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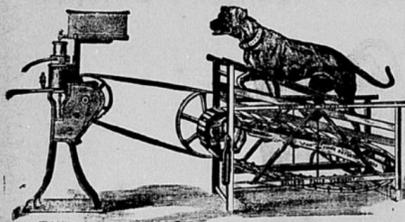
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## The Story of an African Farm.

By OLIVE SCHREINER.

[CONTINUED.]

"Here! I always carry it here," said the boy, putting his hand to his breast, where a bulging out was visible. "This is a model. When it is done, they will have to make a large one."

"Show it me."  
The boy shook his head.  
"No, not till it is done. I cannot let any human being see it till then."

"It is a beautiful secret," said Em, and the boy shuffled out to pick up his skins.

That evening father and son sat in the cabin eating their supper. The father sighed deeply sometimes. Perhaps he thought how long a time it was since Bonaparte had visited the cabin, but his son was in that land in which sighs have no part. It is a question whether it were not better to be the shabbiest of fools and know the way up the little stair of imagination to the land of dreams than the wisest of men, who see nothing that the eyes do not show and feel nothing that the hands do not touch. The boy chewed his brown bread and drank his coffee, but in truth he saw only his machine finished, that last something found out and added. He saw it as it worked with beautiful smoothness, and over and above, as he chewed his bread and drank his coffee, there was that delightful consciousness of something bending over him and loving him. It would not have been better in one of the courts of heaven, where the walls are set with rows of the King of Glory's anachorites and milk white pearls, than there, eating his supper in that little room.

As they sat in silence there was a knock at the door. When it was opened, the small woolly head of a little nigger showed itself. She was a messenger from Tant' Sannie. The German was wanted at once at the homestead. Putting on his hat with both hands, he hurried off. The kitchen was in darkness, but in the pantry beyond Tant' Sannie and her maids were assembled.

A Kaffir girl who had been grinding pepper between two stones knelt on the floor, the Jean Hottentot stood with a brass candlestick in her hand, and Tant' Sannie, near the shelf, with a hand on each hip, was evidently listening intently, as were her companions.

"What may it be?" cried the old German in astonishment.  
The room beyond the pantry was the storeroom. Through the thin wooden partition there arose at that instant, evidently from some creature ensconced there, a prolonged and prodigious howl, followed by a succession of violent blows against the partition wall.

The German seized the churn stick and was about to rush round the house when the Boer woman impressively laid her hand upon his arm.

"That is his head," said Tant' Sannie; "that is his head."

"But what might it be?" asked the German, looking from one to the other, churn stick in hand.

A low hollow bellow prevented reply, and the voice of Bonaparte lifted itself on high.

"Mary Ann, my angel, my wife!"  
"Isn't it dreadful?" said Tant' Sannie as the blows were repeated fiercely.

"He has got a letter. His wife is dead. You must go and comfort him," said Tant' Sannie at last, "and I will go with you. It would not be the thing for me to go alone—me, who am only 33, and he an unmarried man now," said Tant' Sannie, blushing and smoothing out her apron.

Upon this they all trudged round the house in company, the Hottentot maid carrying the light, Tant' Sannie and the German following and the Kaffir girl bringing up the rear.

"Oh," said Tant' Sannie, "I see now it wasn't wickedness made him do without his wife so long, only necessity."

At the door she motioned to the German to enter and followed him closely. On the stretcher behind the sacks Bonaparte lay on his face, his head pressed into a pillow, his legs kicking gently. The Boer woman sat down on a box at the foot of the bed. The German stood with folded hands looking on.

"We must all die," said Tant' Sannie at last. "It is the dear Lord's will."

Hearing her voice, Bonaparte turned himself on to his back.

"It's very hard," said Tant' Sannie. "I know, for I've lost two husbands."

Bonaparte looked up into the German's face.

"Oh, what does she say? Speak to me words of comfort!"

The German repeated Tant' Sannie's remark.

"Ah, I—I also, two dear, dear wives, whom I shall never see any more!" cried Bonaparte, flinging himself back upon the bed.

He howled until the tarantulas that lived between the rafters and the zinc roof felt the unusual vibration and looked out with their wicked bright eyes to see what was going on.

Tant' Sannie sighed; the Hottentot maid sighed; the Kaffir girl, who looked in at the door, put her hand over her mouth and said, "Mow—wah!"

"You must trust in the Lord," said Tant' Sannie. "He can give you more than you have lost."

"I do, I do!" he cried. "But, oh, I have no wife! I have no wife!"  
Tant' Sannie was much affected and came and stood near the bed.

"Ask him if he won't have a little pap—nee, fine, flour pap. There is some boiling on the kitchen fire."

The German made the proposal, but the widower waved his hand.

"No; nothing shall pass my lips. I should be suffocated. No, no! Speak not of food to me!"

"Pap and a little brandy in," said Tant' Sannie coaxingly.

