

The Story of an African Farm

Continued from First Page

from the "white" warmth, ran quickly to the kitchen door, but his mistress looked slowly at him and took her way up the winding footpath that ran beside the stone wall of the camp. When she came to the end of the last camp, she threaded her way among the stones and bushes till she reached the German's grave. Why she had come there she hardly knew. She stood looking down. Suddenly she bent and put one hand on the face of a wet stone.

"I shall never come to you again," she said.

Then she knelt on the ground and leaned her face upon the stones.

"Dear old man, good old man, I am so tired!" she said, for we will come to the dead to tell secrets we would never have told to the living. "I am so tired! There is light, there is warmth!" she said. "Why am I alone, so hard, so cold? I am so weary of myself! It is eating my soul to its core—self, self, self. I cannot bear this life! I cannot breathe, I cannot live! Will nothing free me from myself?" She pressed her cheek against the wooden post. "I want to love! I want something great and pure to lift me to myself. Dear old man, I cannot bear it any more! Will you, so cold, so hard, so hard! Will you help me?"

The water gathered slowly on her shawl and fell on to the wet stones, but she lay there crying bitterly, for the living soul will cry to the dead and the creature to its God, and of all this crying there comes nothing. The lifting up of the hands brings no salvation. Redemption is from within, and neither from God nor man. It is wrought out by the soul itself with suffering and through time.

Dora, on the kitchen doorstep, shivered and wondered where his mistress stood so long, and once, sitting sadly there in the damp, he had dropped asleep and dreamed that old Otto gave him a piece of bread and patted him on the head, and when he woke his teeth chattered, and he moved to another stone to see if it was drier. At last he heard his mistress step, and they went into the house together. She lit a candle and walked to the Boer woman's bedroom. On a nail under the lady in pink hung the key of the wardrobe. She took it down and opened the great press. From a little drawer she took £50, all she had in the world, unlocked the door and turned to hang up the key. Then she paused, hesitated. The marks of tears were still on her face, but she smiled.

"Fifty pounds for a lover! A noble reward!" she said and opened the wardrobe and returned the notes to the drawer, where Em might find them.

Once in her own room, she arranged the few articles she intended to take tomorrow, turned her old letters and then went back to the front room to look at the time. There were two hours yet before she must call him. She sat down at the dressing table and waited and waited. Em came on it and buried her face in her hands. The glass reflected the little brown head with its even parting and the tiny hands on which it rested. "One day I will love something utterly, and then I will be better," she said once. Presently she looked up. The large dark eyes from the glass looked back at her. She looked deep into them.

"We are all alone, you and I," she whispered. "No one helps us, no one understands us. But we will help ourselves." The eyes looked back at her. There was a world of assurance in their still depths. So they had looked at her over since she could remember, when it was but a small child's face above a blue pinafore. "We shall never be quite alone, you and I," she said. "We shall always be together, as we were when we were little."

The beautiful eyes looked into the depths of her soul.

"We are not afraid. We will help ourselves!" she said. She stretched out her hand and pressed it over them on the glass. "Dear eyes! We will never be quite alone till they part—till then!"

CHAPTER XXIII

GREGORY ROSE HAD AN IDEA. Gregory Rose was in the loft putting it next. Outside the rain poured. A six months' drought had broken, and the thirty plains were drenched with water. What it could not swallow ran off in mad rivulets to the great "salt" that now flowed like an angry river across the flat. Even the little furrow between the farmhouse and the kraals was now a stream, knee deep, which almost bore the Kafirs women who crossed it. It had rained for 24 hours. Her still the rain poured on. The fowls had collected a melancholy crowd—in and about the wagon house, and the solitary guard, who alone had survived the six months' want of water, walked and thither, putting his wretched footmarks on the mud, to have them washed out the next instant by the peeling rain, which at 11 o'clock still beat on the walls and roofs with unaltered ardor. Gregory as he worked in the loft took no notice of it beyond stuffing a sack into the broken pane to keep it out, and in spite of the pelt and patter, Em's clear voice might be heard through the open trapdoor from the dining room, where she sat at work, singing the "Blue Water."

