

loved and cried very loudly and then crept under it again. But we," said the stars, "are as old as the unknown."

He leaned his chin against the palm of his hand and looked up at them. So long he sat there that bright stars set and new ones rose, and yet he sat on.

Then at last he stood up and began to loosen the "riem" from the gable.

What did it matter about the books? The lust and the desire for them had died out. If they pleased to keep them from him, they might. What matter? It was a very little thing. Why hate and struggle and fight? Let it be as it would.

He twisted the "riem" round his arm and walked back along the ridge of the house.

By this time Bonaparte Benkins had finished his dream of Trana, and as he turned himself round for a fresh dose he heard the steps descending the ladder. His first impulse was to draw the blanket over his head and his legs under him and to shout; but, recollecting that the door was locked and the window carefully bolted, he allowed his head slowly to crop out among the blankets and listened intently. Whoever it might be, there was no danger of their getting at him, so he clambered out of bed and, going on tiptoe to the door, applied his eye to the keyhole. There was nothing to be seen; so, walking to the window, he brought his face as close to the glass as his nose would allow. There was a figure just discernible. The lad was not trying to walk softly, and the heavy shuffling of the well known "vel-schoons" could be clearly heard through the closed window as they crossed the stones in the yard. Bonaparte listened till they had died away round the corner of the wagon house, and, feeling that his bare legs were getting cold, he jumped back into bed again.

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"What do you keep up in your loft?" inquired Bonaparte of the Boer woman the next morning, pointing upward and elucidating his meaning by the addition of such Dutch words as he knew, for the lean Hottentot was gone home.

"Dried skins," said the Boer woman, "and empty bottles and boxes and sacks and soap."

"You don't keep any of your provisions there—sugar, now?" said Bonaparte, pointing to the sugar basin and then up at the loft.

Tant' Sannie shook her head.

"Only salt and dried peaches."

"Dried peaches, eh?" said Bonaparte. "Shut the door, my dear child, shut it tight," he called out to Em, who stood in the dining room. Then he leaned over the elbow of the sofa and brought his face as close as possible to the Boer woman's and made signs of eating. Then he said something she did not comprehend, then said, "Waldo, Waldo, Waldo," pointed up to the loft, and made signs of eating again.

Now an inkling of his meaning dawned on the Boer woman's mind. To make it clearer he moved his legs after the manner of one going up a ladder, appeared to be opening a door, masticated vigorously, said, "Peaches, peaches, peaches," and appeared to be coming down the ladder.

It was now evident to Tant' Sannie that Waldo had been in her loft and eaten her peaches.

To exemplify his own share in the proceedings Bonaparte lay down on the sofa and, shutting his eyes tightly, said, "Night, night, night." Then he sat up wildly, appearing to be intently listening, mimicked with his feet the coming down a ladder and looked at Tant' Sannie. This clearly showed how, roused in the night, he had discovered the theft.

"He must have been a great fool to eat my peaches," said Tant' Sannie. "They are full of mites as a sheepskin and as hard as stones."

Bonaparte, fumbling in his pocket, did not even hear her remark and took out from his coat a little horsewhip, nicely rolled up. Bonaparte winked at the little rhinoceros horsewhip, at the Boer woman and then at the door.

"Shall we call him—Waldo, Waldo?" he said.

Tant' Sannie nodded and giggled. There was something so exceedingly humorous in the idea that he was going to beat the boy, though for her own part she did not see that the peaches were worth it. When the Katfir maid came with the washtub, she was sent to summon Waldo, and Bonaparte doubled up the little whip and put it in his pocket. Then he drew himself up and prepared to act his important part with becoming gravity. Soon Waldo stood in the door and took off his hat.

"Come in, come in, my lad," said Bonaparte, "and shut the door behind."

The boy came in and stood before them.

"You need not be so afraid, child," said Tant' Sannie. "I was a child myself once. It's no great harm if you have taken a few."

Bonaparte perceived that her remark was not in keeping with the nature of the proceedings and of the little drama he intended to act. Pursing up his lips and waving his hand, he solemnly addressed the boy.

"Waldo, it grieves me beyond expression to have to summon you for so painful a purpose, but it is at the imperative call of duty, which I dare not evade. I do not state that frank and unreserved confession will obviate the necessity of chastisement, which, if requisite, shall be fully administered; but the nature of that chastisement may be mitigated by free and humble confession. Waldo, answer me as you would your own father, in whose place I now stand to you. Have you or have you not, did you or did you not, eat of the peaches in the loft?"

"Say you took them, boy, say you took them. Then he won't beat you much," said the Dutchwoman good naturedly, getting a little sorry for him.

The boy raised his eyes slowly and fixed them vacantly upon her. Then

suddenly his face grew dark with blood.

