

From man to Man

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By

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Chapter 1.

Showing what Baby-Bertie thought of her new tutor; & why Rebekah got married.

Tucked away among the ribs of a mountain in the Eastern Province of the Cape of Good Hope is a quiet tree-covered farm. The owner of this farm ~~some~~ fifteen years ago was an English-man, a gentleman in a rough & unveneered fashion; a man

fond of his books, of his trees, of his land, little given to speaking, much given to ~~side-taking~~ ^{^thinking^} & seldom going further than his own beacons. In truth there was little to tempt any one further[^]; [^]the neighbours were unlettered “velschoen” wearing ~~Boers~~. ^{^Dutchmen.^} They did not often trouble their neighbours with a visit: a fact which no one regretted except for the little mother, who was of a lively sociable turn, & who rejoiced greatly over even ~~even~~ the arrival of ^{^even^} an old Boer Tante. It was a quiet monotonous life[^]; [^]the farmer himself the little mother, their children, & a score of Hottentot & Kaffir servants complemented the catalogue of the farm’s ~~human~~ inhabitants.

Its human inhabitants, ~~for~~ of wild animal life there was no ~~lack~~ ^{^want.^} In the ~~bou~~ bush that covered the mountain sides were leopards, who came down at night to carry off bleating lambs from the ~~K~~ “kraals”^{^;}[^] in the trees were wood doves & cock-o-veets who cried & called all day^{^;}[^] ~~In~~ in the rocks that crowned the mountains ~~summit~~ troops of baboons climbed & fought; & down in the valley were meer-kats, & great tortoises, & hares who paid visits to the corn lands. All day from the open windows of the house you ~~would~~ ^{^could^} ~~saw~~ ^{^see^} the sheep ~~?browsing~~ among the long grasses on the ~~?hills ?like~~ mountain; ~~side,~~ & catch sight, ~~as~~ far off moving specks of

~~of the gl~~ goats among the thorn trees ^{^of the goats.^} All day long the great glass doors & windows stood open; & through them came the smell ~~of~~ ^{^from^} the orange ^{^ry^} ~~trees~~ before the door, & from the flowergarden beyond where the hollihocks & ~~sun-flower~~ & dalias & fuschias & mary-golds & sunflowers & four-o-clocks & cactuses ~~they~~ made a ~~mat~~ ~~[unreadable]~~ ^{^maze^} of colour^{^.} ^{^nearly all the year, & beyond them^} Sometimes there[^] was the scent of the blossoms ~~in the spring~~ from the long ~~rows~~ ^{^orchard^} of fruit trees; & in autumn the faint lus-cious smell of falling ~~figs~~ ^{figs} & peaches, which the ~~the little~~ ^{^little^} Kaffirs & ~~the~~ ^{^small^} pigs came over the low sod wall ~~to eat~~ ^{^revel among^} **Down below the house was the “flat”. In the “flat” below the house grew the thorn trees ^in spring time when^** ~~When you looked out at the windows at the end of the ?house you saw them all the ?land.~~¹

¹ As well as being crossed out, this passage has five vertical lines drawn through it.

Over the ~~neck-neck~~ “nek” came the road from the town. It wound in & out, in & out, a line of white among the *~~“thorn trees”~~. It disappeared altogether, then it came out near the “mealie-lands” & again by the great dam with the willow trees. In that dam on hot summer nights the frogs loved to croak. Baby-Bertie, the farmers youngest daughter said she loved to hear them as she lay in her bed at night; but Rebekah her sister said it was a sad sound & made one think of when one was a child, long ago. But Bertie, Baby-Bertie they called her, was only fifteen & two months & she had not a long long ago to think of. Rebekah her sister was twenty & had been to ~~school~~ Cape Town, & knew a great deal & that might make it seem a long time since she was a

*Mimosas are generally called thorn trees. A beautiful tree a delicate acacia leaf, long white thorns from an inch to three in length, & with a sweet scented yellow

^honey blossom.^2

² These two words are at the very bottom of page at 180 degrees on the right hand edge of the page facing out.