"And take me away, And take me away, To the Blue Water!"

that quaint childish song of the people that has a world of sweetness and sad, vague yearning when sung over and over dreamily by a woman's voice as she sits alone at her work. But Gregory heard neither that nor yet the loud laughter of the Kafirs maids that every now and again broke through from the kitchen, where they joked and worked. Of late Gregory had grown strangely impervious to the sounds and sights about him. His head had run out, but Em had said: "Do not renew it. I need one to help me. Just stay on." And he had added: "You must not remain in your own little house. Live with me. You can look after my ostriches better so."

And Gregory did not thank her. What difference did it make to him, paying rent or not, living there or not? It was all one. But yet he came. Em wished that he would still sometimes talk of the strength and master right of man, but Gregory was as one smitten on the cheek bone. She might do what she pleased, he would find no fault, but no word to say. He had forgotten that it is man's right to rule. On that rainy morning he had lighted his pipe at the kitchen fire and when breakfast was over stood in the front

door watching the water rush down the road till the pipe died out in his mouth. Em saw she must do something for him and found him a large coffee pot. He had sometimes talked of putting the left hand, and today she could find nothing else for him to do. So she had the ladder put to the trapdoor that he need not go out in the wet, and Gregory with the broom and dustpan mounted to the loft. Once at work, he worked hard. He dusted the broken canals and bent forks that had stuck in the thatch for 20 years. He placed the black bottles neatly in rows on an old box in the corner and piled the skins on one another and sorted the rubbish in all the boxes, and at 11 o'clock his work was almost done.

He waited himself on the packing case which had once held Waldo's books and proceeded to examine the contents of another which he had not yet looked at. It was carefully nailed down. He loosened one plank and began to lift out various articles of female attire—old fashioned caps, aprons, dresses with long pointed bodices such as he remembered to have seen his mother wear when he was a little child. He took them out one by one. They had belonged to Em's mother, and the box as packed at her death had stood untouched and forgotten these long years. She must have been a tall woman, that mother of Em's, for when he stood up to shake out a dress the neck was on a level with his, and the skirt touched the ground. Gregory laid a nightgown on his knee and began pulling up the strings, but presently his fingers moved slower and slower, then his chin rested on his breast, and finally the imploring blue eyes were fixed on the full attractiveness. Why Em's voice called to him from the foot of the ladder, he started and threw the nightgown behind him.

She was only come to tell him that his cup of soup was ready, and when he could hear that she was gone he picked up the nightgown again and a great brown sun "kapje," just such a "kapje" and such a dress as one of those remembered to have seen a sister of Em's wear. Gregory's mind was full of thought. He took down a fragment of an old looking glass from behind a beam and put the "kapje" on. His head looked somewhat grotesque under it. He put up his hand to hide it. That was better. The blue eyes looked out with mild gentleness that became eyes looking out from under a "kapje." Next he took the brown dress and, looking round furtively, slipped it over his head. He had put his arms in the sleeves and was trying to hook up the back when an increase in the patter of the rain at the window made him drag it off hastily. When he perceived there was no one coming, he tumbled the things back into the box and, covering it carefully, went down the ladder.

Em was still at her work, trying to adjust a new needle in the machine. Gregory drank his soup and then sat before her, an awful and mysterious look in his eyes.

"I am going to town tomorrow," he said.

"I'm almost afraid you won't be able to go," said Em, who was intent on her needle. "I don't think it is going to leave off today."

"I am going," said Gregory.

Em looked up. "But the 'shoots' are as full as rivers. You cannot go. We can wait for the post," she said.

"I am not going for the post," said Gregory impressively.

Em looked for explanation. None came.

"When will you be back?"

"I am not coming back."

"Are you going to your friends?"

Gregory waited, then caught her by the wrist.

"Look here, Em," he said between his teeth. "I can't stand it any more. I am going to her."

