

THE BIRTH-MARK

By ETTA W. PIERCE.

CHAPTER XIII.

Three weeks had gone by at Beechwood. Sibyl's arm had healed—nevertheless she was still Varneek's guest. A letter received in answer to the telegram sent on the day succeeding her accident had simply contained the usual regrets, the news that her mother was suffering from a relapse and instructions to remain where she was until called for.

"Called for!" cried Sibyl, bitterly. "As if I were a bundle of merchandise! Could any treatment be more cruel or unjust. Where is Hammetton, Long Island, Mr. Varneek? I will not wait to be called for! I will go on alone."

"You will do nothing of the kind," he answers, smiling. "What new disasters do you yearn to encounter? Await your mother's pleasure patiently. What lacks our hospitality that you cannot content yourself a little longer with us?"

"Do you not see—is it not plain that she hates me?" cried Sibyl, passionately. "I shall soon begin to think I have no mother—that some one other than that name is playing a bitter jest with me!"

"Do not think at all," he answered, lightly; "be happy with us. Oh, if you must, for want of a better subject, turn your thoughts toward me!"

So Sibyl remained shut up at Beechwood with her host and his servants. She listened to his wild, walling music late into the small hours of night; watched him depart and return on long moonlit gallops across country; had his superb face and figure constantly before her; tasted freely of his hospitality; was his honored guest. Could the odd ways of this handsome dreamer have, for a moment, any charm for a proud, isolated, imaginative girl of nineteen?

By degrees the old country house began to assume the air of an enchanted palace to Sibyl, and she seemed to live and move and have her being in a strange, splendid dream.

Down the broad, black stair she came gliding one night and opened the door of the square, wainscoted room, where Mr. Varneek usually dined. On the tiled hearth, between a pair of enormous brass fire-dogs, a flickering fire snapped and roared, burning away the damp of the early summer night. Sibyl, standing in the shadow of the door, looked in a body and rushed upon his beautiful, young guest.

"Down!" cried Varneek as they leaped rude and loving upon him, licking her hands, barking joyously—"down, you rude fellows, and keep quiet! You have altogether alienated my dogs' affection, Miss Arnauld—they do not notice me when you are by. I beg you, come in and accept my chair of state."

He started up, and over his blonde, bored face swept a swift and subtle change. His bold eyes filled up with sudden brightness. It was as if his languid veins had been surcharged at sight of her with warm, fierce, tingling life.

"No, I did not come to stay," she answered. "I thought you sailing on the lake."

With her deer-like head weighed down with purple-black hair, her swelling, white throat, her young face, cut like an old cameo—how lovely she looked in that blended light of moon and fire!

Varneek walked over to one of the high, arched windows.

"Sailing on the lake?" he repeated; "alone? By no means! I was waiting for you to hear me company. The way is as smooth as glass to-night—hardly wind enough to shake the canvas. Shall I not ring for Patty to bring your wraps?"

The blood rushed hot in her cheek, but she shook her head.

ver-sheeted water.

"We must whistle for the wind," said Varneek, and directly all sorts of exquisite notes began to leap from his lips, loud and low, plaintive and joyful, to every one of which the dark, shady shore answered with a sweeter echo.

Presently a bird from the willows of the landing place started in his dream and began to mock these giddy trills—this hurly of cries and calls, and then a faint breath puffed along the smooth surface of the lake—comb-ed it into a ripple; another followed, after which a brisk breeze broke full upon them, spread the canvas and sent them dancing away through the moonlight, the boat coquetting with its own shadow like a lovely woman.

"Hush!" said Sibyl, breathlessly, "hark!"

The whistling had ceased, but in its place arose a vibrating strain of the sweetest, saddest music she had ever heard. It seemed raining down with the moonlight. She looked up quickly.

"What is that?" she cried. "Am I awake or dreaming? Is the night enchanted?"

He pointed upward to the mast of the boat. She saw fixed there an Aeolian harp, its strings responding plaintively to the wind that now shivered and sighed across them.

"Fancy me dead," said Varneek, half sadly, half lightly, "and this my soul speaking to you."

With her white, unjeweled hands clasped on the leopard skin, her face like a piece of sculpture, Sibyl sat and listened. Not a sound could be heard far or near as they sailed, save that wild harp, swept as by spirit hands.

At last a wind-blown scud passed across the moon. It was not dark, but a tender, luminous glow had superseded the clear brightness of the night. Varneek turned his head suddenly and looked at his companion.

