

THE CRIMINAL'S CONFESSION

OR, SYBIL BERNER'S
VINDICATION

CHAPTER X.—(Continued.)

"There, he has passed in. Now let us go down to breakfast, where we shall meet the little darling again. But, look here! let me give you one warning; take no notice of that child in his father's presence. Captain Inconnu is intensely jealous of his beautiful boy, and visits that black passion upon the poor lad's head," said Gentiliska, as they went below.

"Jealous of a boy of fourteen? (and the lad cannot be more); what a wretch!" cried Sybil in honest indignation, as she followed her conductress downstairs.

Breakfast was served in the back parlor in the same rude style as the supper of the night before had been.

As Sybil and Gentiliska entered the room, the captain left a group of men among whom he had been standing, came forward, bade the young lady good-morning, took her hand and led her to a seat—not at the table, but at the tablecloth, which, lacking a board, was laid as on the evening previous, upon the bare floor. The captain seated himself beside his guest, and the other members of the band took their places at the meal.

Sybil noticed that young Raphael was among them. But Captain Inconnu vouchsafed neither word nor glance to his son and no other one presumed to present him to the lady guest.

Yet at that breakfast Sybil made a most innocent conquest. The boy, who had seen very few young girls in his life, and had never seen so beautiful a woman as Sybil, at first sight fell purely in love with her, for the sake of whose sweet face he felt he could die a thousand deaths, without ever even dreaming of such a reward as to be permitted to kiss her hand!

What woman does not know at once when a life has been silently laid at her feet? Sybil surely knew and felt that this fair boy's heart and soul were hers for life or death. "He loved her with that love which was his doom."

"And what beautiful woman of twenty years old is not careless and cruel in her dealings with her boy worshiper of fourteen? She may perceive, but she never appreciates the pure devotion.

Sybil, the most magnanimous among women, was perfectly incapable of any other selfish act, under any other circumstances; but yet she coolly resolved to improve her power over this fair boy, and to use his devotion for her own purpose of escaping from the band and delivering herself up to the authorities—never once thinking of the pain and peril she would bring upon her young votary.

But she was very cautious in her conduct toward him. She kept in mind the warning that had been given her by Gentiliska, and took care to bestow neither word nor look upon the lad while in the company of Captain Inconnu.

When breakfast was over all the band dispersed about their various business, with the exception of Raphael, who, with pencil and portfolio, strolled about the forsaken grounds, or sat down on fragments of rock to sketch picturesque points in the scenery, and Captain Inconnu, who intercepted Sybil as she was going to her room, and requested a few moments' private conversation with her.

Sybil thought it the best policy to grant the captain's request. So she permitted him to lead her into the unfurnished front parlor, where for the want of a chair or a sofa, he put her in the low window-seat.

"I had the honor of telling you yesterday, madam, that if you should be pleased to do so, we would talk further to-day, upon the subject of your return to the world," began the rather too courteous captain.

Sybil bowed in silence.

"I am here now, at your orders, for that purpose."

Again Sybil bent her head in acknowledgment of this politeness.

"And first, I would inquire," said the captain, with a singular smile, "whether, after having slept upon the question, as I advised you to do, you are still in the same mind?"

"Not exactly," replied Sybil, truthfully, but evasively, for though she was still firmly resolved to give herself up to justice, she had changed her plan of proceeding.

"Ah!" commented the captain, with an expression that proved how much he had mistaken the lady's meaning—"ah! I thought a night's repose and a morning's cool reflection would bring you to a more rational consideration of the question."

Sybil answered his smile, but left him in his error, and presently said to him:

"Captain, I have a question to ask you."

"Proceed, madam! I am entirely at your commands," said the captain, with a bow.

leaving your band, and giving myself up to take my trial, would you have assisted me, or would you have hindered me?"

"Mrs. Berners, your purpose was a suicidal one! Your question simply means this: If you were bent upon self-destruction, would I help you or hinder you in your determination? Of course there can be but one answer to such a question. I should employ every power of my mind and body to prevent you from destroying yourself."