"Since that day when he had come home and found Lyndal gone he had never talked of her, but Em knew that it was his need to be spoken of by her name."

She said when he had released her hand:

"But you do not know where she is?"

"Yes, I do. She was in Bloemfontein when I heard last. I will go there, and I will find out where she went then, and then, and then! I will have her!"

Em turned the wheel quickly, and the ill-adjusted needle sprang into 20 fragments.

"Gregory," she said, "she does not want us. She told us so clearly in the letter she wrote." It was only by pain on her face, Gregory, that she like to have you near her."

There was an answer he might have made, but it was his secret, and he did not choose to share it. He said only:

"I am going."

"I do not know. Perhaps I shall never come back. Do what you please with my things. I cannot stay here."

He rose from his seat.

"People say forget, forget!" he cried, pacing the room. "They are mad! They are fools! Do they say so to men who are dying of thirst—forget, forget? Why is it only to us they say so? It is a lie to say that time makes it easy! It is afterward, afterward, that it is easy in that hour! 'I have lived here quietly, day after day, as if I cared for what I ate and what I drank and what I did! I care for nothing! I cannot bear it! I will not forget, forget!' ejaculated Gregory. "You can forget all the world, but you cannot forget yourself. When one thing is more to you than yourself, how are you to forget it?"

"I will," he said—"yes, and then I come to a word she used, and it is all back with me again! I go to count my sheep, and I see her face before me, and I stand and let the sheep run by. I look at you, and to your smile, something at the corner of your lips. I see her. How can I forget her when, whenever I turn, she is there and not there? I cannot, I will not, live where I do not see her!"

"I know what you think," he said, turning upon Em. "You think I am mad; you think I am going to see whether she will not like me! I am not so foolish. I should have known at first she never could suffer me. Who am I, what am I, that she should look at me? If any one says it is not, it is a lie! I am not going to speak to her," he added, "only to see her, only to stand sometimes in a place where she has stood before."

CHAPTER XXIV

AN UNFINISHED LETTER. Gregory Rose had been seven months. Em sat alone on a white sheepskin before the fire. The August wind, wild and shrill, howled round the chimneys and through the cranberries and in walls and doors and uttered a long, low cry as it forced its way among the clefts of the

stones on the "kopje." It was a wild night. The prickly pear tree, stiff and upright as it held its arms, felt the leaves heavily together till great branches broke off. The Kafirs as they slept in their straw huts whispered one to another that before morning there would not be an animal of thatch left on the roofs, and the beams of the wagon house creaked and groaned as if it were heavy work to resist the importunity of the wind.

Em had not gone to bed. Who could sleep on a night like this? So in the dining room she had lighted a fire and sat on the ground before it, turning the roaster cakes that lay on the coals to bake. It would save work in the morning, and she blew out the light because the wind through the window chinks made it flicker and run, and she sat singing to herself as she watched the cakes. They lay at one end of the wide hearth on a bed of coals, and at the other end a fire burned up the chimney, casting its amber glow over Em's light hair and black dress, with the ruffe of cape about the neck and over the white curls of the sheepskin on which she sat.

London and more fiercely bowed the storm, but Em sang on and heard nothing but the words of her song, and heard them only faintly, as something restful. It was an old, childish song she had once heard her mother sing long ago:

"Where the rocks dance by the river,
Where the willow's song is laid,
On the face of the morning water,
I followed a white swan's head."

She folded her hands and sang the next verse dreamily:

"Where the rocks dance by the river,
Where the moonlight's shen is shed,
On the face of the morning water,
Two leaves of a white flower shed."

She echoed the refrain softly till it died away, and then repeated it. It was as if, unknown to herself, it harmonized with the pictures and thoughts that sat with her there alone in the freight. She turned the cakes over while the wind burst down a row of bricks from the gable and made the walls tremble.

Presently she paused and listened. There was a sound as of something knocking at the back doorway. But the wind had raised its level higher, and she went on with her work. At last the sound was repeated. Then she rose, lighted the candle at the fire and went to see, only to satisfy herself, she said, that nothing could be out on such a night.

