THE STORY OF AN AFRICAN FARM

BY OLIVE SCHREINER.

A TALE OF LIFE IN THE BOER REPUBLIC.

(Continued from last week.)

"That blue mountain far away—let us stop when we get to it, not before." She closed her eyes again. He drew the sails down before and behind, and the wagon rolled away slowly. The landlady and the niggers stood to watch it from the "stoep."

Very silently the great wagon rolled along the grass covered plain. The driver on the front box did not clap his whip or call to his oxen, and Gregory sat beside him with folded arms. Behind them, in the closed wagon, she lay, with the dog at her feet, very quiet, with folded hands. He (Gregory) dared not be in there. Like Hagar when she laid her treasure down in the wilderness, he sat afar off. "For Hagar said, Let me not see the death of the child."

Evening came, and yet the blue mountain was not reached, and all the next day they rode on slowly, but still it was far off. Only at evening they reached it, not blue now, but low and brown, covered with long waving grasses and rough stones. They drew the wagon up close to its foot for the night. It was a sheltered, warm spot.

The night was growing very old when from a long, peaceful sleep Lyndall awoke. The candle burned at her head. The dog lay on her feet, but he shivered. It seemed as though a coldness struck up to him from his resting place. She lay with folded hands, looking upward, and she heard the oxen chewing, and she saw the two mosquitoes buzzing drearily round and round, and her thoughts—her thoughts ran far back into the past.

Through these months of anguish a mist had rested on her mind. It was rolled together now, and the old clear intellect awoke from its long torpor. It looked back into the past. It saw the present. There was no future now. The old strong soul gathered itself together for the last time. It knew where it stood.

Slowly raising herself on her elbow, she took from the sail a glass that hung pinned there. Her fingers were stiff and cold. She put the pillow on her breast and stood the glass against it. Then the white face on the pillow looked into the white face in the glass. They had looked at each other often so before. It had been a child's face once, looking out above its blue pinafore. It had been a woman's face, with a dim shadow in the eyes and a something which had said: "We are not afraid, you and I. We are together. We will fight, you and I." Now tonight it had come to this. The dying eyes on the pillow looked into the dying eyes in the glass. They knew that their hour had come. She raised one hand and pressed the stiff fingers against the glass. They were growing very stiff. She tried to speak to it, but she would never speak again. Only the wonderful yearning light was in the eyes still. The body was dead now, but the soul, clear and unclouded, looked forth.

Then slowly, without a sound, the beautiful eyes closed. The dead face that the glass reflected was a thing of marvelous beauty and tranquility. The gray dawn crept in over it and saw it lying there.

Had she found what she sought for—something to worship? Had she ceased from being? Who shall tell us? There is a veil of terrible mist over the face of the hereafter.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DREAMS.

"Tell me what a soul desires, and I will tell you what it is." So runs the phrase.

"Tell me what a man dreams, and I will tell you what he loves." That also has its truth.

On the night when Gregory told his story Waldo sat alone before the fire, his untasted supper before him. He was weary after his day's work, too weary to eat. He put the plate down on the floor for Doss, who licked it clean and then went back to his corner. After a time the master threw himself across the foot of the bed without undressing and fell asleep there. He slept so long that the candle burned itself out and the room was in darkness. But he dreamed a lovely dream as he lay there.

In his dream, to his right rose high mountains, their tops crowned with snow, their sides clothed with bush and bathed in the sunshine. At their feet was the sea blue and breezy, bluer than any earthly sea, like the sea he had dreamed of in his boyhood. In the narrow forest that ran between the mountains and the sea the air was rich with the scent of the honey creeper that hung from dark green bushes, and through the velvety grass little streams ran purling down into the sea. He sat on a high, square rock among the bushes, and Lyndall sat by him and sang to him. She was only a small child, with a blue pinafore and a grave, grave, little face. He was looking up at the mountains. Then suddenly when he looked round she was gone. He slipped down from his rock and went to look for her, but he found only her little footmarks. He found them on the bright green grass and in the moist sand and there where the little streams ran purling down into the sea. In and out, in and out, and among the bushes where the honey creeper hung, he went looking for her.