"So you haven't got anything to say to us, my lad?" said Bonaparte, momentarily forgetting his dignity and bending forward with a little snarl.

"But what I mean is just this, my lad—when it takes a boy three-quarters of an hour to fill a salt pot and when at 3 o'clock in the morning he goes knocking about the doors of a loft it's natural to suppose there's mischief in it. It's certain there is mischief in it, and where there's mischief in it must be taken out," said Bonaparte, grinning into the boy's face. Then, feeling that he had fallen from that high gravity which was as spice to the pudding and the flavor of the whole little tragedy, he drew himself up. "Waldo," he said, "confess to me instantly and without reserve that you eat the peaches."

The boy's face was white now. His eyes were on the ground, his hands doggedly clasped before him.

"What? You do not intend to answer?"

The boy looked up at them once from under his bent eyebrows and then looked down again.

"The creature looks as if all the devils in hell were in it," cried Tant' Sannie. "Say you took them, boy. Young things will be young things. I was older than you when I used to eat 'bultong' in my mother's loft and get the little niggers whipped for it. Say you took them."

But the boy said nothing.

"I think a little solitary confinement might perhaps be beneficial," said Bonaparte. "It will enable you, Waldo, to reflect on the enormity of the sin you have committed against our Father in heaven, and you may also think of the submission you owe to those who are older and wiser than you are and whose duty it is to check and correct you."

Saying this, Bonaparte stood up and took down the key of the fuel house, which hung on a nail against the wall.

"Walk on, my boy," said Bonaparte, pointing to the door, and as he followed him out he drew his mouth expressively on one side and made the lash of the little horsewhip stick out of his pocket and shake up and down.

Tant' Sannie felt half sorry for the lad, but she could not help laughing. It was always so funny when one was going to have a whipping, and it would do him good. Anyhow he would forget all about it when the places were healed. Had not she been beaten many times and been all the better for it?

Bonaparte took up a lighted candle that had been left burning on the kitchen table and told the boy to walk before him. They went to the fuel house. It was a little stone erection that jutted out from the side of the wagon house. It was low and without a window, and the dried dung was piled in one corner, and the coffee mill stood in another, fastened on the top of a short post about three feet high. Bonaparte took the padlock off the rough door.

"Walk in, my lad," he said.

Waldo obeyed sullenly. One place to him was much the same as another. He had no objection to being locked up.

Bonaparte followed him in and closed the door carefully. He put the light down on the heap of dung in the corner and quietly introduced his hand under his coat and drew slowly from his pocket the end of a rope, which he concealed behind him.

"I'm very sorry, exceedingly sorry, Waldo, my lad, that you should have acted in this manner. It grieves me," said Bonaparte.

He moved round toward the boy's back. He hardly liked the look in the fellow's eyes, though he stood there motionless. If he should spring on him!

So he drew the rope out very carefully and shifted round to the wooden post. There was a slipknot in one end of the rope, and a sudden movement drew the boy's hands to his back and passed it round them. It was an instant's work to drag it twice round the wooden post. Then Bonaparte was safe.

For a moment the boy struggled to free himself. Then he knew that he was powerless and stood still.

"Horses that kick must have their legs tied," said Bonaparte as he passed the other end of the rope round the boy's knees. "And now, my dear Waldo," taking the whip out of his pocket, "I am going to beat you."

He paused for a moment. It was perfectly quiet. They could hear each other's breath.

"Chasten thy son while there is hope," said Bonaparte, "and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Those are God's words. I shall act as a father to you, Waldo. I think we had better have your naked back."

He took out his penknife and slit the shirt down from the shoulder to the waist.

"Now," said Bonaparte, "I hope the Lord will bless and sanctify to you what I am going to do to you."

The first cut ran from the shoulder across the middle of the back. The second fell exactly in the same place. A shudder passed through the boy's frame.

"Nee, eh?" said Bonaparte, peeping round into his face, speaking with a lisp, as though to a very little child.

"Nith, eh?"

But the eyes were black and lustrous and seemed not to see him. When he had given 16, Bonaparte paused in his work to wipe a little drop of blood from his whip.

"Cold, eh? What makes you shiver so? Perhaps you would like to pull up your shirt? But I've not quite done yet."

When he had finished, he wiped the whip again and put it back in his pocket. He cut the rope through with his penknife and then took up the light.

"You don't seem to have found your tongue yet. Forgotten how to cry?"

said Bonaparte, patting him on the cheek.

The boy looked up at him, not sullenly, not angrily. There was a wild, fitful terror in the eyes. Bonaparte made haste to go out and shut the door and leave him alone in the darkness. He himself was afraid of that look.