~~seem a long while ago since she was~~ a child, but to Bertie it was only yesterday, though she ~~was so tall~~ she could touch the oranges no other woman on the farm could reach ^& her chin was higher than her father's shoulder.^ So to her, the croaking of the frogs ^at night^ was as sweet ^pleasant^ as the lowing of the cows when they came down the mountain-side at ^in the^ evening.

On^e^ this afternoon Bertie Baby-Bertie stood at the gable window i^o^f the ?open ?spare spare room ~~arran~~ putting flowers ^dalias & lilies^ into a black glass; Rebekah ~~kneet~~ ^was kneeling in the corner^ behind her pinning a white valance round the bed. ~~The world was yellow in its spring dress~~ ^Out side all the "flat" was full of yellow blossoms the thorn trees were in flower.^ Bertie put her head out ~~now & then to look.~~ ^at the window again & again.^ She was ^a very^ velvety & round every [unreadable] ^& had^ ^with^ ?her eyelashes ^that^ curled back ~~till~~ ^&^ they touching her eyebrows, & large round brown eyes, & a sticking out chin, very small & round. Her face was round, & her forehead very low & broad with the hair hanging over it.

Rebekah ^her sister^ was a little woman, with ^coal^ black hair ~~that was~~ ^that was^ ^wavy &^ parted ~~smooth~~ down the middle; she had ~~blue veins on her temple, & her face flushed whenever she spoke, & then got white again.~~ ^a very white face except when she used to flush & then it seemed as if the blood was coming through the skin: you could always see the veins in her temples & in the back of her hands.^ When she was a little child she used to run behind the bed & ~~say that~~ ^pray & say that^ ^for a prayer that^ hymn of Boner's –

“Calm me my God & keep me calm!

Let thine out stretched wing

Be as the shade of Elim's palms,

Beside her desert springs”

^Yes, keep me calm - ”^

because her heart beat so she thought it was going to ~~break~~ burst: ^?sometimes^ that she never told any one,^ ~~but~~ God ^only knew^ how she used to vibrate. Now she was going to be married the next day, to her cousin ~~Frank~~ ^who had come to fetch her^ from Cape Town, who had yellow mustaches & blue eyes, & stout ~~soft~~ ^white^ hands, & smoked ~~cigarettes.~~ ^cigars, & was very particular about his shirts & collars.^ ~~He~~ ^He^ had asked her four years before to marry him

but she never could make up her mind: ~~she had always been so busy~~ now the wedding breakfast was laid out in the ~~back dining~~ ^{back} room. She was going to be married the next morning in a lilac silk in the sitting room: her father & mother & Bertie & the servants would be there to see; & the minister was coming from the town to marry them.

Now she & Bertie were getting ready the spare room, because Bertie's tutor was coming who was to teach her when Rebekah was gone.

Bertie looked out again. There was nothing, but the flat shimmering & the road over the "neek". She put out her head over the flowers. "Perhaps Jan has got drunk, or the cart has broken down. Perhaps he has turned it over."

"It is not four yet."

As Bertie ~~walked with~~ ^{took} the dalias to the mantle-piece. At this moment three little niggers whom Bertie had set on the top step of the loft ladder to watch, set up a succession of frantic yells. Bertie put down

the flowers & rushed out of the room. Rebekah pined on quietly. She never seemed ~~greatly~~ ^{^very much^} excited ~~even~~ ^{^even^} when she found a new insect, ~~in the~~ ^{^for her micros-cope,^} ~~to~~ or when one of her grafts budded, or when a new book came from Town, & those were the things she cared ^{^most^} about ^{^.^} ~~most~~. Afterwards Bertie put her face in.

“Rebekah”, she said, “do come & see him.” He’s come! He’s just like you so lovely & small. – He’s not a bit bigger than you are. – He’s got coal black hair. – I’m not a bit afraid of him. – He keeps on smiling. – He’s so nice. – He’s got a little curl – just ~~above his ear~~ like a little drakes tail just above his ear; do come & see!”

Rebekah looked up.

“Oh come now!”