At last, far off, in the sunshine, he saw her gathering shells upon the sand. She was not a child now, but a woman, and the sun shone on her soft brown hair, and in her white dress she put the shells she gathered. She was stooping, but when she heard his step she stood up, holding her skirt close about her, and waited for his coming. One hand she put in his, and together they walked on over the glittering sand and pink seashells, and they heard the leaves talking, and they heard the water babbling on their way to the sea, and they heard the sea singing to itself, singing, singing.

At last they came to a place where was a long reach of pure white sand. There she stood still and dropped on to the sand one by one the shells that she had gathered. Then she looked up into his face with her beautiful eyes. She said nothing; but she lifted one hand and laid it softly on his forehead. The other she laid on his heart.

With a cry of suppressed agony Waldo sprang from the bed, flung open the upper half of the door and leaned out, breathing heavily.

Great God! It might be only a dream, but the pain was very real, as though a knife ran through his heart, as though some treacherous murderer crept on him in the dark! The strong man drew his breath like a frightened woman.

"Only a dream, but the pain was very real," he muttered as he pressed his right hand upon his breast. Then he folded his arms on the door and stood looking out into the starlight.

The dream was with him still. The woman who was his friend was not separated from him by years. Only that very night he had seen her. He looked up into the night sky that all his life long had mingled itself with his existence. There were a thousand faces that he loved looking down at him, a thousand stars in their glory, in crowns and circles and solitary grandeur. To the man they were not less dear than to the boy they had been not less mysterious, yet he looked up at them and shuddered, at last turned away from them with horror. Such countless multitudes, stretching out far into space, and yet not in one of them all was she! Though he searched through them all, to the farthest, faintest point of light, nowhere should he ever say, "She is here!" Tomorrow's sun would rise and gild the world's mountains and shine into its thousand valleys. It would set and the stars creep out again. Year after year, century after century, the old changes of nature would go on, day and night, summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, but in none of them all would she have part!

He shut the door to keep out their hideous shining and because the dark was intolerable lighted a candle and paced the little room faster and faster yet. He saw before him the long ages of eternity that would roll on, on, on, and never bring her. She would exist no more. A dark mist filled the little room.

"Oh, little hand! Oh, little voice! Oh, little form!" he cried. "Oh, little soul that walked with mine! Oh, little soul that looked so fearlessly down into the depths, do you exist no more forever, for all time?" He cried more bitterly: "It is for this hour—this—that men blind reason and crush out thought! For this hour—this, this—they barter truth and knowledge, take any lie, any creed, so it does not whisper to them of the dead that they are dead! O God, God, for a hereafter!"

Muttering to himself, Waldo walked with bent head, the mist in his eyes.

To the soul's wild cry for its own there are many answers. He began to think of them. Was not there one of them all from which he might suck one drop of comfort?

"You shall see her again," says the Christian, the true Bible Christian. "Yes; you shall see her again. 'And I saw the dead, great and small, stand before God. And the books were opened, and the dead were judged from those things which were written in the books. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death.' Yes; you shall see her again. She died so, with her knee unbent, with her hand unraised, with a prayer unuttered, in the pride of her intellect and the strength of her youth. She loved, and she was loved. But she said no prayer to God; she cried for no mercy; she repented of no sin! Yes; you shall see her again."

In his bitterness Waldo laughed low.

Ah, he had long ceased to hearken to the hellish voice!

But yet another speaks.

"You shall see her again," says the nineteenth century Christian, deep into whose soul modern unbelief and thought have crept, though he knows it not. He it is who uses his Bible as the pearl fishers use their shells, sorting out gems from refuse. He sets his pearls after his own fashion, and he sets them well. "Do not fear," he says. "Hell and judgment are not. God is love. I know that beyond this blue sky above us is a love as widespreading over all. The All Father will show her to you again—not spirit only. The little hands, the little feet, you loved—you shall lie down and kiss them if you will. Christ arose and did eat and drink. So shall she arise. The dead, all the dead, raised incorruptible! God is love. You shall see her again."

