

The Story of an African Farm

Continued from First Page

Lyndall wiped a drop of blood on the lip she had bitten.

"I am going to sleep," she said. "If you like to sit there and howl till the morning, do. Perhaps you will find that it helps. I never heard that howling helped any one."

Long after, when Em herself had gone to bed and was almost asleep, Lyndall came and stood at her bedside.

"Here," she said, slipping a little pot of powder into her hand. "Rub some on your face. Does it not burn where she struck you?"

Then she crept back to her own bed. Long after, when Em was really asleep, she lay still awake and folded her hands on her little breast and muttered:

"When that day comes and I am strong, I will have everything that has power and help everything that has weakness. And she bit her lip again."

The German looked out at the cabin door for the last time that night. Then he drew out a pen and paper and sat down to write, rubbing his old gray eyes with his knuckles before he began:

My Children—You did not come to my goodby to the old man. Might you? Ah, well, there is a land where they part no more, where solace is found.

I sit here alone, and I think of you. Will you forget the old man? When you see him, he will be far away. The old man is here, but he has his stick to help him. That is three times he has come back with the stick. Poor old man! Will you welcome him? Well, we shall see. I go to meet him. He comes back with the stick. Then he follows me. Poor old man! I know. That is a land where all things are made right, but that land is not here.

My little children, never the same. Give your hearts to him while you are yet young. Life is short.

Nothing is mine; otherwise I would say, Lyndall, take my books, Em my stones. Now I say nothing. The things are mine. I have said. God knows. God knows. But I am silent. Let it be. But I feel it. I must say I feel it.

Do not cry too much for the old man. He goes out to seek his fortune and comes back with it in a bag, it may be.

I love my children. Do they think of me? I am old Otto, who goes out to seek his fortune.

Having concluded this quaint production, he put it where the children would find it the next morning and proceeded to prepare his bundle.

Never thought of entering a protest against the loss of his goods. Like a child he submitted and wept. He had been there 11 years, and it was hard to go away. He spread open on the bed a blue handkerchief and on it put one by one the things he thought most necessary and important. A little bag of curious seeds which he meant to plant some day, an old German hymn-book, three missal-papers, a Bible, a shirt and two handkerchiefs. Then there was room for nothing more. He put the bundle together and put it on a chair by his bedside.

"That is not much. They cannot say I take much," he said, looking at it.

He put his knotted stick beside it, his blue tobacco bag and his short pipe, and then inspected his coats. He had two left, a black coat overcoat and a black alpaca coat. It was warm certainly, but then he could carry it over his arm and only put it on when he met some one along the road. It was more respectable than the black alpaca. He hung the greatcoat over the back of the chair and stuffed a hard bit of rooster cake under the knot of the bundle, and then his preparations were completed. The German stood contemplating them with much satisfaction. He had almost forgotten his sorrow at leaving in his pleasure at preparing. Suddenly he started. An expression of intense pain passed over his face. He drew back his left arm quickly and then pressed his right hand upon his breast.

"Ah, the sudden pang again!" he said.

His face was white, but it quickly regained its color. Then the old man busied himself in putting everything right.

"I will leave it neat. They shall not say I did not leave it neat," he said. Even the little bags of seeds on the mantelpiece he put in rows and dusted. Then he undressed and got into bed. Under his pillow was a little story book. He drew it forth. To the old German a story was no story.

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was a quite peculiar quiet in the German's room. Though you strained your ear most carefully, you caught no sound of breathing.

He was not gone, for the old coat was to be put on when he met any one, and the bundle and stick were ready for tomorrow's long march. The old German himself lay there, his wavy black hair just touched with gray, thrown back upon the pillow. The old face was lying there alone in the dark, smiling like a little child's—oh, so peacefully! There is a stranger whose coming, they say, is worse than all the ills of life, from whose presence we flee away in trembling, but he comes very tenderly sometimes, and it seemed almost as though death had known and loved the old man, so gently it touched him. And how could it deal hardly with him—the loving, simple, childlike old man?

So it smoothed out the wrinkles that were in the old forehead and fixed the passing smile and sealed the eyes that they might not weep again, and then the short sleep of time was set into the old man's eyes, and he died.