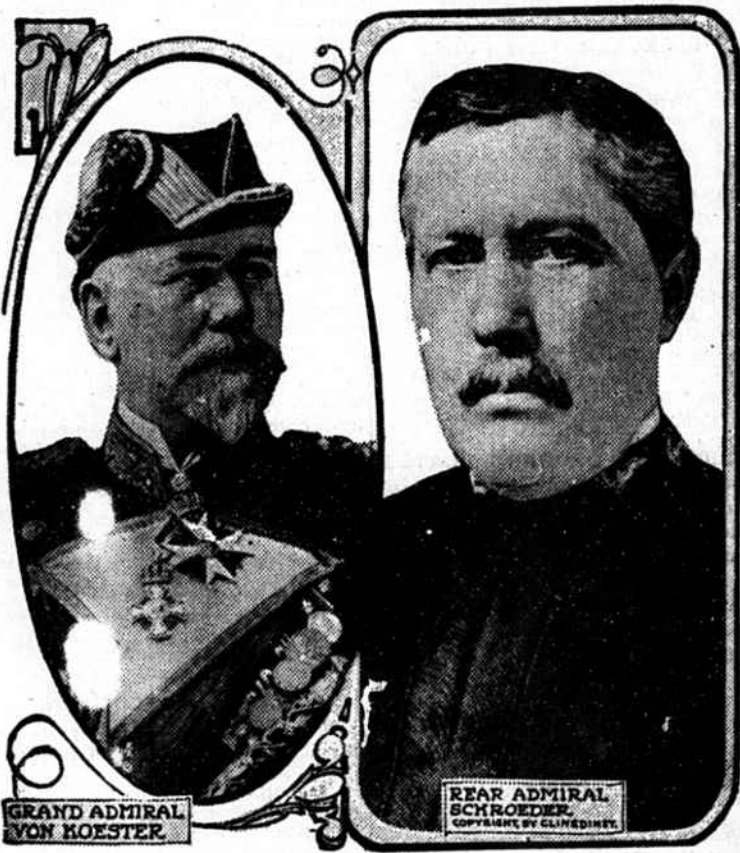
Only a few feet divided them in the boat. She felt those two intense eyes as the fellows felt the fervid sun. Her blood for a moment seemed stagnated, then she was choked and suffocated with the swift, fiery rush it made through all her veins. She dropped her proud face to avoid his look, and leaning over the boat's side, dabbed her fingers in the ripples.

The stars leaned low to watch them. As the wind rose the voice of the harp at the mast grew higher and wilder. It seemed to sing of storm and ardor, of great waters crashing on lonely shores, of shipwreck, destruction—the anguish of loss.

Hitler and thither they drifted, speechless, motionless. Hour after hour went by. Sibyl's voice was the first to break the spell.

"Ought we not to turn back now?" she said, in a low tone; "it must be late."

"What!" he answered, reproachfully; "are you tired this soon of the lake, the harp, and me?"



REAR ADMIRAL SCHROEDER AND HIS DISTINGUISHED GERMAN GUEST AT HUDSON-FULTON CELEBRATION.

Before the arrival of the British and German squadrons sent to this country to participate in the Hudson-Fulton celebration there was considerable discussion as to whether Grand Admiral von Koester of the German navy or Admiral Sir Edward H. Seymour of England held the higher rank. It was argued that because the British navy provided no title beyond that of admiral of the fleet the title of grand admiral would give the German commander the post of honor over Seymour. This, however, was settled promptly when Grand Admiral von Koester arrived in New York. He said the question never should have been raised, as Admiral Seymour ranked him by one year in date of commission. Both the admirals, together with the Italian, French and Dutch admirals, were the guests of Rear Admiral Beaton Schroeder of the Atlantic fleet on the day they reached New York.

haggard, as if with a night's vigil. The next moment he had opened the gate, and was walking rapidly away toward the station.

Sibyl clenched her white hands. He asked her to trust him for a few hours. She must—she would! Why did Patty's story about "the low person" buzz through her head like a wicked bee? She put it resolutely away, and dressed herself for the day—the weary, interminable day that must pass before his return. It had dawned dully and cheerless—doubly cheerless for succeeding such a night.

"Mr. Varneek," said Patty, as she attended Sibyl at breakfast, "left the key of his library for you, miss, and bade me say he should be back in the evening. I think you had better look it up."