That was all Sybil wanted to know. She felt now that her only hope was in the boy.

Smilingly she arose and excused herself to the captain, who soon after left the room.

But not until she knew that he had mounted his horse and ridden away from the house did Mrs. Berners begin to put her plan in practice.

She was playing a desperate game and she knew it. The heaviest stake was that fair boy's fate.

She knew that the robber captain would never permit her to take what he chose to term the "suicidal" step of delivering herself up to justice. She, therefore, knew that she must act without his knowledge, as well as without his help.

But she did not know her present locality, or even its bearings in relation to the county seat, Blackville; and, therefore, before she could set out to seek that place, she must enlist the sympathies and services of some one who would be able to guide her to that town.

There was no one to be found for such a purpose but Raphael, the captain's son, and her own adorer. Regardless of all consequences to him, since it was to save her own honor, she resolved to enlist the boy.

And to effect her purpose, she felt that she must begin at once. So she walked out upon the neglected and briar-grown grounds, and strolled around until, "accidentally on purpose," she came upon the boy as he sat sketching. He started up, confused and blushing, and stood with downcast eyes, before the goddess of his secret idolatry.

"Please take your seat again, and I will sit beside you," said Sybil, in a gentle tone.

Raphael was a very perfect little gentleman, and so he bowed and remained uncovered standing, until Sybil took her seat. Then, with another bow, he placed himself beside her.

"You have been sketching. Will you permit me to look at your sketches?" inquired the lady.

With a deferential bend of the head, the boy placed his specimens in her hand.

They were really very fine, and Sybil could praise them with sincerity as well as with excess.

"You are an enthusiast in art," she said.

"Until to-day," replied Raphael, with a meaning glance. "Until to-day, my one sole aspiration in life was to become an artist-painter!"

"And why until to-day? How has to-day changed your purpose?" softly inquired Sybil.

The boy dropped his eyes, blushed, and shivered, and at length replied:

"Because, to-day I have a loftier aspiration!"

"A loftier aspiration than for excellence in art there cannot be," said Sybil, gravely.

The lad could not and did not contradict her. But she understood as well as if he had explained, that his "loftier aspiration" was to serve and to please herself.

She carefully examined his sketches, and praised his natural genius. And he listened to his commendations in breathless delight.

At length he ventured to ask her:

"Do you mean, madam, who so much appreciate my poor attempts, do you also sketch from nature?"

"Ah, no," answered Sybil, with a heavy sigh; "since my captivity here, I have lost all interest in my own work! My only aspiration is for freedom!"

Raphael looked up at the lady, amazement now taking the place of the deep deference of his expression.

"You seem surprised," said Sybil, with a smile.

"I am very much astonished," replied the lad. And his eloquent and ever-changing countenance said, as plainly as if he had spoken, "I knew the captain was an evil man, but I did not know that he was a base one."

"Were you not aware that I am a captive of this band?" next inquired Sybil.

"No madam; I thought you had been rescued by our men from the officers of the law. I thought that you were in refuge with us, from a false and fatal charge."

"Your thoughts were partly correct. I was rescued from the bailiffs by Captain Inconnu's band. And I do suffer under a false charge. But, Raphael, what think you? Do you not think that a false charge should be bravely met, answered, and put down? Would not you, if you were falsely charged with

any criminal act, bravely go forward to answer it in your innocence, rather than run away from it as if you were guilty?"

"Oh, indeed I would!" answered the youth, earnestly.

"I knew it. Your face assures me that you would neither commit a dishonorable act, nor rest one moment under a dishonoring charge."

The lad thrilled and glowed under the lovely lady's praise, and felt that he must do all he could to merit it. He could find no words good enough to reply to her, but he lifted his cap and bowed deeply.