It is a heavenly song this of the nineteenth century Christian. A man might dry his tears to listen to it but for this one thing—Waldo muttered to himself confusedly:

"The thing I loved was a woman proud and young. It had a mother once, who, dying, kissed her little baby and prayed God that she might see it again. If it had lived, the loved thing would itself have had a son, who, when he closed the weary eyes and smoothed the wrinkled forehead of his mother, would have prayed God to see that old face smile again in the hereafter. To the son heaven will be no heaven if the sweet worn face is not in one of the choirs. He will look for it through the phalanx of God's glorified angels, and the youth will look for the maid, and the mother for the baby. 'And whose then shall she be at the resurrection of the dead?'

"Ah, God! Ah, God! A beautiful dream!" he cried. "But can any one dream it not sleeping?"

Waldo paced on, moaning in agony and longing.

He heard the transcendentalist's high answer:

"What have you to do with flesh, the gross and miserable garment in which spirit hides itself? You shall see her again. But the hand, the foot the forehead, you loved you shall see no more. The loves, the fears, the frailties, that are born with the flesh, with the flesh shall die. Let them die! There is that in man that cannot die—a seed, a germ, an embryo, a spiritual essence. Higher than she was on earth, as the tree is higher than the seed, the man than the embryo, so shall you behold her, changed, glorified!"

High words, ringing well. They are the offering of jewels to the hungry, of gold to the man who dies for bread. Bread is corruption; gold is incorruptible. Bread is light; gold is heavy. Bread is common; gold is rare. But the hungry man will barter all your mines for one morsel of bread. Around God's throne there may be choirs and companies of angels, cherubim and seraphim, rising tier above tier, but not for one of them all does the soul cry aloud, only perhaps for a little human woman, full of sin, that it once loved!

"Change is death, change is death!" he cried. "I want no angel, only she—no holier and no better, with all her sins upon her. So give her me or give me nothing!"

For the soul's fierce cry for immortality is this, only this: Return to me after death the thing as it was before. Leave me in the hereafter the being that I am today. Rob me of the thoughts, the feelings, the desires, that are my life, and you have left nothing to take. Your immortality is annihilation; your hereafter is a lie.

Waldo flung open the door and walked out into the starlight, his pain stricken thoughts ever driving him on as he paced there.

"There must be a hereafter because man longs for it," he whispered. "Is not all life from the cradle to the grave one long yearning for that which we never touch? There must be a hereafter because we cannot think of any end to life. Can we think of a beginning? Is it easier to say 'I was not' than to say 'I shall not be?' And yet where were we 90 years ago? Dreams, dreams! Ah, all dreams and lies! No ground anywhere!"

All dies, all dies! The roses are red with the matter that once reddened the cheek of the child. The flowers bloom the fairest on the last year's battleground. The work of Death's finger cunningly wreathed over is at the heart of all things, even of the living. Death's finger is everywhere. The rocks are built up of a life that was. Bodies, thoughts and loves die. From where springs that whisper to the tiny soul of man, "You shall not die?" Ah, is there no truth of which this dream is the shadow?

He fell into perfect silence. And at last, as he walked there with his bent head, his soul passed down the steps of contemplation into that vast land where there is always peace; that land where the soul, gazing long, loses all consciousness of its little self and almost feels its hand on the old mystery of Universal Unity that surrounds it.

"No death, no death!" he muttered. "There is that which never dies, which abides. It is but the individual that perishes; the whole remains. It is the organism that vanishes; the atoms are there. It is but the man that dies; the Universal Whole of which he is part reworks him into its inmost self. Ah, what matter that man's day be short; that the sunrise sees him, and the sunset sees his grave. That of which he is but the breath has breathed him forth and drawn him back again. That abides; we abide."

For the little soul that cries aloud for continued personal existence for itself and its beloved there is no help. For the soul which knows itself no more as a unit, but as a part of the Universal Unity of which the Beloved also is a part, which feels within itself the throb of the Universal Life—for that soul there is no death.

