

# The Story of an African Farm

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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, she asked for her desk.

Then Gregory sat down in the lamp-light on the glass 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. Her hand was on the languid eyelids. Must have been strangely moved before by her hand set down to 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 you? 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 be true to the sake of what lay by me those three hours, but that 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 give up 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 free."

"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 so sat watching the 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 a tick, 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. "It 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 awake 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 feet 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 murmured to herself: "Not utterly had, not quite bad. What makes them all love me so?"

Kneeling 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, perhaps? Fearful? Her face 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 straying far from the light, 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 lived 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 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 one stocking, 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

glorified angels, and the youth who look for the maid, and the mother for the baby. And when those shall be at the resurrection of the dead?"

"Ah, God! Ah, God! A beautiful dream!" he cried. "But can you say dream is not sleeping?"

Waldo paced on, moaning in agony and longing.

He heard the transcendent stillness of the desert, the sound of the wind with the faint rustle of the leaves, and the sound of the sea with the soft murmur of the waves, and the sound of the stars with the soft murmur of the night.

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## For You to Read

"What puzzled me in the beginning was that I kept losing flesh without any cause for it that I could see. I had a little trouble with my stomach, too, and after a while began to grow weaker and to cough. The cough, I thought, would soon go away and cure itself, but it didn't. It grew worse, and then I began to spit up a peculiar looking substance. I never thought of consumption, but one day I had a hemorrhage, and she was frightened in earnest and did just what you would do. I rushed to the doctor. He was quite too busy, something else, for he didn't do me any good. I kept going on down hill, and the outlook was bad. Things took a different turn, however, when I heard of Ackers' English Remedy for Consumption, for I took it, and it not only cured my coughing and spitting, but it built up my whole system. I took on permanent flesh, and today am just as healthy a man as you can find in a week's time. You may be sure I always keep Ackers' English Remedy in the house, and it is a good thing I do so, for one night my young child was seized with croup. That hoarse, wheezy cough was the first signal, and I lost no time in giving the poor little sufferer proper doses of this grand medicine. In almost no time the disease was under control, and my child was saved. I advise every parent to have a bottle handy all the time. It serves the same purpose in keeping croup out of the house that a good lock and key serve to keep burglars out. It is both an expectorant and a tonic. It cured me of consumption, and my child, and I know what I am talking about." (Signed) Hon. M. HOGAN, picture frame manufacturer, 241 Center Street, New York.



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