MY HALF SISTER

xxx By ELTON HARRIS xxx

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

"Look here, Mollie, will you—won't you? I love you awfully. I have just run over on the chance of seeing you, because I could not stay away any longer. And I hate to think of you here with these people. Won't you look at me? Do!"

A most persuasive voice was Reggie's; but Mollie's eyes were fixed on the point of her shoe, and she put her hands behind her when he attempted to take them.

"Give me time to think," she whispered in a subdued tone. "I can hardly believe that you are here. How did you find me?"

"Saw the Dubois in town, but they did not see me. Rode straight on and met the little kiddie, who brought me here. Told her that I wanted to speak to you very particularly alone; and she flew off and promised to keep watch for the return of the enemy," said Reggie briefly.

"Dear little Kittie!"

"Won't you say, 'Dear Reggie,' too, Mollie?" he suggested, eyeing her wistfully. "I have come all the way from Ireland to ask you." Then, as she flashed a quick, half-smiling glance at him, he added. "'She who hesitates is lost;' 'Silence gives consent.' How usefully these ancient copybook saying come in in one's old age, don't they."

"They certainly seem to," allowed Mollie hesitatingly.

And as there seemed no opposition offered to the arm Reggie had stolen round her, it stayed there, while, two not being able to sit with any comfort in an American cane chair, they repaired to the rustic seat, and were as happy and forgetful of the world as mortal lovers could be for the next half hour, as they sat in the sunshine, in the springtime of youth, hope, and love.

"Oh, Reggie—Madam Dubois!" exclaimed the girl at length. "She will never, never consent; she means me to marry Henri."

"Then we will pay Henri's country the compliment of taking French leave, my dear child," he returned gaily.

But she shook her head.

"I shall be of age in 18 months," she said shyly.

"Eighteen centuries! Why, I hate to leave you here now!"

"And I could not leave my poor little Kittie," she exclaimed, raising her eyes to his deprecatingly. "By then I hope she will be better, stronger. Oh, Reggie, couldn't you bargain with them to give me Kittie? It would be so cruel to leave her; you cannot think how loving, how true to me the little pet is!" And she poured into his ear all that she had overheard that hot evening at the window.

Reggie's face grew very pale as he listened, and he gave a low whistle of dismay; but whatever he thought he was too wise to make his sweetheart more uncomfortable than she already was. But she had to promise that on no account would she even listen to Henri, against whom Reggie's sentiments were far from peaceful, and that if matters became worse she would take refuge at the White house, whither his mother returned in a week's time. And then Kate came running back to announce her aunt's return.

"Oh, Reggie!" ejaculated Mollie, rising, and turning very pink.

"Sit down, child," he said calmly, dragging her back to his side, and taking Kate on his knee. "Let them come."

Kate pushed back her curls and regarded him with a frown. She was very fond of Reggie, but— He understood the look, read the dawning jealousy of any one coming between Mollie and herself, in those sharp hazel eyes, which had already discovered the truth; and as this tall, merry young officer's heart was as tender as a girl's towards those he cared for, he hastened to dissipate it.

"You are going to be my sister, kidling," he said gently.

"I know," she answered, with trembling lips. "You will take her away."

"But she tells me she cannot be happy without you, so we shall have to manage for you to come, too," he continued. "Now if you think that will be jolly, and we shall be the best brother and sister going, never jealous of each other, signify the same in the usual manner by a kiss." And he was more touched than he liked to show when the little girl threw her arms round his neck in a transport of relief, happily unconscious of the obstacles that might come in their way.

It was this group that madame, followed by her son, came in sight of, and great was her wrath. Nor was it in any way mollified when Mr. Anstruther advanced politely, and, after the usual greetings, informed her that Miss L'Estrange had promised to be his wife, and he trusted that he should have her consent; he was sure of that of the trustees, who were old friends of his father's. Madame was very suave at first, though Mollie knew the effort it must have cost her. She understood the firmly-shut mouth, the half-opened eyes; but, suave or not, she managed to convey plainly her decision. She not only could not sanction the engagement, but Miss L'Estrange must be considered quite free.