"Let us die, beloved, you and I, that we may pass on forever through the Universal Life!" In that deep world of contemplation all fierce desires die out, and peace comes down. He (Waldo) as he walked there saw no more the world that was about him; cried out no more for the thing that he had lost. His soul rested. Was it only John, think you, who saw the heavens open? The dreamers see it every day.

So age succeeds age, and dream succeeds dream, and of the joy of the dreamer no man knoweth but he who dreameth.

Our fathers had their dream; we have ours; the generation that follows will have its own. Without dreams and phantoms man cannot exist.

[Continued next week.]

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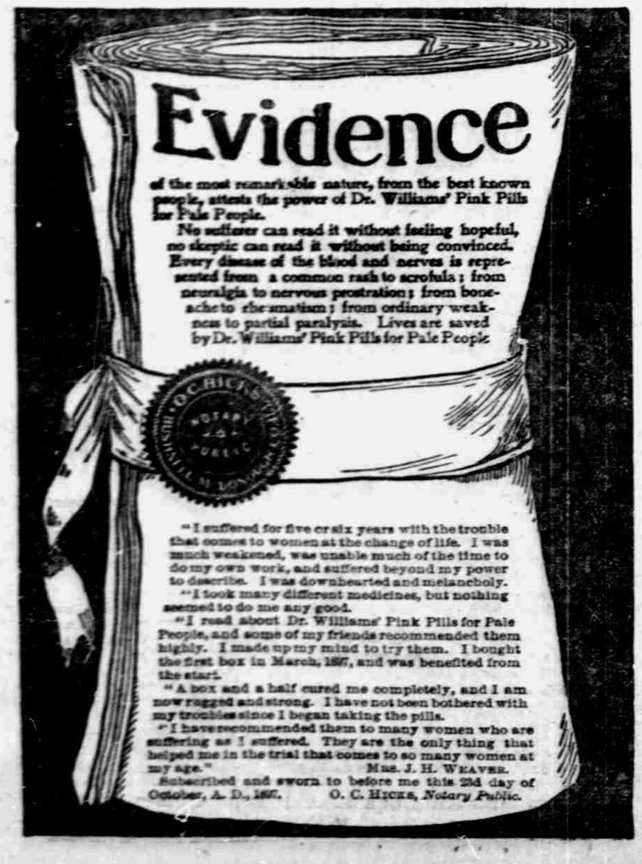

KITTIE.

It was away out in the country where dissipation was a word almost without meaning.

Into this quiet tide a sudden, exciting element had fallen in the shape of a gay young girl from a neighboring city.

Her name was Jennie Mordant, and she claimed cousinship with Farmer Mordant's brown faced and rather bashful sons in a daring, coaxing way that was new and delightful to them, and Jared, the eldest, grew more demonstrative toward others.

There was a little girl living up at Low Hill pass whose name had often been spoken in connection with Jared's, and it was guessed that they mutually felt a shy fondness for each other. Jared only called her by her formal Christian name, Katherine, at rare intervals, and then with a sense of familiarity that made him half ashamed.

But after Jennie Mordant had tied his necktie and brushed the threads off his coat he escaped from her bright eyes and merry ways and walked to Low Hill with a light step. As he neared the house he saw Katherine returning home "cross lots" from Widow Sangster's, where she had been to take the old lady some buttermilk. With one leap he scaled the wall, and, hurrying to the narrow footpath, he said softly:

"Don't walk so fast, Kittie."

The girl stood still, trembling and blushing, and then she asked in a voice scarcely audible:

"What made you call me—that?"

"May I call you so again?"

"Yes," she answered simply, and he did not know how quick her heart was beating. And so they went in silence through the gathering dew and darkness up to the door.

When it was time for Jared to leave, he sidled up to the kitchen window, and, reaching in, with one arm on the sill, he dropped a spray of lilac as if by accident and said, "Good night, Kittie."

