yearly bearer, not requiring the resting spells that some demand, and seems to be no favorite with apple diseases that feast on other kinds. Altogether it is a safe variety to plant."

So Meehan's Monthly sums up this much discussed fruit in connection with the illustration here given.

## Kaffir Corn.

The Kansas station recommends two varieties of Kaffir corn, the red and the black bulled white. Kaffir corn makes a slow growth and should not be planted until the ground becomes warm. On cold soils surface planting is best. On warm soils listing does well. Plant in rows 3 to 3½ feet apart, dropping single seeds an inch apart in the row. Cultivate the same as you would for a good crop of corn. Many farmers sow Kaffir corn broadcast, cut with mower, handle and feed as hay. When grown for grain, the heads may be cut off and gathered if the fodder is not wanted. When the fodder is to be used, the cheapest method of harvesting Kaffir corn is to cut and put it up in large shocks.

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