Rebekah stood up slowly; she went into the drawing room. There was a little man ~~there~~ sitting on the end of the sofa. He had his hands between his knees. He smiled with his face

turned down when she came in & stood up. His nose was small & round, & there was a look of oil upon his forehead which was curved & rounded. Rebekah shook hands with him, but he kept looking at the piano & smiling. ~~She was~~ She said it was a warm afternoon, & went out, & the man sat down again with his hands between his knees. He said he was ~~35 full~~ thirty-five but he did not look more than ~~28~~ twenty-eight.

That afternoon they had tea in the front work room, because the ~~bre~~ wedding breakfast was laid at the back. The room opened with a large window onto to the *"stoep". Beyond the "stoep" were the orange trees, & it was always cool in the afternoon. After tea the father went to ^smoke &^ read Swedenborg ~~on in out~~ at the window at ^of^ the back-room, & the mother went to see

*A round pavement as stone some feet high, that always runs before Cape house, & which may or may not be covered by a

^verandah.^³

³ This last word is at 180 degrees facing out on the right-hand edge of the paper.

ham & turkey old Ayah was taking out of the oven, & Bertie took her school master to show him the yard & the orchard. Then Rebekah sat still at the empty table, cutting stars out of orange peel. Her lover who had gone to smoke put his elbows in at the window

“Won’t you come out.”

“No, I have to go & look after the cakes.”

“Arrant cad, that new arrival, eh”? Rebekah looked up quickly, “He is as devoid of intelligence as he is without intellectual ^{power.}”[^] ~~cultivation.~~ “Oh, I shouldn’t mind about the ~~intellectual~~ intellectual power if he was ^{n’t} ~~not~~ such an atrocious criminal in the way of oil. There is something shiny about the fellow.” He planted his elbows firmly on the window, with his head a little thrown back, & drew the smoke slowly. “How well that dress fits you;

I never saw you in anything I like so much. What's that you've got on?"

"A sleeveless jacket."

"I like it; white & blue suit you. You ought always to ~~we~~ wear a white dress & a sleeveless thing like that. It makes your waist look so nice."

He smoked slowly, "Don't know how a fellow will ever go back to wearing a coat & black hat again!" He wore ~~was dressed in a~~ spotless ^blue^ cotton shirt, ~~but blue-striped~~ with strips; a spotless ^white^ handkerchief hung ~~out of~~ ^from^ the pocket; ~~& on he wore~~ ^had^ a new cricket belt instead of braces, ~~& a white alpaca ^alpagea^ jacket thrown open,~~ & a straw hat with a blue ribbon. ~~on his head~~ & a yellow silk jacket. "This lazy life doesn't do!" He stretched his arm slowly, & drew it up: you saw the muscle of the arm between the elbow & the shoulder gather & subside under the sleeve. He watched

it.

“I’ve ~~lost~~ ^gained^ five pounds since I was here: that won’t do!” He stretched his arm out again. “What are you doing with that orange peel.”

“Nothing; e I am tired.”

“Come out.”

“I can’t.”

He blew a long whif of smoke towards her. “It’s very jolly under the orange trees; it’s the best place on a day like this. He took his elbows from the window & turned away. Rebekah stood up & went to see after the cakes. At nine o’clock that night Rebekah sat on the “stoep”. It was a dark night; the ~~mosquitoes~~ & night flies buzzed about at intervals. She sat on the step opposite the door † with her back to it; a square of light fell from the open door across the “stoep”, & dimly onto the stems of the orange trees beyond. She sat with her elbows on her knees looking into the dark. After a while she looked back: through the open

door she could see her little mother sitting in the corner of the room in the rocking chair, rocking herself & smiling. Mr ^Percy^ Laurie the new master ~~sat~~ was at the piano playing, Bertie was standing by him turning over ~~the~~ ^the^ music for him bending so low her brown hair almost touched his: She could see her lover lying on the sofa with his large arm thrown across his forehead listening to the music; & in the room beyond her father at the bare deal table reading, his black beard pressed against his chest, his black hair falling in a heavy lock over his forehead as he was intent on his book. She looked in for a while & then she looked away again.

