

The Story of an African Farm

Continued from First Page

do we hear of Moses or Noah riding in a railway? The Lord sent fire carriages out of heaven in those days.

"Yes," said Tant Sannie; "I had almost forgotten to tell you. By the Lord if I had him here! We were walking to church last sacrament Sunday, First and L. Close in front of us was old Tant Trana, with droopy and cancer and can't live eight months. Walking by her was something with his hands under his coat, flap, flap, flap, and his chin in the air, and a stick up collar, and the black hat he was wearing on the head, I know him! 'Who's that?' I asked. 'The rich Englishman that Tant Trana married last week.' 'Rich Englishman?' I said. 'I'll tell Tant Trana a thing or two. My fingers were just an his little white curls. If it hadn't been the blessed sacrament, he would not have walked so 'sourka, sourka, sourka' any more. But I thought well till I've had it, and then— I beg, my fox, son of a man, seed of a man, he was me looking at him in the church. The blessed sacrament wasn't half over when he takes Tant Trana by the arm, and out they go. I clap my baby down to its father, and I go after them. But," said Tant Sannie regretfully, "I couldn't get up to them. I am too fat. When I got to the corner, he was pulling Tant Trana up into the cart. 'Tant Trana,' said the 'Hot-tent's brack.' I hadn't any more breath. He winked at me—he winked at me," said Tant Sannie, her sides shaking with indignation, "first with one eye and then with the other, and then he went away. Child of the Analek-it," said Tant Sannie, "if it hadn't been the blessed sacrament! Lord, Lord, Lord!"

Here the little Bush girl came running to say that the horses would stand no longer, and still breathing out vengeance against her old adversary, she labored toward the cart. Shaking hands and affectionately kissing Em, she was with some difficulty drawn up. Then slowly the cart rolled away, the good Bro woman putting her head out between the sails to smile at her old friend. Em was not a bit in a hurry. Then as the sun dazzled her eyes she turned away. There was no use in going to sit with Gregory. He liked best sitting there alone, staring across the green "karrow," and till the sun had set, Em did not go to anything to do, so Em walked away to the wagon house and climbed on to the end of Waldo's table and sat there, swinging one little foot slowly to and fro, while the wooden curls from the plane leaped themselves up against her black braided hair.

"Waldo," she said at last, "Gregory has given me the money he got for the wagon and oxen, and I have £50 besides that once belonged to some one. I know what they would have liked to have done with it. You must take it and go to some place and study for a year or two."

"No, little one, I will not take it," he said as he planned slowly away. "The time was when I would have been very grateful to any one who would have given me a little money, a little help, a little power of gaining knowledge. But now I have gone so far alone I may go to the end. I don't want it, little one."

"Why is it always so, Waldo—always so," she said, "that for things and long for them and pray for them, but they would give all we have to come near to them, but we never reach them. Then at last, too late, just when we don't want them any more, when all the sweetness is taken out of them, then they come. We don't want them then," she said, folding her hands resignedly on her little apron. After awhile she added: "I remember once, very long ago, when I was a very little girl, my mother had a workbox full of colored beads. I always wanted to play with them, but she would never let me. At last one day she said I might take the box. I was so glad I hardly knew what to do. I ran round the house and sat down with it on the back steps, but when I opened the box all the cottons were taken out."

"She sat for awhile longer till the Kaffir maid had finished churning and was carrying the butter toward the house. Then Em prepared to slip off the table, but first she laid her little hand on Waldo's. He stopped his planning and looked up.

"Gregory is going to the town tomorrow. He is going to give in our banners to the minister. We are going to be married in three weeks."

Waldo lifted her very gently from the table. He did not congratulate her. Perhaps he thought of the empty box, but he kissed her forehead gravely.

She walked away toward the house, but stopped when she had got half way. "I will bring you a glass of buttermilk when it is cool. You must take it, and soon her clear voice came ringing out through the back windows as she sang the "Blue Water" to herself and washed the butter.

Waldo did not wait till she returned. Perhaps he had at last really grown weary of work, perhaps he felt the wagon house chilly for he had shuddered two or three times, though that was hardly likely in that warm summer weather, or perhaps, and most probably, one of his old dreaming fits had come upon him suddenly. He put his tools carefully together, ready for tomorrow, and walked slowly out. At the side of the wagon house there was a world of bright sunshine, and a hen with her chickens was scratching among the gravel. Waldo seated himself near them with his back against the red brick wall. The long afternoon was half spent, and the "kopje" was just beginning to cast its shadow over the round headed yellow flowers that grow between it and the farmhouse. Among the flowers the white butterflies hovered, and on the old kraal mounds three white kids gambled, and at the door of one of the huts an old gray headed Kaffir woman sat on the ground mending her mums. A halcyon, restless, business seemed to reign everywhere. Even the old hen seemed well satisfied. She scratched among the stones and called to her chickens when she found a treasure and with intense clucked to herself with intense inward satisfaction. Waldo as he sat with his knees drawn up to his chin and his arms folded on them looked at it all and smiled. An evil world, a deceitful, treacherous, mirage-like world, it might be, but a lovely world for all that, and to sit there gazing in the sunlight was perfect.