"How has he grown so young in this one night?" they said when they found him in the morning.

Yes, dear old man, to such a you time brings no end. You, with your purity and innocence of your childhood upon you, though you die in your gray hairs.

CHAPTER IX.
HE SAYS A THOUGHT.

Bonaparte stood on the ash heap. He espied across the plain a moving speck, and he chuckled his countenance up and down in expectancy of a scene.

The wagon came on slowly. Waldo lay curled among the sacks at the back of the wagon, the hand in his breast resting on the sheep shearing machine. It was finished now. The right thought had struck him the day before as he sat, half asleep, watching the wagon come over the hill wheel. He muttered to himself, with half-closed eyes:

"Tomorrow smooth the cogs, tighten the screws a little, show it to them."

Then after a pause, "Over the whole world, the whole world—mine, that I have made." He pressed the little wheels and pulleys in his pocket till they cracked. Presently his muttering became louder, "And a black hat for my dadda, for Lyndall a blue silk, very light, and one purple, like the earth bells, and white shoes." He muttered, "A box full, full of books. They shall tell me all, all, all," he added, moving his fingers desirously—"why the crystals grow in such beautiful shapes, why lightning runs to the iron, why black people are black, why the sunlight makes things warm. I shall read, read, read," he muttered.

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them into the great crevices in the wall and frightening out the spiders, rapping them against the old plaster till it cracked and fell in pieces, pouring up the chimney till the soot dropped on his bald head and blackened it. He felt in little blue bags; he tried to raise the heartstone; he shook each bag till the old leaves fell down in showers on the floor.

It was getting dark, and Bonaparte stood with his finger on his nose reflecting. Finally he walked to the door, behind which hung the trousers and waistcoat the dead man had laid down. He had felt in them, but hurriedly, just after the funeral the day before. He would examine them again. Sticking his fingers into the waistcoat pockets, he found in one a hole. Pressing his hand through it, between the lining and the cloth, he presently came into contact with something.

Bonaparte drew it forth—a small, square parcel, sewed up in sallow cloth and shining on the ash heap, where the fowls were pecking. He turned and sat down on the nearest chair and, taking out his penknife, ripped the parcel open. The first thing that fell was a shower of yellow, faded papers. Bonaparte opened them carefully one by one and smoothed them out on his knee. There was something very valuable to be hidden so carefully, though the German characters he could not decipher. When he came to the last page, he felt there was something hard in it.

"You've got it, Bon, my boy; you've got it!" he cried, slapping his leg hard. Edging nearer to the door, for the light was fading, he opened the paper carefully. There was nothing inside but a plain gold wedding ring.

"Better than nothing!" said Bonaparte, trying to put it on his little finger, which, however, proved too fat.

He took it off and set it down on the table before him and looked at it with his crosswise eyes.

"When that auspicious hour, San- nien," he said, "shall have arrived when, panting, I shall lead thee, lighted by my torch, to the consummation of our love, then upon thy fair amaranthine finger, my joyous bride, shall this ring repose."

"The fair body, oh, my girl, shall Bonaparte possess; the finger is by me, my boy. He therein, too, shall mess."

Having given utterance to this flood of poetry, he sat lost in joyous reflection.

"He therein, too, shall mess," he repeated meditatively.

At this instant, as Bonaparte swore, and swore truly to the end of his life, a slow and distinct rap was given on the crown of his bald head.

Bonaparte started and looked up. No "crin" or strap hung down from the rafters above and not a human creature was near the door. It was growing dark. He did not like it. He began to fold up the papers expeditiously.

He stretched out his hand for the ring. The ring was gone—gone, although no human creature had entered the room; gone, although no form had crossed the doorway. Gone!

He would not sleep there, that was certain.

He stuffed the papers into his pocket. As he did so three slow and distinct taps were given on the crown of his head. Bonaparte's jaw fell. Each joint lost its power. He could not move, he dared not rise. His tongue lay loose in his mouth.

"Take all, take all!" he gurgled in his throat. "I—I do not want them. Take!"

Here a resolute tug at the gray curls at the back of his head caused him to leap up, yelling wildly. Was he to sit still paralyzed, to be dragged away bodily to the devil? With terrific shrieks he fled, casting no glance behind.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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