What was she leaving it for, that quiet peaceful life? – she folded her arms on her knees. What did she leave it for! The light streamed out from the door, & lay in a square just behind her. To-night, almost too late, she took up

the old balances & began to weigh again. What was she leaving it for, this quiet peaceful life? – The blue eyes & yellow hair of her cousin Frank? – She loved him, better than her mother, as well as her father, only a little less than her sister: better than her microscope & collection of insects, as well as her grafting & her experiments, only less than her books. When she was dead she would be buried with them all round her, at her side at her feet, at her head, the books! What was she leaving it for? It was a quiet peaceful life in which the right was pleasantest & easiest to do, & lay right ahead; in which there was no being torn asunder living between “I would” & “I must”[^]; a life in which there was just so much to be done for others as might yield a grateful sense of self-satisfaction. A dreary placid life into which

the noisy battling, babbling, worried worrying world crept only once a week through the post bag of the boy who brought the letters from the town. A peaceful studious life, in which one might grow wise exceedingly & suck what joy there is ~~from~~ from plants & stones; a studious thoughtful life, in which one might read, & creep into the heart of books as can only be so when the wheels of the daily life are grinding soft & low. A life in which suffering was small & pleasure was large. What was she leaving it for? She look back again into the room. The scale looked heavy. ~~The se~~ On the other side was – well, - nothing, - only a vague insatiable hunger. Books, black-beetles, well performed duties, she had tried them all, they were chaff! She was dying

of hunger. What the far off blue & purple mountains whisper of when they say, “Come! come! come! We have ~~something~~ ^that^ to give that you know not of; come! ^come! come!^ to us!” that she was hungry for.

When an ox is ~~left~~ dying of hunger & thirst & left & at the road-side it does not lie down, it walks up & down, up & down. It does not lie still.

She folded her arms on her knees & decided as before.

After a while everyone left the front room & went to the back to drink coffee; they took the light with them & she was left in the dark there. At last Bertie came out with a cup of coffee for ~~it~~. her.

“I can hardly see you.” She sat down beside her on the step.

“Rebekah, you will wake me very early tomorrow? I want to come & help you dress.”

“Yes.”

“Some day I shall come & see you at Cape Town.”

“Yes, when you have learned a little more.”

She put her hand into Rebekah’s lap, & the palms of ~~their hands lay together~~. Rebekah’s hand lay against hers. “Do you know what happened this evening? Frank gave me your wedding ring to try on. I went into the kitchen to show Old Ayah, & she was ^{so} angry. She said it was unlucky to try on other peoples wedding rings. She said if you did you never married, & the most dreadful thing in the world happened to you. She wouldn’t tell

me what it was. The ring fell off & got behind the wood-pile when she tried to take it from me & we had to unpack all the wood to get it. – Rebekah, what is the most dreadful thing ~~in~~ ~~the world~~ that could happen to any one?”

“I don’t know. Have you got the arch ready?”

“Oh yes, we are going to put it up early tomorrow, the little Kaffirs are going to help me.” They got nearer each other on the step. “When your house ~~is~~ ^has ended being^ furnished you ’ll write & tell me just how it is, won’t you?”

“Yes.”

Sometimes I think if one lives to be eighty, & the sights & sounds of the present world become dim to one, that there, as one sits by the fire dreaming, & out in the sun that the child sister of our blood who was young with us will

come & sit with us there, & no one else will see her; & we ^{will sit there} ~~will sit~~ ~~she with her flowing hair, & look out at life together~~ sat ^{two} – she with her long flowing hair - & look out at life together ^{again} with our young ~~untired~~ ^{eager} eyes. I think it is that she may sit with us there that we treasure her memory so.

After a while, Bertie took the coffee cup, & went ~~it~~ in. And ~~it~~ ^{through} the dark front room Rebekah's lover came out ^{presently}. He felt for her ~~with~~ with his hands. ~~“Where are you?”~~ ~~Then he drew her up.~~ He drew her up.

“What an unsociable little mortal it is.”

The little mother came, ~~put~~ ^{with} the light ^{lamp} into the front room, & wished them good night. When she was gone they walked up & down on the “stoep”. The

little blue-flies buzzed about them, & there was a blue cloud of smoke from his cigar. The light from the door ^shone^ ~~showed~~ ^on^ the stems of the orange trees, & made visible the outlines of the stones on the “stoep”. She had a shawl over her head & walked holding his arm. She did not reach to his shoulder.