.....

It was almost morning. Waldo lay with his face upon the ground at the foot of the fuel heap. There was a round hole near the top of the door where a knot of wood had fallen out, and a stream of gray light came in through it.

Ah, it was going to end at last! Nothing lasts forever, not even the night. How was it he had never thought of that before? For in all that long dark night he had been very strong, had never been tired, never felt pain, had run on and on, up and down, up and down. He had not dared to stand still, and he had not known it would end. He had been so strong that when he struck his head with all his force upon the stone wall it did not stun him nor pain him, only made him laugh. That was a dreadful night. When he clasped his hands frantically and prayed, "O God, my beautiful God, my sweet God, once, only once, let me feel you near me tonight!" he could not feel him. He prayed aloud, very loud, and he got no answer. When he listened, it was all quite quiet, like when the priests of Baal cried aloud to their god, "O Baal, hear us; O Baal, hear us!" but Baal was gone a-bunting.

That was a long, wild night, and wild thoughts came and went in it; but they left their marks behind them forever; for, as years cannot pass without leaving their traces behind them, neither can nights into which are forced the thoughts and sufferings of years. And now the dawn was coming, and at last he was very tired. He shivered and tried to draw the shirt up over his shoulders. They were getting stiff. He had never known they were cut in the night. He looked up at the white light that came in through the hole at the top of the door and shuddered. Then he turned his face back to the ground and slept again.

Some hours later Bonaparte came toward the fuel house with a lump of bread in his hand. He opened the door and peered in, then entered and touched the fellow with his boot. Seeing that he breathed heavily, though he did not rouse, Bonaparte threw the bread down on the ground. He was alive. That was one thing. He bent over him and carefully scratched open one of the cuts with the nail of his forefinger, examining with much interest his last night's work. He would have to count his sheep himself that day. The boy was literally cut up. He looked the door and went away again.

"Oh, Lyndall," said Em, entering the dining room and bathed in tears that afternoon, "I have been begging Bonaparte to let him out, and he won't."

"The more you beg the more he will not," said Lyndall.

She was cutting out aprons on the table.

"Oh, but it's late, and I think they want to kill him," said Em, weeping bitterly; and, finding that no more consolation was to be gained from her cousin, she went off blubbering, "I wonder you can cut out aprons when Waldo is shut up like that."

For ten minutes after she was gone Lyndall worked on quietly. Then she folded up her stuff, rolled it tightly together and stood before the closed door of the sitting room with her hands closely clasped. A flush rose to her face. She opened the door quickly, walked in and went to the nail on which the key of the fuel room hung. Bonaparte and Tant' Sannie sat there and saw her.

"What do you want?" they asked together.

"This key," she said, holding it up and looking at them.

"Do you mean her to have it?" said Tant' Sannie in Dutch.

"Why don't you stop her?" asked Bonaparte in English.

"Why do you take it from her?" said Tant' Sannie.

So they looked at each other, talking, while Lyndall walked to the fuel house with the key, her underlip bitten in.

"Waldo," she said as she helped him to stand up and twisted his arm about her waist to support him, "we will not be children always. We shall have the power, too, some day." She kissed his naked shoulder with her soft little mouth. It was all the comfort her young soul could give him.

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CHAPTER XIII.
HE MAKES LOVE.

"Here," said Tant' Sannie to her Hottentot maid, "I have been in this house four years and never been up in the loft. Fatter women than I go up ladders. I will go up today and see what it is like and put it to rights up there. You bring the little ladder and stand at the bottom."

"There's one would be sorry if you were to fall," said the Hottentot maid, leaning at Bonaparte's pipe, that lay on the table.

"Hold your tongue, jade," said her mistress, trying to conceal a pleased smile, "and go and fetch the ladder."

There was a never used trapdoor at one end of the sitting room. This the Hottentot maid pushed open, and, setting the ladder against it, the Boer woman with some danger and difficulty climbed into the loft. Then the Hottentot maid took the ladder away, as her husband was mending the wagon house and needed it, but the trapdoor was left open.

For a little while Tant' Sannie poked about among the empty bottles and skins and looked at the bag of peaches that Waldo was supposed to have liked so. Then she sat down near the trapdoor beside a barrel of salt mutton. She found that the pieces of meat were much too large and took out her clasp knife to divide them.

This was always the way when one left things to servants, she grumbled to herself, but when once she was married to her husband Bonaparte it would not matter whether a sheep spoiled or no—when once his rich aunt with the dropsy was dead. She smiled as she dived her hand into the pickle water.

At that instant her niece entered the room below, closely followed by Bonaparte, with his head on one side, smiling mawkishly. Had Tant' Sannie spoken at that moment the life of Bonaparte Benkins would have run a wholly different course. As it was, she remained silent, and neither noticed the open trapdoor above their heads.

