

# MY HALF SISTER

By ELTON HARRIS

## CHAPTER I.

"It is not like going home at all," said Mollie L'Estrange disconsolately, looking round at the open trunks, the wearing apparel spread upon every available chair or bed in the school dormitory. "And I had no idea that I possessed so many things."

"You have been these four years here," said the German governess kindly, "and you spend much money, bad child! But they will be pleased to see you home—o-h, yes!"

"I don't know who will be pleased, I am sure," returned Mollie, with a sigh, "for there is only my half-sister Kate."

"Ach himmel! Well, she is no doubt looking forward to your return. She is older than you—wiser?"

"She is ten years old," interrupted the girl, sitting down on the edge of the bed, and regarding the well meaning Fraulein gloomily. "When I last saw her she was about six, and my stepfather spoilt her shamefully."

"What? With whom will you if then, mine Mollie? With the stepfather?"

"Oh, no; he died twelve months ago. I shall live at Chalfont House, the property of my half-sister, Kate, with her, and her aunt, Madame Dubois."

"Ach, a French lady!"

"No, but she married a Frenchman. She is now a widow with one son, and after my mother's death she went to keep house for her brother, Mr. Barlowe."

"Thy stepfather?"

"I never called him that." And a strange look of scorn and bitterness swept over the girl's pretty, glowing face. "It is wrong to hate any one—but I hated him living, and I find it hard not to hate him dead."

"So, so, the Bible tells us to hate no man," reproved the governess, with a placid shake of her head, as she began to fold up some of her favorite pupil's clothes.

"And I try not to do so; I pray every night to forgive him," burst forth Mollie in a shaking voice, "but he separated me from my mother; he did not make her happy."

She paused abruptly, conscious how impossible it was to make the solid Fraulein understand that the wrongs that were rankling in her mind had grown with her growth, and become part of her life; and, as a rosy-cheeked German maid entered at the same moment and announced that she had been sent to assist Fraulein L'Estrange to pack, nothing more was said.

For four years Mollie L'Estrange had been left at Frau Seckendorf's school in Hanover, without once returning to England, without any one coming to see her. But she had been very happy, for she had naturally a merry, buoyant disposition, and was the pet and favorite of the school establishment, from the grave, kindly Frau herself downwards.

Then she was liberally supplied with pocket money by her father's trustees, generously paid for in every way, while Frau Seckendorf had carte blanche to do everything for her amusement in the holidays, and the time had gone so fast that Mollie could hardly believe she was nearly nineteen, and that few days would see her once more in her native land.

Ah, that dear native land! How often in her dreams had she seen it as it would be looking now, with the first faint breath of spring rustling through the bare, brown branches, the leaves sprouting in the hedgerows, the violets peeping forth from some sheltered nook! Yes, though there was no one now in the house where she was born to welcome her home with affection, it would be something to be in England in the sweet spring time, to gather violets and primroses in the well remembered woods and fields around Revertor.

The packing was accomplished at last, more by the Fraulein's and Liza's exertions than her own, for the girl was restless and excited, torn by conflicting feelings, sorry to bid farewell to quaint old Hanover, and all those who had been so kind to her since she came there,—a pale, motherless child of fourteen—yet anxious to rush into the future, to see what it held in store for her.

So when the trunks were shut and Liza had departed with her arms full of the gifts she had bestowed upon her, Mollie made her way with unusual sedateness to Frau Seckendorf's private apartments. Since the girls of her own age had left one by one, and she had outgrown the class rooms, she had been promoted to the use of these salons, and taken out to concerts, theaters, and coffee parties by the good Frau, who was secretly immensely proud of the pretty, well-dressed English heiress confided to her care, and watched over her with a vigilant eye; and Mollie looked round them with a friendly glance, and a sigh at the thought that after tomorrow she should see them no more.

The dusk was falling fast; it was difficult to see the houses across the wide street, and as she stood by the porcelain stove, warming her cold

through the green country, it even amused her to see the great open fires in the waiting rooms once more as they flashed through the stations. Then she suddenly became aware that the two ladies were talking very hard, and she heard her own name.

"You will find Revertor looking much the same, Louise," the elder was saying. "The people alter, but not the place. Why, you have not been here since the year poor Mrs. L'Estrange married Mr. Barlowe, have you?"

"No; how pretty she was! I know one liked him; you thought him an adventurer. What has he done since her death?"

