

Seybold Melbin;

OR,
THE WORLD OF MARS.

By Walter H. Smith.

"World of Mars;
Lives there a human brotherhood on thee,
Without the sins and errors of mankind."

CHAPTER IX. (Continued.)

A description of one of the most peculiar features of Martian existence is now in order. Beside those already named, there were—*lona-jide* members of the Am-Ram household, children of my host and hostess, relatives of the accomplished Myrina, eight others, working about the establishment much as servants do on earth—at various domestic and agricultural employments. These, although part of the family, did not eat their meals with the rest, in fact took no part in the general conversation, and were treated in every way as servants, not as children. I found that they even had no heirship with the rest, being accounted in Martian law mere goods or chattels, and capable of being hired out at will to others if necessary.

To explain this peculiar feature of Martian household economy, I have but to point my reader to that most industrious of insects—the bee. In the hive one finds three classes, or sexes if one may so express it, viz: the male, female and neuter. The neuter bees are pre-eminently the worker bees, are they not? So it is with the human neuters on Mars. It is their business to do the drudgery.

That afternoon, I remember, two of these neuters waited at table, and it was from their mother and sister, Morna and Myrina, that I gleaned the following items of interest concerning their class, its ways, peculiarities and habits.

Every Martian wife, I was told, bore her husband from ten to fourteen children. First, two or three girls—so as to ensure the continuance of the race—next, two or three boys, after which the capacity of the Martian mother for male or female child production appears to fail, and all succeeding children are sexless. That Martian boys and girls excel those of earth in genius, inventive ability, intelligence, and mental adaptability for art and science, cannot be gainsaid. And necessarily, since each one is destined to fill a post of importance, directing either a household or a number of neuters at their work in factory, house or field.

The neuters are devoid of every quality that has its springs in the well of affection. Lacking in intellect, they are docile to an extreme, remarkable for their endurance, and the toughness of their thews and sinews. They have absolutely no gallantry, are devoid of nearly all ambition, have very little

courtesy; aspiring to little more in life than the animal routine of eating, drinking, sleeping and working; undergoing fatigue and pursuing their occupations with a regularity and a continuity of purpose that accomplishes a great deal in a day. In short they are little more than living automata, deficient in brain development, totally failing in those portions representing parental affection, conjugal love and amativeness. "Hewers of wood and drawers of water," these neuters fill a similar position in the Martian domestic economy to that of late occupied by John Chinaman on the Pacific Coast. Every Martian house, even of moderate size is blessed with at least two or three, and heads of families too poor to retain all their neuter children—there are no absolute paupers on Mars—apprentice them to their richer neighbors, receiving in payment a sum fixed by the State.

With these physiological conditions obtaining, it is not to be wondered at that the men and women—the boys and girls even—of Mars, can impress a neuter servant with their wishes at the distance of a mile or more, so satisfactorily—the weaker mind carrying into effect the will of the stronger—that the veriest tittle of detail is carried out on the work in progress, exactly as the overseeing mind dictates.

If you ask me how do the Martian women bear the thought of rearing neuter children? I answer that what is natural, is usually agreed to. Again, the Martian matron looks upon her neuter offspring as necessary—and although she gives them the same care during infancy as she gives to her boys and girls, still her higher maternal love, knowing that it cannot be reciprocated, stays with the children who will reciprocate it, the female and male offspring invariably being the first-born.

At a cursory glance, the appearance of the neuter is not very much different to that of the sexes, except that a distinctive dress of a much less expensive material, is used. The carriage and bearing, too, is more methodical, plodding; more in fact like the gait of the agricultural class on Earth; not at all characterized by the quick step and lofty bearing of the Martians of either sex. The neuters are naturally very robust, stout, big boned, fleshy, much hardier in point of individual strength and muscular development than are the sexes. They attach themselves strongly, like our domestic animals, to the four walls of home, and its immediate surroundings; never seek to stray, but care very little who is master or mistress. When at work, a gang of five or six neuters is generally attended by a male or female overseer—very often of quite tender age whose mind is usually of sufficient power to impress and direct them all. As re-

gards obedience to orders and directions, the automata of the Vrilya, described by the late Lord Lytton, in no wise surpassed the neuters on Mars. In point of population, I was told that the neuters, at the time of which I speak, slightly outnumbered that of both the male and female population put together.

CHAPTER X.

THE STORY OF A WRECKED WORLD.

Seated at the table, which I must confess was rather high for me, and at which I had to be accommodated with an extra cushion on my chair, I had much pleasure in listening to a conversation with Madame Morna on the subject that forms the heading of this chapter.

"Some twenty-five millions of Martian years ago," the lady began "that is, in the early human history of this planet, another large orb existed between our orbit and Jupiter, with a revolutionary period of about four and a half earthly years. This planet, known in our Astronomical works as Sabrina, was attended by three moons, now known by your Earth Astronomers as the asteroids Ceres, Pallas and Vesta. At the time of which I speak, Sabrina was nearing opposition, and was well seen here at midnight. Beyond the planet, what was at first taken for the nebulous head of a comet was noticed, having almost the same Right Ascension and Declination as Sabrina. It soon became evident to our Astronomers that the new body, whatever it was, would encounter the planet, and if not turned aside would strike Mars as well. Our Astronomers declared the comet, or whatever it was, a new body, moving around the sun in an elongated orbit, and decided that if it were not dissipated by Sabrina, its course must at least be changed. Comets in those days, were not quite as well understood as they are now—and if not exactly objects of terror, were certainly looked upon with apprehension by us. We now hail them as public benefactors, because they serve electrically to quicken our poor dying planet, making its soil more productive and stimulating its energies, and the result, here, usually, is an excellent harvest.

"This new body, however, seemed to differ from most of its brethren, being unusually dense, shining quite brilliantly with reflected sunlight and hiding stars that it occulted. We noticed, as the conjunction drew nearer, that Sabrina became perturbed, its moons moved away into extraordinary orbits and then—the crisis came! It was not visible from one half of this planet, and thousands of persons travelled many miles to watch the effect of the conjunction—the foreign body, which was really an immense and very dense shower or cloud of meteors—some of them as large as Phobos and