"You understand me, Raphael! But I will confide still further in you. I will tell you that when that terrible tragedy was enacted at Black Hill, and I was so deeply compromised by circumstances in the crime, I wished to stay and face out the false charge; but I yielded to the persuasions of those who loved me more than life, and sometimes I think more than honor! And I fled with my husband. Since that first flight, Raphael, I have led the hiding and haunted life of an outlaw and a criminal! Raphael, my cheeks burn when I think of it! Raphael, I am a Berners! I can live this life no longer! Come what will of it, I wish to give myself up to justice! Better to die a martyr's death than live an outlaw's life!"

"Oh, madam—!"

It was all the boy could bring out in words. But he clasped his hands, and gazed on her with an infinite compassion, deference, and devotion in his clear, candid, earnest blue eyes.

Sybil felt that she had gone a step too far in talking of her "martyr's death" to this sensitive young soul. So she hastened to add:

"But I have no fear of such a fatal consummation. The charge against me is so preposterous that, on being fairly met, it must disappear. And now, my young friend, I must tell you that I do thank Captain Inconnu and his men for rescuing me from the bailiffs, since it prevented me from suffering the ignominy of being forced to go to trial, and will give me the opportunity of going by my own free will. But I do not thank them for detaining me here to the detriment of my honor, when I wish to secure that honor by frankly giving myself up to justice. I am sure you comprehend me, Raphael?"

"I do, madam; but still I cannot conceive why the captain should oppose your wish to go to trial."

"It is enough that he does oppose it," replied Sybil, who could not tell this lad that his father, being the real criminal, was unwilling that she should suffer for his crime.

"You are certain, madam, that he would do so?" inquired the boy, dubiously.

"I am quite certain; for I put the question to him this morning."

"Lady, what would you like to do first?"

"To escape from this place, go to Blackville, give myself up to the judge, and demand to be cleared from this foul charge by a public trial."

"But are you sure that such a trial would result in your complete vindication and restoration to your home and happiness?"

"As sure as innocence can be of acquittal."

The boy suddenly got up and knelt at her feet.

"Lady, what would you have me to do? Command me, for life or for death."

"Thanks, dear young friend, you are a true knight."

"But what would you have me to do?"

"Help me to escape from this place, escort me to Blackville, and attend me to the judge's house."

"I will do so! When shall we start?"

"Let me see—how far is Blackville from this place?"

"About five miles."

"And how is the road?"

"As bad as a road can be."

"Could we reach the village on foot?"

"Better on foot than in a carriage or on horseback; because the foot way is shorter. By the road it is five miles; by a footpath that I know, which is almost a beeline, it is not more than half that distance."

"We will go on foot, then," said Sybil, rising.

"When?" inquired the lad, following her example.

"Now. We will set out at once! No one notices our position now. If we were to return to the house we might be observed and watched."

"I am ready," said the boy, closing his portfolio, and hiding it under a flat piece of rock, where he thought it would be equally safe from trespassers and from the elements.

"Let us go," said Sybil.

"This way then, madam," replied the lad, leading the way to the woods.

"I have another reason for haste," Sybil explained, as they went on. "I know that the court is now in session at Blackville, and that the judge has rooms at the hotel. I know also that the court takes a recess at one o'clock. It is now eleven; if we make moderate haste we can reach the village in time to find the judge and secure an immediate interview. Do you not think so?"

"Oh, yes, madam, certainly."

"Does this path become more difficult as we descend?" inquired Sybil, as they threaded their way along an obscure, disused path, leading down the narrow, thickly wooded valley.

"Oh, no, madam, not more difficult, but much less so. It is a very, very gradual descent down to the outlet of the valley. By the way, did you ever observe, Mrs. Berners, how much all these long, narrow, tortuous vales between the spurs of the mountains, and leading down to the great valley, resemble the beds of water courses emptying into some great river?" inquired the boy artist, looking with interest into the face of his companion.

"Oh, yes, and many geologists declare them to have been really such," replied Sybil.

In such discourse as this, they beguiled the hour and a half that they spent in walking down this hidden valley to its opening near the ferryhouse, on the Black River, opposite to Blackville.

