

I grew ashamed and angry. Was my word to be of less account than a black creature's?

Oompie went to the door, and I followed him, heeding acutely the glances that the others threw upon me. I felt that they were unfriendly, and that the round-shouldered man, though he had affected to take my part, despised me. Yet I could not make up my mind. Wherever I looked I seemed to see Hanni and the children, and when I thought for a moment I seemed to hear Martins' voice telling me to stop and pause. Poor Martins—he was ever faint-hearted—"not the pluck of a house-rat," as Snyders said. He was always quiet, and he advised me to follow his example. Poor Martins. They took his horses and his cattle, and his Hotnot went and lied to the khakis. So they arrested Martins and sent him away. Our little Lord in heaven alone knows where he is now.

How wet it was outside! The rain fell in showers, and the horses stood with their tails to the wind grouped round the poplars to get some shelter. I could hear the lapping of the water in the dam, sad and slow and very quiet, and now and then the rustle of the willow branches. The ground was wet and muddy, soaked and rutted where the little streams had coursed down, and there was no moon to be seen now nor stars. Only the dark wet night and the mist that crept up from the dam, shrouding the mountains beyond.

"They tell us," I said at last, "that you are broken and that there are not a thousand of you that pull the same way. We hear of surrenders every day, and defeats. See, this is the latest official report which has been circulated!"

"Doubtless, doubtless," he answered quickly. "Remember, nephew, that if a cat kittens in an oven the brood is not necessarily loaves of bread. A defeat is not always a defeat, and a victory not always a victory."

Snyders had told me the same, and now, when I heard Oompie confirm it, I believed it. Why should he lie to me?

Tempo came forward and whispered something, and