"I don't wish to be free," said Mollie bodly, over his shoulder. "I have given Mr. Anstruther my word, and will not break it."

"My sweet child, you are young, you do not know your own mind. Mr. Anstruther has taken advantage of finding you alone in my absence—"

"I naturally wished to find Miss L'Estrange alone," answered Reggie, haughtily.

"Oh, yes!" sneered Henri, who had been standing biting his nails gloomily, in direful dismay. "It is well to pay court to the heiress, but she has protection. I—"

He paused uneasily, yet Reggie had only stooped to pick up the riding whip which he had dropped, and then looked at him. But it was enough—he said no more, while madame, going a shade paler as she watched the two young men, hastened to close the interview.

When Reggie left things were only what he had expected. Madame absolutely refused her consent, and declined to see him at Chalfont again, so far losing her temper as to utter innuendoes and insults, which she could say with impunity, as a woman, but which would certainly have brought Reggie's whip across the shoulders of her adored son.

Reggie, for his part, courteously repeated that the engagement was a fact, and would be known all over Reverton; he was sorry for her decision, but it would alter nothing, only cause a little delay. Then, after a few words with Mollie, he reluctantly tore himself away, and she heard the gate clang behind him and watched him down the road until she was blinded by her tears.

CHAPTER IX.

"Mollie, it is so bad again!"

"Is it, my pet? What can I do for you?" said a sleepy voice, as Mollie roused herself from the slumber into which she had fallen by the side of the bed. "Kittie, it is striking 12 by the hall clock; I had no idea it was so late! I will go down to the drawing room and get the cloves; we left them there, and they may ease the pain a little."

Kate sat up in bed, looking as miserable as a child with teeth ache can look, and Mollie slipped off for the cloves, closing the door softly behind her.

It was Easter eve once more; not balmy and soft like last time, but cold and frosty, with a cruel east wind howling round the house, like the night two years ago when Leonard Barlowe had so mysteriously met his death.

The months that had passed had been full of trouble and anxiety to Mollie L'Estrange, and she looked paler and thinner; but the gray eyes were as fearless and sweeter than ever, for the trials had been bravely borne, and if she could not quite love her enemies, she had at least endeavored to follow that splendid precept and return good for evil.,

Henri had been away for some weeks now; at first much to her relief, but latterly she had almost wished him back, for his mother's sake. Ever since his departure she had seemed consumed with restlessness, growing daily more morose and gloomy, and breaking into fits of passion for the merest trifle, while she watched Mollie with suspicious eyes, never allowing her to see the Anstruthers, through whom alone she could hear from Reggie, for both knew that the ordinary post would not be safe.

Stealing quietly down the dark stairs, Mollie gained the drawingroom, and, possessing herself of the bottle of cloves, was returning, when as she got to the door she saw a faint light at the top of the stairs.

Who was abroad in the house this night of all others, when no servant would stir alone, when they vowed that the ghost of Mr. Barlowe walked in his haunts and a light had been seen in his study?

Drawing back against the heavy plush curtains in the hall, she watched with beating heart as it came glimmering nearer, not exactly frightened, but with a curious awe and dread, a feeling that something was going to happen. A moment later, and madame—a lamp in her hand, a strange, dazed glitter in her great black eyes—swept noiselessly past her and went straight to the study.

The girl's first thought was to steal up stairs again, her next to creep across the dark hall after madame, and look in at the half-open door, and so, unthinkingly, she witnessed a sight that froze the blood in her veins and that she never forgot. For had she followed her first impulse and gone upstairs, neither she nor Kate would have been alive when daylight dawned that Easter day. On such slight things as this do great events hang!

Madame put the lamp on a table close by, and then stole with cat-like step to the back of the chair before the writing table, where the detectives said that Mr. Barlowe must have been sitting asleep at the time of the attack. Suddenly she raised her arms, holding them as if she had some heavy weapon in them, and went through the motion twice of bringing it down with terrific force on the back of some one's head.