Bonaparte caught the word.  
"Perhaps, perhaps—if I struggled with myself—for the sake of my duties I might imbibe a few drops," he said, looking with quivering lip up into the German's face. "I must do my duty, must I not?"

Tant' Sannie gave the order, and the girl went for the pap.

"I know how it was when my first husband died. They could do nothing with me," the Boer woman said, "till I had eaten a sheep's trotter and honey and a little roaster cake, I know."

Bonaparte sat up on the bed with his legs stretched out in front of him and a hand on each knee, blubbering softly.

"Oh, she was a woman! You are very kind to try to comfort me, but she was my wife. For a woman that is my wife I could die, for a woman that is my wife I could— Ah, that sweet word! When will it rest upon my lips again?"

When his feelings had subsided a little, he raised the corners of his turned down mouth and spoke to the German with flabby lips.

"Do you think she understands me? Oh, tell her every word, that she may know I thank her!"

At that instant the girl reappeared with a basin of steaming gruel and a black bottle.

Tant' Sannie poured some of its contents into the basin, stirred it well and came to the bed.

"Oh, I can't, I can't! I shall die. I shall die!" said Bonaparte, putting his hand to his side.

"Come, just a little," said Tant' Sannie coaxingly, "just a drop."

"It's too thick, it's too thick. I should choke."

Tant' Sannie added from the contents of the bottle and held out a spoonful. Bonaparte opened his mouth like a little bird waiting for a worm and held it open as she dipped again and again into the pap.

"Ah, this will do your heart good!" said Tant' Sannie, in whose mind the relative functions of heart and stomach were exceedingly ill defined.

When the basin was emptied, the violence of his grief was much assuaged. He looked at Tant' Sannie with gentle tears.

"Tell him," said the Boer woman, "that I hope he will sleep well and that the Lord will comfort him as the Lord only can."

"Bless you, dear friend! God bless you!" said Bonaparte.

When the door was safely shut on the German, the Hottentot and the Dutch woman, he got off the bed and washed away the soap he had rubbed on his eyelids.

"Bon," he said, slapping his leg, "you are the cutest lad I ever came across. If you don't turn out the old hymns and prayers, and pummel the ragged coat, and get your arms round the fat one's waist and a wedding ring on her finger, then you are not Bonaparte. But you are Bonaparte. Bon, you're a fine boy!"

Making which pleasing reflection, he pulled off his trousers and got into bed cheerfully.

### CHAPTER VII.

HE SETS HIS TRAP.

"May I come in? I hope I do not disturb you, my dear friend," said Bonaparte late one evening, putting his nose in at the cabin door, where the German and his son sat finishing their supper.

It was two months since he had been installed as schoolmaster in Tant' Sannie's household, and he had grown mightier and more mighty day by day. He visited the cabin no more, sat close to Tant' Sannie drinking coffee all the evening and walked about loftily with his hands under the coat-tails of the German's black cloth and failed to see even a nigger who wished him a deferential good morning. It was therefore with no small surprise that the German perceived Bonaparte's red nose at his door.

"Walk in, walk in," he said joyfully.

"Boy, boy, see if there is coffee left. Well, none. Make a fire. We have done supper, but—"

"My dear friend," said Bonaparte, taking off his hat, "I came not to sup, not for mere creature comforts, but for an hour of brotherly intercourse with a kindred spirit. The press of business and the weight of thought, but they alone, may sometimes prevent me from sharing the secrets of my bosom with him for whom I have so great a sympathy. You perhaps wonder when I shall return the two pounds?"

"Oh, no, no! Make a fire, make a fire, boy. We will have a pot of hot coffee presently," said the German, rubbing his hands and looking about, not knowing how best to show his pleasure at the unexpected visit.

For three weeks the German's diligent "Good evening" had met with a stately bow, the chin of Bonaparte lifting itself higher daily, and his shadow had not darkened the cabin doorway since he came to borrow the two pounds. The German walked to the head of the bed and took down a blue bag that hung there. Blue bags were a speciality of the Germans. He kept above 50 stowed away in different corners of his room, some filled with curious stones, some with seeds that had been in his possession 15 years, some with rusty nails, buckles and bits of old harness, in all a wonderful assortment, but highly prized.

"We have something here not so bad," said the German, smiling knowingly, as he dived his hand into the bag and took out a handful of almonds and raisins. "I buy these for my chickens. They increase in size, but they still think the old man must have something nice for them. And the old man—well, a big boy may have a sweet tooth sometimes, may he not? Ha, ha!" said the German, chuckling at his own joke, as he heaped the plate with almonds. "Here is a stone, two stones, to crack them, no late patent improvement—well, Adam's nutcracker. Ha,

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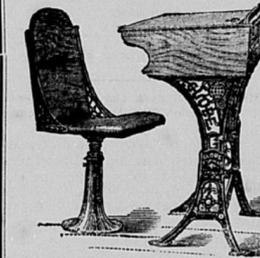
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