Here, while waiting for the boat, which was on the other side, Sybil drew her thick black veil closely over her face, and whispered to her companion:

"I would not, upon any account, be recognized until I get before the judge. So I will keep my face covered, and my lips closed. You must make all the necessary inquiries, and do all the talking."

"I will do anything on earth to serve you, lady," replied the lad, lifting his hat.

"And now here it comes," whispered Sybil, as the ferry-boat touched the shore.

He handed her in, and placed her on a comfortable seat.

After that Sybil never removed her veil or opened her lips. But the boy talked a little with the ferryman until they reached the opposite shore.

They landed, and went immediately up to the hotel.

"Is Judge Ruthven in?" inquired the lad.

"Yes, sir," answered the waiter.

"Is he disengaged?"

"He has just finished luncheon," answered the man.

"Tell him that a lady wishes to speak to him on important business," said the boy.

The waiter left the room, and after an absence of five minutes returned to say that the judge would see the lady, and that he, the waiter, would show her up.

"This may be my last hour of freedom in this world!" murmured Sybil to herself, as, preceded by the waiter and attended by her escort, she went upstairs.

The door of a private parlor was thrown open, and Sybil Berners entered and stood before her judge.

(To be continued.)

About the Farm

CHICKENS IN HOT WEATHER.

If the best results are desired, growing chicks should have proper care and attention during the summer months, writes Mr. H. E. Haydock. It is important that clean and comfortable quarters be provided for them. Coops so placed as to get the sun in the morning and shade in the afternoon will be found desirable. This will prevent the coop from getting so thoroughly heated as to make it uncomfortable at night. Habit is strong in chicks and they will return to an overheated or full-coop, when they should be more comfortable and roomy quarters. They may not die if left to themselves; they will probably take to the fence or trees to escape from such a coop, but they will pay the penalty in poor growth, lack of vigor and weakness, either at that time, or later in life, for this lack of care on the owner's part.

It is well to remember that chicks grow fast and a coop that had been plenty large enough for brood when young, will soon become too small, and overcrowding and in consequence injury to their health and growth will result. More room should be given at once if overcrowding is noticed, either by providing larger coops or dividing the broods. If coops and brooders are cleaned frequently, little reason will be found to complain of that great pest, lice, which otherwise might be the cause of weakness and stunted growth. Not only it is important that the coops be kept clean, but the ground in their immediate vicinity should not be allowed to become foul.

It will be found best to give growing chicks as much range as possible. If necessary to confine them, have as large yards as can be provided. Chicks should be fed from the older fowls. If all are fed together, they will be apt to get an insufficient amount of food and the older fowls will receive too much and in consequence, become too fat. The chicks seem to get plenty of grain, on account of their activity, but when one thinks that this activity is in a great measure caused by their having to dodge the pecks of older fowls, it will be seen that they are not allowed to pick up as much food as they have the appearance of doing. Regularity in feeding is another important matter. If chicks are fed at certain times when on free range, it will be found that they will be near or about the feeding place at the time and all will share alike, whereas if they are fed any old time, some may have wandered off in search of bugs and insects and therefore miss their portion.

While I consider that after a certain age a mash fed to the growing chicks is a help to their development, if given for a change and in moderation, it will be found best to confine oneself in the main to dry feeding, as in the earlier stages of a chick's life.

One of the most important things to be considered during the summer is the water supply. The water should be kept in some vessel or fountain that will prevent the chicks from walking in it, or else the water should be changed frequently. The fountain should of course always be placed in a shady spot and the water changed often.

It is well to remember in raising pure-bred fowls that a growing chick, as it nears maturity, will in a measure molt gradually, so that it does not do to con-

demn a chick at once for a few darker or lighter feathers than standard, as these will be in all probability replaced by the right colored feathers when the chick reaches maturity.

SUMMERING THE PIG.

With the present outlook for good prices for pork, the producers can care for and feed the pigs, with the assurance that they will be well repaid. The large supply of old corn available to feed in connection with pastures, makes the opportunity to secure a good profit on the pigs that are on hand an ideal one. Grain, house slops, skim milk or whey, fed while the pigs get a good supply of grass and some exercise in the open field, will make pork cheaply and of the best quality, writes Mr. N. A. Clapp.