"He has gone—where has he gone?" asked Sibyl, turning upon her desperately.

"I'm sure I don't know, miss; he didn't so much as hint. To see his mother, most likely."

His mother! Sibyl had not thought of her. She said no more, but listless and heavy-eyed, walked about the house, followed by Varneek's dog. In some of the rooms she found the remains of a breakfast, and she sat down at his organ and played a few sad, wailing notes, but an uncountable weight oppressed her. The house seemed like a tomb. She wandered off to the lake, escorted still by her four-footed friends; but there the cold, gray mist hung like a pall, the little pier was sloppy and desolate, and Barney had hidden under shelter of the boat in which they had sailed the previous night. Aolian harp and all.

She returned to the house and dined at three o'clock. Then sat herself down in Varneek's great chair, in the sombre, wainscoted dining-room, to wait.

She was at all times a remarkable looking person—this Sibyl. Today her pallor and the sadness in her great, dark eyes, enhanced her beauty twofold. Half lost in the chair, her lustrous hair rippling over the spotted leopard skin, she was sitting with clasped hands and eyes fixed on the flame, when the door behind her opened suddenly, and two persons appeared on the threshold.

One was a blonde woman in a rich traveling dress, high featured, thin faced, her faded hair dressed in curls on her forehead, gold-rimmed eyeglasses stuck in her severe, light-blue eyes. Like a Nemesis she stood glaring at the girl in Varneek's chair.

Her companion might readily have passed for her daughter. The same stilled dress, the same thin, aquiline face, with pale lashes and brows, the same cold, blue eyes fixed brightly on Sibyl. But the younger lady wore her twenty-five odd years with less grace than the elder did her half a century.

Sibyl rose slowly to her feet. For a moment the three stood and surveyed each other. Said Sibyl:

"You wish to see Mr. Varneek? He is not here."

Miscellaneous Reading.

TRAINING THE FARMER'S SON.
Better System of Rural Schools Badly Needed.

The bulwark of society is the home, and the best conditions for wholesome home environment are in the rural districts. The prosperity, the stability, the virtue, and the vitality of any modern state are measured chiefly by the manhood and womanhood of her country-bred people. Our leaders of thought and action are closely identified with rural life. The unity of the country home is ideal. In large cities the unity of home life is all but destroyed; the poorer classes crowded together in tenements, have but little knowledge of the meaning of home, and spending months each year in traveling, have little better knowledge of its meaning. The vigor and the energy of the city are largely contributions from the rural population. Any city shut off three generations from the infusion of fresh blood from the country would be reduced to a pitiable state of degeneracy.

The most substantial and independent people of any land are the intelligent and trained men and women who dig their wealth out of the soil, or manufacture it from the raw material. Agriculture may be called properly the oldest vocation of man. It is this day ends in anguish and bitterness. The farmer who has passed under the evergreen, out through the gate into the high road, and set her face toward the station, a half mile away.

Rumble—rumble! Wheels flying toward her through the mud and rain. A carriage with a driver and a solitary passenger—the latter a grave, middle aged woman in black—approached Sibyl as she turned from the gate.

"I think, ma'am," said the driver to his companion, "that yonder's the young person coming now. I've seen her once or twice with Mr. Varneek."

"Stop, then!" said the woman.

The carriage stopped. The solitary passenger leaned over and looked eagerly at the girl in the road at its side.

"Is this, she asked, knitting her hard brows—"is this the Miss Arnauld who is Mr. Varneek's guest?"

Sibyl threw back her veil, showing beneath it her colorless face and dark, desolate eyes, into which a wild hope seemed suddenly to leap.

"The same," she answered. "Oh," looking breathlessly back at the woman, "is it I?—no; it cannot be my mother!"

"It is Rebecca Hardin, your mother's nurse," replied the other, dryly. "Where are you going?"

"To the station!" cried Sibyl, passionately; "to Hammetton—to my mother!"

The woman looked at her, oddly. "Get into the carriage," she said. Sibyl obeyed.

The driver turned his horses and started at a round pace back toward the station.

(To Be Continued.)

GREAT MEXICAN CHURCH.
Many Years in Building—Used as a Fort and Barracks.

Rural School the Farmer's Salvation.