“I’ve written to ~~John Ferdinand~~ ^Graham^ to tell him to open the house. We’ll be there on Thursday afternoon at the latest.

“Yes.”

“You must know Graham. Good fellow. Terrible state of concern when he heard I was going to get married. Thought all our good days were coming to an end. Going to get married once – that’s the story - & found the girl didn’t like

tobacco smoke, & broke it off. Very good fun to tell the story before him & make him protest; ~~he~~ takes things so much in earnest. Very good fellow.” “I wonder if you quite understand why I’m marrying you”, she said looking quickly up at him.

“Because I am – “

^“Because^ I want change”, she said.

He pressed her hand closer to his arm, & ~~but~~ ^burst out^ laughed. “I should rather think you did. How you’ve held out so long I can’t make ~~out~~ out! With Aunt – ‘Ayah! Ayah! Ayah! the calves are getting out of the kraal! Make haste, make haste make haste! ~~Call~~ Call the little Kaffirs, drive them back they’ll drink all the milk!’ – And Uncle,

old Swedenborg sticking out of his coat ~~tail~~ tails & not a soul to see from January to December. I should go ~~?staring~~ staring, raving mad if I were here eight months^{^^} Bertie's the only living thing about the place. ~~Of course t^T^~~here's the shooting, but you don't have that. It's my belief he thinks the sheep are angels, positive he does, when he counts them into the "kraal"! He laughed, "I think – "

She moved her head, "The life is not lonely here to me you go along a line a certain length, then you get to the end of it; & you want another".

"There's something got stuck down the stem of my pipe," he said, "can't you give me anything to run down it."

⁴ Has been mis-numbered.

She took a hair pin from her head. He bent it & ran it down the stem. “There, I think that’ll do;” they stood opposite to each other “Cant make out why this thing won’t draw ~~propper~~ properly!” – “So,” he put her hand back on his arm. “Seriously,” he said, “of course every one wants change; & I can’t understand what the value of a woman’s life is unless she’s got a husband & a house & children of her own. Of course with those society girls who dress & flirt & ~~g~~ spend their time on getting themselves up it’s different. But they’re great fools after all. What a man really wants in marriage, & what he looks for when he wants a wife is a woman he can

rely rely upon[^],[^] ~~that~~ someone he always knows where to find. That's what these girls don't understand. They dress & dance & flirt, & they wonder that they don't get anyone to marry them. When a man really wants a wife he looks else where. I've not thought of any other woman, not seriously – as a wife – since that day up on Table Mountain, all the girls running away & pretending to be afraid of the storm, & hiding under the rocks that we might ~~cover~~ ^{^protect^} them, & you stepping out & covering the luncheon basket with your mackintosh, & kneeling down by it to hold it down. I said “That's the girl for me, & they thought they were charming me so.” She slipped her hand

along his ~~to~~ arm & into the palm of his hand, & curled it up there. “It’s not the letting down of shower baths of love on one another; that, “I shall blow my brains out if you don’t instantly marry me” kind of thing that rally answers. Now I shouldn’t have blown my brains out if you hadn’t married me, but I should never have liked another woman so well, never.”

She twisted her fingers tight about his, & brought her face close to his arm. “Yes – you know^{^,^} what I feel^{^,^} is not so much that I want to be married exactly, but that I want to know what marriage is. It seems to me that it is necessary to complete a woman’s life. I want to ~~understand ?just what~~ ^{^understand^} marriage^{^.}”[^] is It is part of life.”

He laughed. "Of course you do." "What do you do that for? – Why do you pull away^{^!}[^] ~~from me? Why[^][^] do you always pull away for when I laugh. do that for? – Don't you like me to laugh? – Which way is it that I may laugh!~~" He still kept her hand on his arm. You never like me to laugh. Not so? Which way then?"

He laughed again & kept her hand on his arm.

"Are your boxes packed?" she said.

"No; ~~only~~ the large one partly."

"I'll pack ~~the little one tomorrow morning~~ them tomorrow: put them outside your door. I'll get up early & do it. Did you see about the forage?"

"What forage."

"We shan't get any at the first outspan; we must take some cut up. Tell one of the men to put it in a bag & tie it on at the back of the cart."

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