It was awful to see her face as she stood there, wild, fierce, watchful, her features working convulsively as she eyed the empty chair as if it were occupied, her dark hair streaming down the light dressing gown she wore, her breath coming in heavy gasps. After a minute she began muttering to herself, and leaned over as if to examine what was in the chair; then she went to the table and turned over the papers in a strange, troubled manner, her eye ever returning to that empty chair.

"It is only what you deserve—what you deserve!" she muttered in a harsh, strained voice, addressing the chair. "You are a hard, bad man. I begged to you for mercy for my child—my son, my beloved—and you only laughed. What if he did forge your name? It was not for much. You are rolling in wealth—your wretched wife's money—and we are poor, and Henri is young and extravagant. But you shall not punish him. I helped you in the past, but that goes for nothing with such as you. You have only yourself to blame that I have taken the law into my own hands. I would die a thousand times rather than that you should expose my boy. Now you cannot say a word, and I take the proofs of his guilt and burn them!"

She went through the motions—phantomwise, yet strangely real—ot taking papers and thrusting them into the grate, apparently holding them down with the weapon she thought she held, doing it all in a strange, dull calm, which her twitching face belied. For some minutes she crouched over the empty grate moaning and wringing her hands; then, when she evidently thought the papers and weapons destroyed, she rose, appeared to drag what was on the chair to the window—which she threw wide open—and, before Mollie could move, she came swiftly out of the room, and, lamp in hand, went towards the kitchen.

To describe the feelings of the horror-stricken girl watching her would be impossible. As one act after another of this terrible drama was played out before her she felt powerless to move, almost to think. All her senses were bound up in the effort to keep her trembling knees from giving way under her, for well she knew that to make the least sound might cost her her life! No need to ask again who killed Leonard Barlowe. She had been how it was done; she had seen everything—knew it was by his own sister's hand that the blow was struck.

Yet frightened as she was Mollie's courage did not desert her. She determined to see what took this wretched woman, whom she felt persuaded was mad, to the kitchen; so, with chattering teeth, she gathered her skirts together, and crept silently through the dark passages after her.

The lamplight guided her to the butler's pantry, and there stood madame, holding her hands under a tap which she had not turned on, and muttering incessantly to herself. As she wrung the imaginary water off them and rubbed them on her skirt, it occurred to Mollie, with a cold chill of fear, that she was action by action following out just what she must have done that terrible night—that it was she whom the servants took for a ghost, who had frightened Kate by brushing past her in the dark. Suddenly madame's glance fell upon some knives lying on a table, and a gleam like fire flashed into her eyes, a gleam that had neither reason nor sanity in it, only cunning and fierce exultation.

"Why not kill them both?" she muttered, standing still with a meditative look. "They are no use to Henri; the girl will not marry him; the child had better follow her father. Yes, yes; that will be best!"

(To be continued.)

DISPOSAL OF IDIOTS.

Society Cannot Shirk Its Responsibility for Criminals.

Now, of course it is the easiest thing in the world to pick out individual cases where this highly effective and economical plan would seem justifiable, but the obstacle which must everlastingly keep all such obstacles out in the realm of purely visionary and impossible propositions is the fact that no man, or group of men—no, nor that of angels, probably—could ever be trusted to decide that such and such a person could not be reformed, but must die. There is the crux of the whole matter. That little word "very" which is supposed to describe the kind of vicious and criminal persons who are to be "gently and painlessly" assisted out of this world, contains the whole range of subtle, unknown and unfathomable qualities of character upon whose possibilities no human wisdom is competent to pass the final word. With Dr. McKim declaring, for example, that John Jones, aged thirty, whom he has carefully examined, is incorrigible and should be executed, and John Jones' mother, who, presumably, also knows something about him, declaring that there is that within the boy which, bad as he is, can and may reclaim him to useful manhood—where is the judge or jury that would venture to pass upon the awful issue? Oh, no! Society has long since passed the point where it can shirk its share of original responsibility for its criminals and imbeciles by killing them—no matter if doing it is a little more "gentle" than our savage forefathers' custom of strangling female babies because they were an incumbrance to the tribe.—Gunton's

JEWS CEASE TO COME.

Exodus of Roumanians Has Ceased.