At present the system of pork production is a well-defined one and generally understood. Instead of keeping pigs until they are from a year to 1½ or 2 years old before I begin to crowd them and fatten for market, I begin while the pigs are yet young and crowd them along to a weight that the market demands. But few are kept on the farm until they are more than ten months old, I now have two crops of pigs, one in the fall and the other during the spring.

Some who feed their pigs largely on grain and crowd them to marketable weights at six months of age, sell them in April and May. Others prefer to feed less grain through the winter, let the pigs eat more clover, corn fodder, roots and cheaper feeds until grass starts. They then make a rapid growth with the dairy wastes, in which to mix the meal or mill feed. A good share of the feed is gathered from the fields. This method gives excellent butcher's pork, and is also an excellent plan to follow in producing the present very popular bacon hog. Pigs fed along in this manner can be ripened up and sold during August and September, when good prices, almost invariably, prevail. The odds and ends on the farm, that furnish a great variety of feeds, are converted into palatable meat, that is eagerly sought for by the fastidious consumers of butcher's meats and bacon. This yields a liberal profit to both the producer and dealer.

Start the pigs early in life, as the weight can be produced cheaper while the pigs are young than later in life. Another point worthy of consideration is establishing the thrifty habit, which enables the pigs to make more meat for a given amount of feed consumed, than those whose stomachs have not been expanded and have not the habit of rapid growth and development.

It is presumed that the most of the pigs have had an opportunity to eat a long time before they are weaned from the sow. They have been given an abundance of exercise, pure air and a variety of feeds which has taken them past the period when diseases of various kinds afflict those that are closely penned and fed only corn. Now is the time to begin to feed for rapid growth and profits. If middings are mixed with the corn meal, scalded and mingled with the skim milk, buttermilk, whey or house slops and these are fed warm and in quantities which can be readily eaten up clean, at least four times per day, while they get a run at the June grass, clover, rape or any of the forage plants that they relish, they are ready to make pork faster and cheaper than at any time later in life.

The spring pigs are the ones that can be utilized to consume the waste fruits from the orchard and garden, glean the stubbles and be ripened for market on the poor corn of the present year's crop. They will reach the marketable weight in the late fall and early winter.

FROM THE TOMB OF ANTINOUS.

Explorer Gayet Brings Back Some Rare Gilded Mummies.

M. Gayet, the explorer of the tombs of Antinous in Egypt, has returned to Paris, bringing with him some gilded mummies the like of which are not in any European museums, nor even in Cairo. One was shown in the exhibition of 1900, but was returned to some private collection in Egypt. M. Gayet is especially proud of one, which was called the favorite of Antinous. He speaks lovingly of her dark brown hair, which clusters thickly like bunches of black grapes. In life she was one of the courtesans who vowed service to Antinous, the Egyptian Bacchus, behind whose ear she leaped and danced, symbolizing the renewed youth of the year awakened by the caresses of the god of springtime.

M. Gayet discovered much even in the name of this mummy from an adept in the hidden sciences, whose name he keeps a secret. He will give this man an object to hold and he can call before him its first owner. Gayet tells a story of how he first tested this man by giving him a forged scarab, saying it was ancient and had just been brought from a tomb. The adept held the scarab in his hands and Gayet, who expected to hear some faked-up story of old Egypt, heard with surprise an exact description of the fellow who had made the scarab a week before for him.

Then M. Gayet gave the expert a ring of virgin gold which had lain 2,000 years in the tomb beside the favorite of Antinous. The seer blew lightly, in order to drive away the effect of the later touches, and then pressed his forehead. He had never seen the courtesan's mummy, but described the favorite as she was wrapped for the tomb. He described how she danced in procession and told an intimate story of her life as an example of how she out of wantonness would pierce doves to the heart with a long gold pin of her headdress. He told even the name of the dead woman, which was Artenisis.

A man has reached the limit of self-importance when he is satisfied with his own society.