"Oh, he feathered his nest well—got the whole of her property for himself and his wretched little girl, to the exclusion of the elder child! Every one knew that his poor wife was horribly afraid of him, and he had it all his own way. Well, I must not say more, for he was hurried to his account with all his sins upon his head, and no time to repent him of his wickedness."

"What do you mean?"

"Did you not see it in the papers? It was the talk of Revertor! He was found murdered in his study nearly twelve months ago. Yes, I remember, it was on Easter Sunday."

"Murdered?" echoed the other blankly. "That handsome man? Who did it?"

"It has never been found out."

## CHAPTER II.

Murdered! Could this awful word, so full of terrible meaning, apply to her stepfather, who she had last seen standing at the door of Chalfont House, full of life and health, holding the fretful Kate by the hand? Mollie sat up and turned hastily to the two ladies, the color fading from her face.

"My name is L'Estrange," she stammered nervously, looking from one to the other. "I am Mrs. Barlowe's eldest daughter. I thought I ought to tell you. I—I did not know that he died like that; no one told me. Are you sure?"

Mollie could see the ladies were gazing; but she was too eager to learn the truth to mind that, or anything else. Why had she been allowed to come home in ignorance of the tragedy that hung undiscovered over Chalfont House?

In the pause before any one spoke she was not conscious of feeling any sorrow for her dead stepfather, nor had these ladies expressed any; but she did feel a thrill of horror at the thought of the crime that had been committed in the house where she was born—her mother's house—and could not repress a shudder. Then, the first lady got up, and, coming over, sat down heavily in the seat opposite to her.

"I am heartily sorry you have heard me, my dear," she said kindly. "It is a lesson to me not to talk of my neighbors in the train. But are you really Amy Barlowe's child? Yes, looking at you, I can see your dear father. Your parents were my dearest friends. You do not remember me, but surely you have not forgotten Reggie and Joyce?"

Mollie started, and, leaning forward, turned her beautiful, miserable grey eyes on the speaker with dawning recognition.

"Yes—yes, I do now," she cried. "You are Mrs. Anstruther; you live in that pretty white house near the church. Oh, Mrs. Anstruther, about this dreadful thing about Mr. Barlowe, Madame Dubois wrote that he died suddenly, and she was now my guardian; but how did it happen? Why was I not told?" And she glanced imploringly at the pleasant motherly face now regarding her with a troubled frown.

(To be continued.)

## CRUELTY IN TONE.

### CROSS WORDS KILL A BIRD IN ITS CAGE.

A bird which receives a scolding is made as miserable and unhappy thereby as a child would be. To illustrate Our Dumb Animals tells the following story: A Massachusetts woman had, a few years ago, a beautiful canary bird which she dearly loved, and to which she had never spoken an unkind word in her life. One Sunday the church organist was away, and she stopped after church to play the organ for the Sunday school. In consequence of this the dinner had to be put off an hour, and when she got home her good husband was very hungry, and he spoke to her unkindly. The things were put on and they sat down in silence at the table, and presently the bird began to chirp at her as it always had to attract her attention. To shame her husband for having spoken so, she turned to the bird, and for the first time in her life spoke to it in a most violent and angry tone. In less than five minutes there was a fluttering in the cage. She sprang to the cage—the bird was dead.

Mrs. Hendricks, the wife of the late vice-president of the United States, says she once killed a mockingbird in the same way. It annoyed her by loud singing. To stop it she spoke in a violent tone, and pretended to throw something at it, and within five minutes it was dead.

## A BOY'S REVENGE.

The present German emperor, then a small boy, attended the wedding of the prince and princess of Wales. He was under the charge of his two uncles, the duke of Edinburgh and the duke of Connaught. As may be expected, young William fidgeted sadly, and consequently received an occasional warning tap the shoulder. But how he did revenge himself! His uncles were in Highland dress, and the future emperor slyly knelt down and bit into their bare legs with great earnestness.

# TAKING THE FORTS AT TAKU

Graphic by Dr. Peacock, the chief engineer of the British warship Alacrity.

Toward the beginning of the action the Fame and Whiting had attacked and captured the four Chinese torpedo boat destroyers lying off on the dockyard, meeting with very little opposition. The last of the forts was taken about 7 A. M., the action thus lasting a little over six hours. The British loss was slight, being only one man killed and nine wounded. The Russians and Germans suffered much more

city, Barfleur, Centurion, Orlando, Aurora and Endymion, in command of Commander C. Cradock of the Alacrity.