She opened the door a little way and held the light behind her to defend it from the wind. The figure of a tall man stood there, and before she could speak he had pushed his way in and was forcing the door to close behind him.

"Waldo!" she cried in astonishment. He had been gone more than a year and a half.

"You did not expect to see me," he answered as he turned toward her. "I should have slept in the outhouse and not troubled you tonight, but through the shutter I saw glimmerings of a light."

"Come into the fire," she said. "It is a terrible night for any creature to be out. Shall we not go and fetch your things in first?" she added.

"I have nothing but this," he said, motioning to the little bundle in his hand.

"Your horse?"

"Is dead."

"Your horse?"

"Is dead."

"Your horse?"

"Is dead."

"Where is she? I had one letter from her, but that is almost a year ago now, just when she left. Where is she?"

"In the Transvaal. I will go and get you some supper. We can talk afterward."

"Can you give me her exact address? I want to write to her."

But Em had gone into the next room. When food was on the table, she knelt down before the fire, turning the cakes, but she had nothing to say of this, now that she was glad to see him. Tant Nannie was coming soon to show her her new baby. He must stay on the farm now and help her. And Waldo himself was well content to eat his meal in silence, asking no more questions.

"Gregory is coming back next week," she said. "He will have been gone 103 days tomorrow. I had a letter from him yesterday."

"Where has he been?"

"How the wind blows! One can hardly hear one's own voice," she said. "Take this warm cake. No one's cakes are like mine. Why, you have eaten nothing?"

"I am a little weary," he said. "The wind was mad tonight."

"I will write a few lines," he said, "if you are ready to sit down and talk."

Em as she shook out the tablecloth watched him bending intently over his paper. He had changed much. His face had grown thinner; his cheeks were almost hollow, though they were covered by a dark growth of beard.

She sat down on the skin beside him and felt the little bundle on the bench. It was painfully small and soft. Perhaps it held a shirt and a boot and nothing more. The old black hat had a piece of unhemmed muslin twisted round it, and on his elbow was a large patch so fixed on with yellow thread that her heart ached. Only his hair was not changed and hung in beautiful waves almost to his shoulders. Tomorrow she would take the ragged edge off his collar and put a new band round his hat. She did not interrupt him, but she wondered it was that he sat to write so intently after his long, weary walk. He was not tired now. His pen hurried quickly and restlessly over the paper, and his eye was bright. Presently Em raised her hand to her breast, where lay the letter yesterday had brought her. Soon she had forgotten him as entirely as he had forgotten her. Each was in his own world with his own. He was writing to Lyndal. He would tell her all he had seen, all he had done, though it were nothing worth relating. He seemed to have come back to her and to be talking to her now he sat there in the old house:

"And then I got to the next town, and my horse was tired, so I could go no farther and looked for work. A shopkeeper agreed to hire me as a salesman. He made me sign a promise to remain six months, and he gave me a little empty room in the back of the store to sleep in. I had still £3 of my own, and when you have just come from the country £3 seems a great deal."

"When I had been in the shop three days, I wanted to go away again. A clerk in a shop has the lowest work to do of all people. It is much better to be a break stone. You have the blue sky

above you and only the stones to bend to. I asked my master to let me go, and I offered to give him my £2 and the bag of mealies I had bought with my money, but he would not.

"I found out afterward he was only giving me half as much as he gave to the others. That was why. I had a fear when I looked at the other clerks that I would at last become like them. All day they were bowing and smiling to the women who came in, smiling when all they wanted was to get their money from them. They used to run and fetch the dresses and ribbons to show them, and they seemed to me like worms with oil on. There was one respectable thing in that store—it was the Kafirs' storehouse. His work was to load and unload, and he never needed to smile except when he liked, and he never told lies.

OR BE CONTINUED.

THE CALIFORNIA ROSE CO., Los Angeles, Cal. are headquarters of the rose for fine field grown ROSE HUSKIES. All the latest and best sorts. Send for a catalogue today.