There are times when a man's soul can see Nature. So long as any passion holds its revel there, the eyes are hidden that should not see her. Go out, if you will, and walk alone on the hillside in the evening, but if your

favorite child lies ill at home, or your lower comes tomorrow, or at your heart there lies a scheme for the holding of wealth, then you will return as you went out—you will have seen nothing for Nature, ever, like the old Hebrew God, cries out: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Only thou when the old idol is broken, when the old hope is dead, when the old desire is crushed, then the Divine compensation of Nature is made manifest. She shows herself to thee."

So near she draws you that the blood seems to flow from her to you through a still uncut cord. You feel the throbs of her life.

When that day comes that you sit down before, without one human creature, to whom you cling, with your loves the dead and the living dead; when the very thirst for knowledge through long continued thwarting has grown dull; when in the present there is no craving and in the future no hope, then, with a beneficent tenderness, Nature unfolds you.

Then the large white snowflakes as they flutter down softly, one by one, whisper soothingly, "Rest, poor heart, rest!" It is as though our mother smoothed our hair, and we are comforted.

Well to die then, for, if you live, so surely as the years come, so surely as the spring succeeds the winter, so surely will passions arise. They will creep back, one by one, into the bosom that has cast them forth and fasten there again, and peace will go. Desire, ambition and the fierce agonizing flood of love for the living—they will spring again. Then Nature will draw down her veil. With all your longing you shall not be able to see one corner. You cannot bring back those peaceful days. Well to die then!

Sitting there with his arms folded on his knees and his hat slouched over his forehead, he looked out into the yellow sunshine that tinted even the very air with the color of ripe corn and was happy.

He was an uncouth creature, with small learning and no prospect in the future but that of making ends meet, and stone walls, yet it seemed to him as he sat there that life was a rare and very rich thing. He rubbed his hands in the sunshine. Ah, to live so, so, year after year, how well! Always in the present, letting each day glide, bringing its labor and its own beauty, the gradual lighting up of the hills, night and the stars, freight and the combs! To live on so, calmly, far from the paths of men, and to look at the lives of clouds and insects, to look deep into the faces of flowers and see how longingly the pistil and the stamens nestle there together, and to see in the thorn pods how the little seeds suck their life through the delicate curled up strings and how the little embryo slips inside! Well, how well, to live on one side, taking no part in the world's life, but when great men blossom into books looking into those flowers also, to see how the world of men, too, opens beautifully, leaf after leaf! Ah, life is delicious! Well to live long and see the dawn breaking and the day coming, the day when the soul shall not trust back soul that would come to it, when men shall not be driven to seek solitude because of the crying out of their hearts for love and sympathy! Well to live long and to have done with it. You must take it and go to some place and study for a year or two."

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building, and the work was prosecuted there in some degree, and good results. This led to the enactment of the law for state aid, under which hundreds of miles of new improved roads have been built in all sections of the state. In Essex county the improvement has gone on under the state aid act until the county is a network of good roads. For road improvements projected for the present year the county will pay about \$55,000.

The law imposes one-third of the cost of new roads on the state, 10 per cent on the property owners and the balance on the county. By the new law townships can petition independently of the board of freeholders for state aid, and this will promote road building in counties which have been backward by reason of the unwillingness of the county authorities to assume the county's share of the cost.

Recommendations were made to the legislature to add to the highway law provision for the maintenance of improved highways by the county officials and to provide for a state quarry of road rock where convicts from Sing Sing prison can be employed in producing crushed stone for highway improvement.

Since the good roads movement was begun the state and counties of New Jersey have spent \$2,147,478 in improving their highways, and up to Dec. 15 last have completed 430 1/2 miles of road. The state and counties of Massachusetts during the same period expended \$2,037,700, and built more than 250 miles of road, which, according to Mr. Mendonell, is as perfect as any of the remarkably highways of Europe. The Higbee-Armstrong bill became a law in New York a little over two years ago, and there has been a annual appropriation of \$50,000 as state aid for the improvement of highways. New York is far behind either Massachusetts or New Jersey, and efforts will be made at intervals to show that if the commerce is to be retained and merchandise brought satisfactorily to the railroads and canals, upon which so much public money is being lavished, the highways must be improved.