Small unarmored gunboats were pitted against the strength of eight very powerful modern forts and batteries, armed with the latest guns and supplied with all the improvements for facilitating rapid fire which make modern war such a grim business. The capture of Taku under these conditions is an achievement of which each nation concerned may justly be proud. The forts did not show much damage from the outside, but on entering one a vivid idea was gained as to the effect of modern shell fire. The place was wrecked, and mutilated men and horses were thickly strewn over the blood-stained ground.

When one of the batteries on the north side of the river had been stormed and carried by a British, Italian and Japanese landing party the guns in the fort were immediately turned on to the forts on the south side of the river. At 6 A. M. a shell from this battery entered the magazine of the



the Chinese fire. It was a brave act for the Iltis is a small ship and her armament was not sufficient to answer the big batteries of the forts. Her after funnel was riddled and her bridge was shattered by a shell which wounded her commander severely and destroyed two Maxim guns. The crew of the Algerine cheered the Iltis frantically and succeeded in silencing the fort, thanks to the work done by the Germans. The picture printed here was made by a British naval officer on a gunboat lying near the Algerine, and shows the Iltis just beginning to work into the line of fire.

The other picture, showing the general operations during the lively little engagement, was drawn for the Lon-

severely, the Iltis alone having eight killed and nine wounded, while the Russians had five officers and twenty-eight men killed and over sixty wounded. The only gunboat disabled was a Russian, which sank in a shallow part of the river. The British landing party was composed of men from the Alac-

south fort, causing a terrific explosion, the shock being strongly felt by the ships which were lying thirteen miles off, outside the river. The explosion decided the fortunes of the day in favor of the allies, and only desultory firing followed at lengthening intervals, until all the forts were captured by 7 A. M. and works of various kinds line the shore, and the hum and roar of modern activity dull the ear until it is difficult to realize that this rushing, hustling, feverishly busy place is Asiatic at all. But the heavy, nauseous scent of China-bean oil, plus incense, plus 4,000 years of accumulated and concentrated essence of abominations, are so unmistakably Oriental that they so reassured one.

## HEARD THE CORN GROW IN IOWA.

L. K. Hillard of Iowa, who has just arrived in Washington, declares, in all solemnity, that he had "heard the corn grow" out in the Iowa fields. He says further: "They have corn fields in Iowa that it is half a day's journey for a man to walk across. Iowa corn stalks are noted for their prodigious height and size, as well as for the size of the ear. An ear of corn fifteen or eighteen inches in length is not by any means a curiosity, and the stalk frequently attains the thickness of a man's arm. Farmers are often compelled to split their corn stalks, as they would split a log into rails, before they are able to feed them as fodder to their cattle."

## OUR STUDENT POPULATION.

The entire number of pupils in all schools, public and private, last year in this country was 16,687,643, out of an estimated population of 72,737,100. There are 101,058 young men and women in the universities and colleges, 54,231 in schools of law, medicine and theology, 67,538 in normal schools, 70,950 in business schools, 23,501 in reform schools and 97,737 in kindergartens.

An aid de camp of King Humbert says he never saw the king angry but once. The aid was then at a dinner in the role of the officer whom the queen always kept at hand to make a fourteen at the table if necessary, and arose to prevent the sitting of thirteen when a lady was obliged to leave the room. The king angrily insisted that the aid keep his seat, as the superstition was all nonsense.

The Russians have a veteran actress of whom they are very proud. Mme. Orlay, in spite of her being 95 years of age, recently appeared on the stage in a performance specially given in aid of a charitable institution. Mme. Orlay has the distinction of having been the first actress to play Lady Macbeth and Ophelia in the Russian tongue.

At the trial of Powers for complicity in the murder of Goebel the prosecuting attorney, Robert Franklin, excited much admiration by his dramatic eloquence and ability as a mimic. It has since become generally known that Mr. Franklin was at one time an actor, but gave up his stage career in obedience to the desire of his relatives.

Major Lothaire, the Belgian officer who executed the Englishman named Stokes in the Congo Free State, has been dismissed from his position as manager of the Congo Free State Trading company. It is understood that this is the result of the charges brought against him of cruelty to the natives.

The Rev. Charles M. Sheldon, author of "In His Steps," is said to be preparing to write a novel on the liquor question, as he observed it in England.



MASSACRE IN A CHRISTIAN CHURCH AT ICHANG.