Try a bottle of it.

Portland Business College

THE BUSY WORLD OF BUSINESS

gives profitable employment to hundreds of our graduates, and will to thousands more. Send for our catalogue. Learn more and how we teach. Verily,

A BUSINESS EDUCATION PAYS

SAVE YOUR STAR TIN TAGS

"Star" tin tags (showing small stars printed on under side of tag). "Horse Shoe," "Green Bow," and "Diamond" Natural Leaf Tin Tags are of equal value in securing presents mentioned below, and may be assorted. Every man, woman and child can find something on the list that they would like to have, and can have

FREE!

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1 Watch, 14K gold, good steel. | 20 Clock, 4-day, Calendar, 14K gold, 12K gold, 10K gold, 8K gold, 6K gold, 4K gold, 3K gold, 2K gold, 1K gold, 1/2K gold, 1/4K gold, 1/8K gold, 1/16K gold, 1/32K gold, 1/64K gold, 1/128K gold, 1/256K gold, 1/512K gold, 1/1024K gold, 1/2048K gold, 1/4096K gold, 1/8192K gold, 1/16384K gold, 1/32768K gold, 1/65536K gold, 1/131072K gold, 1/262144K gold, 1/524288K gold, 1/1048576K gold, 1/2097152K gold, 1/4194304K gold, 1/8388608K gold, 1/16777216K gold, 1/33554432K gold, 1/67108864K gold, 1/134217728K gold, 1/268435456K gold, 1/536870912K gold, 1/1073741824K gold, 1/2147483648K gold, 1/4294967296K gold, 1/8589934592K gold, 1/17179869184K gold, 1/34359738368K gold, 1/68719476736K gold, 1/137438953472K gold, 1/274877906944K gold, 1/549755813888K gold, 1/1099511627776K gold, 1/2199023255552K gold, 1/4398046511104K gold, 1/8796093022208K gold, 1/17592186044416K gold, 1/35184372088832K gold, 1/70368744177664K gold, 1/140737488355328K gold, 1/281474976710656K gold, 1/562949953421312K gold, 1/1125899906842624K gold, 1/2251799813685248K gold, 1/4503599627370496K gold, 1/9007199254740992K gold, 1/18014398509481984K gold, 1/36028797018963968K gold, 1/72057594037927936K gold, 1/144115188075855872K gold, 1/288230376151711744K gold, 1/576460752303423488K gold, 1/1152921504606846976K gold, 1/2305843009213693952K gold, 1/4611686018427387904K gold, 1/9223372036854775808K gold, 1/18446744073709551616K gold, 1/36893488147419103232K gold, 1/73786976294838206464K gold, 1/147573952589676412928K gold, 1/295147905179352825856K gold, 1/590295810358705651712K gold, 1/1180591620717411303424K gold, 1/2361183241434822606848K gold, 1/4722366482869645213696K gold, 1/9444732965739290427392K gold, 1/18889465931478580854784K gold, 1/37778931862957161709568K gold, 1/75557863725914323419136K gold, 1/151115727451828646838272K gold, 1/302231454903657293676544K gold, 1/604462909807314587353088K gold, 1/1208925819614629174706176K gold, 1/2417851639229258349412352K gold, 1/4835703278458516698824704K gold, 1/9671406556917033397649408K gold, 1/19342813113834066795298816K gold, 1/38685626227668133590597632K gold, 1/77371252455336267181195264K gold, 1/154742504910672534362390528K gold, 1/309485009821345068724781056K gold, 1/618970019642690137449562112K gold, 1/1237940039285380274899124224K gold, 1/2475880078570760549798248448K gold, 1/4951760157141521099596496896K gold, 1/9903520314283042199192993792K gold, 1/19807040628566084398385987584K gold, 1/39614081257132168796771975168K gold, 1/79228162514264337593543950336K gold, 1/158456325028528675187087900672K gold, 1/316912650057057350374175801344K gold, 1/633825300114114700748351602688K gold, 1/1267650600228229401496703205376K gold, 1/2535301200456458802993406410752K gold, 1/5070602400912917605986812821504K gold, 1/10141204801825835211973625643008K gold, 1/20282409603651670423947251286016K gold, 1/40564819207303340847894502572032K