Improving the Roads. Between the wheelmen and the farmers it ought to be possible to make the question of national highway improvements a very live issue. Plenty of subjects which are petty and absurd by contrast have won much attention in congress. It is time that the improvement of public highways had its share of the interest centered upon questionable schemes and the improvement of dubious little rivers which can never have any commerce worthy of the name.—Cleveland Leader.

Good Roads Movement Has Become National in Scope. The announcement that a bill had been introduced to congress on behalf of the League of American Wheelmen asking for an appropriation of \$5,000,000 for good roads marked the beginning of the good roads agitation as a national movement. Heretofore confined to the state, it is now in a fair way to become a national importance and, as predicted by many of the good roads enthusiasts, to become a national political issue.

Already there are some who say that such an appropriation is not feasible because there are small chances of the bill becoming a law. It may be news to this class to know that all the machinery of the league has been at work on this bill for the past six months, and every feature of it has been most carefully considered. It is now thought an appropriate time to introduce it and from now on every effort will be made to secure its passage. The methods to be employed in its behalf have been part of the investigations of the national officers of the league, and the campaign outlined will be carefully and enthusiastically carried out.

As for the merits of the bill, there can be no question. It is a recognized fact now that good highways are an economical necessity, in which this country is conspicuously behind Europe. That such a bill will receive an extended support cannot be doubted, as it is framed in the interests of wheelmen, farmers, automobilists and the commercial community generally.

Good Roads in Other Countries. There are, it is estimated, 300,000 miles of highway in the United States, about 20 per cent of the roads of all the world. Great Britain has 120,000 miles of roads, and there are some 275,000 miles of roads, and some of them are as poor as the roadways of a great country can be. France, which has taken an enlightened view of the good roads question for many years and has spent by governmental and local authority more than \$1,000,000,000 on highways, has a road mileage of 330,000, more than any other country. Russia, with an enormous area, has only 10,000 miles of roadways, while Italy, a smaller country, has 55,000. Wide tires for heavy loads are prescribed in all these countries.

Are Friends of the Farmer. The wheelmen during their bicycle trips and the lawless outrages during their peregrinations in the country, may occasionally scare the farmer's horse, but none the less the farmer should give them welcome. They are the advance agents and apostles of the good roads, and to the farmer good roads are of the first necessity.—Philadelphia Record.

NEW YORK HIGHWAYS. Progress in Improvement Reported by the State Engineer. Edward A. Bond, state engineer and surveyor of New York, in his annual report to the legislature touched on the improvement of highways. He said:

"The improvement of highways under the provisions of the Higbee-Armstrong act of 1898 constitutes an important part of the duties of the state engineer and is one which attracts much public interest. The state has appropriated \$100,000 in all with which to pay for one-half the cost of such roads as are improved under the provisions of the law. This sum is small in proportion to the amounts appropriated by the states of Massachusetts and New Jersey, but with it contracts have been made for 25 miles of improved highways, of which seven miles on four roads have been finished and accepted during the year. Six and a half miles on one road are about finished, but are not accepted, and 11 miles on six roads are in progress. These roads are located in Erie, Monroe, Otsego, Schoharie, Oneida, Renesselear and Columbia counties. Surveys have also been made for 142 miles of roads in 14 counties, which are expected to be improved when provision is made by the legislature.

"The highways which have so far been improved have necessarily been comparatively short pieces, ranging from one-half mile to six miles in length. These serve as examples to the people in the various localities, with the immediate result that many petitions are received from the counties in which roads have been built. There is a general expectation that the legislature will make appropriation which will bear some comparison to those made for road work by the neighboring states."

"Some of the roads have been built of six inches thickness of crushed limestone, forming macadam 12 feet wide. The average cost per mile has been \$7,074, not including two roads made nine inches thick instead of six inches and costing proportionately more per mile. Experience, however, shows that 16 feet is the least width of roadway for a road having much travel, and as the roads first improved are naturally the main highways in the region, this width is the one generally adopted. It is also found to give best economy to use two inches of gravel rock, which is most durable to form the surface of the macadam roadway. With these features the average cost throughout the state will be between \$8,000 and \$9,000 per mile, which is 20 per cent below the cost of similar roads in Massachusetts.

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6 a. m. Willamette River Corvallis and way landings. 4:30 p. m. Tues Thu a Sat

1 p. m. Snake River Riparian to Lewiston. 8:30 a. m.

Address, W. H. DUBBUERT, Gen'l Pass. Agent, Geo'l Agts. Nor. Pac. S. S. Co. Portland, Oregon.