So the summer passed with a new glory, and when the evenings grew long and cool in the autumn a dancing school was talked of in the village. So the season opened far more gayly than usual. Then there was to be a husking at Farmer Mordant's in the long, new barn. Long before dark the great piles of corn filled the barn floor, and the fiddlers walked about, with their pet violins tucked away in green bags, while the kitchen was overflowing with food, and a row of cider barrels lay tapped in the yard.

Katherine Hubbell came down early with her brothers.

The candles were lighted in the sitting room, and there was Jared—her Jared—actually romping with Miss Jennie. She was standing on her toes to reach his head, pulling his hair and bothering him, when suddenly he turned, and, taking the two little hands in his big brown palms, he held her so firmly that she could not get away, though she struggled and laughed for a minute and then stood still, listening intently.

When he let her go, she patted his face, smiled brightly and ran away, and Katherine could see that Jared was blushing like a girl.

She did not go into the sitting room as though nothing had happened.

She was not actress enough for that. She went slowly round to the kitchen door and found the girls, and in their merry chatter they did not notice her silence. But that Jennie—how could she ever speak to her again?

She could not flirt and laugh and pretend not to care, as some girls could. Her eyes flashed with anger as she thought of Jared leading Jennie Mordant out before them all, and, creeping away to Grandma Mordant's room, she huddled herself down by the fire in a forlorn little heap. The old lady was not there, but she soon came in, and with her was "that Jennie," talking low and earnestly.

"She is always in my way," thought Katherine bitterly, but she held her breath to listen as Jennie said:

"Jared says he never has a chance to see her a minute alone, and the house is so full of company that I'm sure there won't be another quiet spot but this room. I'll manage to smuggle him in while she is here, and then do you make an excuse to go out and leave them, there's a dear, good grandma! She is really a sweet little girl, and Jared is so fond of her. Do you know he calls her Kittie?"

The old lady chuckled pleasantly to herself as she went out after a candle, and when she returned with it lighted the room was empty. But later the harvest moon dropped lower from the deep sky, and all the radiant stars came near to listen to the new meaning that echoed in Jared's voice as he said, "Good night, Kittie."

Last night an old man lay dying in a handsome home. His gentle, silver haired wife stood beside him, holding his hand. "It's growing dark. Come nearer. Good night, Kittie." And his voice had hushed forever.—New York News.

Christianity In Business.

"There is not the least question that as the commercial world is organized and run today it is run at a fearful loss along the side of money," writes Rev. Charles M. Sheldon in The Ladies' Home Journal. "Even the rules of success that business men lay down do not insure success. Perhaps no age has equaled this for disturbance and unrest and warring interests in the business world.

"If the principles of Christianity were applied to the whole business world, it would cause a shock that for the time being would result in what might indeed prove to be the greatest financial panic of the ages, but out of that result would emerge a new order of buying and selling that would result ultimately in more financial success on the part of more people than the world has ever witnessed. Ultimately love will pay in dollars and cents better than selfishness.

"On selfish principles the business world today does not succeed even in the matter of making money—that is, not for any length of time nor for the masses of the people. Love in business would lose less money and actually distribute the real earnings of toil among a far greater number of human beings than is possible now under the present system."

Cautious.

"Don't let Henrietta hear you allude to her as my better half," said Mr. Meekton behind his hand to the friend who had come to dinner.

"I understand. The expression is a trifle commonplace, not to say plebeian."

"It isn't that. But I wish you'd choose another fraction. It would annoy Henrietta vastly to have you think she was less than four-fifths at the lowest calculation."—Washington Star.

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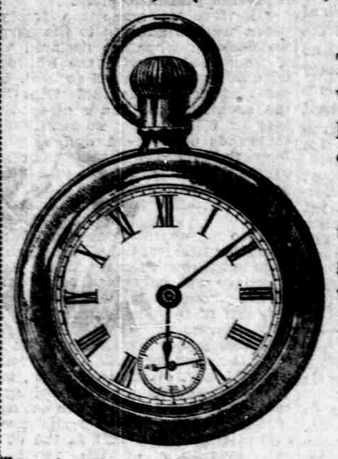
To the Readers of the Independent.



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