gold, 1/81129638414606681695789005144064K gold, 1/162259276829213363391578010288128K gold, 1/324518553658426726783156020576256K gold, 1/649037107316853453566312041152512K gold, 1/1298074214633706907132624082305024K gold, 1/2596148429267413814265248164610048K gold, 1/5192296858534827628530496329220096K gold, 1/10384593717069655257060992658440192K gold, 1/20769187434139310514121985316880384K gold, 1/41538374868278621028243970633760768K gold, 1/83076749736557242056487941267521536K gold, 1/166153499473114484112975882535043072K gold, 1/332306998946228968225951765070086144K gold, 1/664613997892457936451903530140172288K gold, 1/1329227995784915872903807060280344576K gold, 1/2658455991569831745807614120560689152K gold, 1/5316911983139663491615228241121378304K gold, 1/10633823966279326983230456482242756608K gold, 1/21267647932558653966460912964485513216K gold, 1/42535295865117307932921825928971026432K gold, 1/85070591730234615865843651857942052864K gold, 1/170141183460469231731687303715884105728K gold, 1/340282366920938463463374607431768211456K gold, 1/680564733841876926926749214863536422912K gold, 1/1361129467683753853853498429727072845824K gold, 1/2722258935367507707706996859454145691648K gold, 1/5444517870735015415413993718908291383296K gold, 1/10889035741470030830827987437816582766592K gold, 1/21778071482940061661655974875633165533184K gold, 1/43556142965880123323311949751266331066368K gold, 1/87112285931760246646623899502532662132736K gold, 1/17422457186352049329324779900506524426552K gold, 1/34844914372704098658649559801013048853104K gold, 1/69689828745408197317299119602026097706208K gold, 1/139379657490816394634598239204052195412416K gold, 1/278759314981632789269196478408104390824832K gold, 1/557518629963265578538392956816208781649664K gold, 1/1115037259926531157076785913632417363299328K gold, 1/2230074519853062314153571827264834726598656K gold, 1/4460149039706124628307143654529669453197312K gold, 1/8920298079412249256614287309059338906394624K gold, 1/17840596158824498513228574618118677812789248K gold, 1/35681192317648997026457149236237355625578496K gold, 1/71362384635297994052914298472474711251156992K gold, 1/142724769270595988105828596944949422502313984K gold, 1/285449538541191976211657193889898845004627968K gold, 1/570899077082383952423314387779797690009255936K gold, 1/1141798154164767904846628775559595380018511872K gold, 1/2283596308329535809693257551119190760037023744K gold, 1/4567192616659071619386515102238381520074047488K gold, 1/9134385233318143238773030204476763040148094976K gold, 1/18268770466636286477546060408953526080296189952K gold, 1/36537540933272572955092120817907052160592379904K gold, 1/73075081866545145910184241635814104321184759808K gold, 1/146150163733090291820368483271628208642369519616K gold, 1/292300327466180583640736966543256417284739039232K gold, 1/584600654932361167281473933086512834569478078464K gold, 1/1169201309864722334562947866173025669138956156928K gold, 1/2338402619729444669125895732346051338277912313856K gold, 1/4676805239458889338251791464692102676555824627712K gold, 1/9353610478917778676503582929384205353111649255424K gold, 1/18707220957835557353007165858768410706223298510848K gold, 1/37414441915671114706014331717536821412446597021696K gold, 1/74828883831342229412028663435073642824893194043392K gold, 1/149657767662684458824057326870147285649786388086784K gold, 1/299315535325368917648114653740294571299572776173568K gold, 1/598631070650737835296229307480589142599145552347136K gold, 1/119726214130147 |
|--------------------------------|---|