When shall our people realize the fact that the best way of maintaining the present number of inefficient rural schools? When shall they realize the inefficiency and inadequacy of these schools? Had our people established years ago a better system of schools for the country people, we should have one rich with virgin soil; immense forests of pine, oak and hickory, sources of untold wealth, would be where now are barren wastes and short farms would be profitable, country life would be attractive and the people would be contented. It is not too late yet to mend our ways. The worn-out lands must be reclaimed, the good lands must be improved, the swamps must be reforested, the swamps must be drained, farms must be made remunerative, country life must be made attractive, the people must be made content. The country, the village, the city, all must co-operate to accomplish these. It can be done, it will be done, if only our people resolve it. Train, train, train; the people must be trained. If we fail, or if we neglect our opportunities, others will succeed. Shall we throw away our birthright? W. H. Hand.

University of South Carolina.

WINTER COVER CROPS.

Prevent Leaching of the Soil By Rain.

One of the most important crops for the people of South Carolina is the winter cover crop. They prevent leaching and when turned under add humus to the soil. The legumes, clover and vetch, store plant food in the soil during the winter as the peas do in summer. In the sand hills where winter cover crops are turned under the soil will not leach and turn the crop yellow in spring. The soil will not be washed away by the spring rains where humus has been put in the soil by turning under a winter cover crop in the spring. This was proved very forcibly in many places throughout the state this year. Where winter cover crops were turned under the past spring the soil did not leach or wash away as it did where the soil was left bare during the winter and nothing turned under in the spring.

Nothing helps a crop to resist a drought like winter cover crop turned under before planting. For these crops I would recommend vetch, crimson clover and rye.

Rye is one of the best winter cover crops, but it does not add plant food to the soil in the form of nitrogen, except what is stored in the plant and turned under. Most people know how to sow rye. It can be sown during any month and will make a successful cover crop up to the first of December. It can also be sown in corn or cotton early in the fall. If sown early it will make a better growth, hence of more value as a cover crop. One of the best kinds of rye, especially for the sandy lands, is Abruzzese, which was imported by the agricultural department. Pure seed of this appears to give better results than any other.

Clover and Vetch.

Preparation of the land. A good seed bed is necessary for these crops. The land should be plowed and thoroughly pulverized with a tooth harrow and for the improvement of the land it is best to turn it a few inches deeper than it has been previously plowed, but when the land has been turned in order to prepare it, if good rains do not intervene between the preparation of the land and the sowing of the seed, a roller should be used to firm the seed.

Clover and vetch can both be sown in corn and cotton at this season of the year. If the fields are fairly clean, sow the seed broadcast and run a harrow or sweep through the middle. We have seen some good crops grown this way in the past winter. If pea stubble is to be used for sowing clover or vetch it can be thoroughly pulverized with a cut-away harrow and a tooth harrow and will probably make a better crop without turning.

The best fertilizer for clover or vetch is stable manure. If it should be well rotted and applied some time previous to sowing the seed, if the best results are to be secured, 300 to 400 pounds, of acid phosphate, 100 to 400 acid and 4 per cent potash, called a 16-4-4, per acre should be applied at the time of sowing the seed. If the land seems to be at all sour, it is well to use a little of the lime, or nearly all cases, lime is beneficial. Use one or two tons of air slaked lime per acre. The best time to sow the seed for crimson clover is as early in the fall as it can be sown without the hot sun killing the young plants. In the lower section of the state it is generally best not to sow until the 1st of September. Vetch can be sown with good results almost any month from the 1st of September to December 1st.

Inoculation.

One of the most important requirements for crimson clover and vetch is that the soil should be inoculated. In the Piedmont section of the state six big manure very often furnishes sufficient inoculation for a sure crop, but the surest plan is to inoculate the soil with one of the best ways to do this is by securing soil from some field where a crop of the kind to be planted has been grown successfully. The more soil the better.

The department of agriculture will also furnish inoculation which when given good results. Some companies also sell inoculated seed. These, I believe, in some instances have been obtained by using nothing but well used soil.

Amount of Seed.

About 20 pounds of crimson clover seed should be sown per acre and 30 to 40 pounds of vetch seed. It is a good plan also to sow with the vetch some rye. The seed should be sown broadcast and lightly pushed in using nothing heavier than a tooth harrow.

Safe Either Way.—An Elk county citizen who has just graduated from a law school, wrote to a prominent lawyer in an Arkansas town to find out whether there would be for him in that part of the country. "I am a Republican in politics," he wrote, "and an honest lawyer." "If you are an honest lawyer," came the reply, "you will have no competition, and if you are a Republican the same law will protect you."—Kansas City Journal.