"Sit there, my love," said Bonaparte, motioning Trana into her aunt's elbow chair and drawing another close up in front of it, in which he seated himself. "There; put your feet upon the stove too. Your aunt has gone out somewhere. Long have I waited for this auspicious event!"

Trana, who understood not one word of English, sat down in the chair and wondered if this was one of the strange customs of other lands—that an old gentleman may bring his chair up to yours and sit with his knees touching you. She had been five days in Bonaparte's company and feared the old man and disliked his nose.

"How long have I desired this moment!" said Bonaparte. "But that aged relative of mine is always casting her unhallowed shadow upon us. Look into my eyes, Trana."

Bonaparte knew that she comprehended not a syllable, but he understood that it is the eye, the tone, the action, and not at all the rational word, that touches the love chords. He saw she changed color.

"All night," said Bonaparte, "I lie awake. I see naught but thy angelic countenance. I open my arms to receive thee. Where art thou, where? Thou art not there!" said Bonaparte, suiting the action to the words and spreading out his arms and drawing them to his breast.

"Oh, please, I don't understand," said Trana. "I want to go away."

"Yes, yes," said Bonaparte, leaning back in his chair, to her great relief, and pressing his hands on his heart, "since first thy amethystine countenance was impressed here, what have I not suffered, what have I not felt? Oh, the pangs unspoken, burning as an ardent coal in a fiery and uncontaminated bosom!" said Bonaparte, bending forward again.

"Dear Lord," said Trana to herself, "how foolish I have been! The old man has a pain in his stomach, and now, as my aunt is out, he has come to me to help him."

She smiled kindly at Bonaparte and, pushing past him, went to the bedroom, quickly returning with a bottle of red drops in her hand.

"They are very good for 'benaauwdheit.' My mother always drinks them," she said, holding the bottle out.

The face in the trapdoor was a fiery red. Like a tiger cat ready to spring, Tant' Sannie crouched, with the shoulder of mutton in her hand. Exactly beneath her stood Bonaparte. She rose and clasped with both arms the barrel of salt meat.

"What, rose of the desert, night-gale of the colony, that with thine amorous lay whistled the lonesome light!" cried Bonaparte, seizing the hand that held the "vonicence." "Nay, struggle not! Fly as a stricken fawn into the arms that would embrace thee, thou!"

Here a stream of cold pickle water, heavy with ribs and shoulders, descending on his head, abruptly terminated his speech. Half blinded, Bonaparte looked up through the drops that hung from his eyelids and saw the red face that looked down at him. With one wild cry he fled. As he passed out at the front door a shoulder of mutton, well directed, struck the black coat on the small of the back.

"Bring the ladder! Bring the ladder! I will go after him!" cried the Boer woman as Bonaparte Benkins wildly fled into the fields.

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Late in the evening of the same day Waldo knelt on the floor of his cabin. He bathed the foot of his dog which had been pierced by a thorn. The bruises on his own back had had five days to heal in, and, except a little stiffness in his movements, there was nothing remarkable about the boy.

The troubles of the young are soon over. They leave no external mark. If you would the tree in its youth, the bark will quickly cover the gash; but when the tree is very old, peeling the bark off and looking carefully, you will see the scar there still. All that is buried is not dead.

Waldo poured the warm milk over the little swollen foot. Doss lay very quiet, with tears in his eyes. Then there was a tap at the door. In an instant Doss looked wide awake and winked the tears out from between his little lids.

"Come in," said Waldo, intent on his work, and slowly and cautiously the door opened.

"Good evening, Waldo, my boy," said Bonaparte Benkins in a mild voice, not venturing more than his nose within the door. "How are you this evening?"

Doss growled and showed his little teeth and tried to rise, but his paw hurt him so he whined.

"I'm very tired, Waldo, my boy," said Bonaparte, plaintively.

Doss showed his little white teeth again. His master went on with his work without looking round. There are some people at whose hands it is best not to look. At last he said:

"Come in."

Bonaparte stepped cautiously a little way into the room and left the door open behind him. He looked at the boy's supper on the table.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

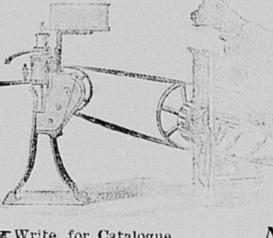
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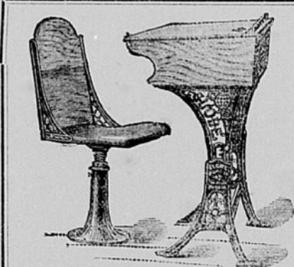
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