To the probable relief of the governments of Hungary, Austria, and Holland, and to some extent the United States also, the exodus of Jews from Roumania has practically ceased, says Robert Attner in the Chicago Record. More than 3,000 of those who last started for America got no further than Budapest or Vienna, whence they were promptly sent back to Roumania. For the present it is believed the movement is over, at any rate until next year. Beginning in the early summer of this year the number of these emigrants increased so rapidly that the governments of Hungary and Austria, whose territories they were crossing, became alarmed. For the most part the travelers were without means of subsistence and threatened to become a burden on the local authorities of these countries. The Dutch government, too, became interested, since Roumania, in her anxiety to rid herself of the Jews was giving to as many of them as space permitted free transportation on the state steamship line to Rotterdam, indifferent as to whether they had the necessary means to cross the Atlantic or not. Each of these countries made strong diplomatic remonstrances to Roumania on this subject, and both Austria and Hungary gave notice that the refugees would not be permitted to cross their borders unless they were provided with sufficient funds to reach Hamburg, Bremen or some other port of embarkation. These conditions were strictly enforced, and nearly a score of emigrant parties, numbering in all more than 3,000 men, women and children, were sent back to Roumania. Meanwhile the attention of the treasury authorities at Washington had been drawn to the movement. In nearly every case the parties going to America claimed that Canada was their destination, but the officials of the United States legation in Vienna had strong reasons to conclude that the emigrants were going to Canada with the intention of crossing the border into the United States and thus evading the laws governing the admission of immigrants into that country, with which they were not in a position to conform. The Vienna legation promptly reported the matter to the state department, and steps were immediately taken to strengthen the force of immigration inspectors along the Canadian frontier. In addition, Robert Watchorn, special immigration inspector, was directed to go to Roumania and investigate the conditions there. Recently a conference was held at Vienna, at which Charles V. Herdlika, charge d'affaires at Vienna; Arthur S. Hardy, United States minister to Greece and Roumania; Mr. Watchorn from Washington, and M. Take Jonesco, ex-minister of finance, Roumania, were present. M. Jonesco, who seemed thoroughly familiar with the whole situation, explained the conditions leading up to the movement. The real reason for the attempted exodus was, he said, the temporary distress prevailing in Roumania. There had been a run of bad harvests and very little money was left in the country. No classes had suffered more keenly than the small shopkeepers, small money lenders and artisans, and the bulk of these were Jews. There was, too, a permanent overcrowding of the business in which the Jews usually engaged, and the situation was rapidly growing worse through the constant stream of Jewish immigrants, in spite of the laws prohibiting their admission to the country. Another reason for the emigration movement, and of an entirely different character, was to be found in the new Jewish generation now growing up. These young Jews are extremely dissatisfied with the social and political position of their race in Roumania. They resent the contemptuous toleration extended to them and demand to be put on an equality with their neighbors. If they cannot succeed in getting these conditions altered they prefer to leave the country.

Sat on the Hat

WHITE WOMAN CRUSHES GORGEOUS HEADGEAR OF A NEGRESS.

From the St. Louis Globe-Democrat: An amusing incident, in which a white woman, a black man and a new hat figured, occurred in the waiting room at Union station. The station was crowded with in and out bound passengers and seats in the waiting room were at a premium. The colored woman, flashily dressed and walking with a self-satisfied air, entered. Spying two vacant seats in one corner, she started toward them, sat down in one and placed a pasteboard box containing a hat, for the purchase of which she had traveled to town, on the other. A few minutes later a handsomely dressed white woman entered the station. Her eyes wandered in the direction of the colored woman and fell upon the seat occupied by the bandbox and its owner. When she reached the seat she looked at the bandbox and then inquiringly at the woman. The latter paid no attention to her, and she finally pointed to the box and asked the colored woman if it was hers. The latter nodded in the affirmative and the white woman requested her to remove it. The other refused, saying she had paid as much fare as the white woman and did not intend to set her hat on the floor or hold it in her lap.

A wrathful gleam flashed into the eyes of the white woman. She looked the woman over for a moment and then turned as though to walk away, but instead dropped leisurely into the seat on which was the bandbox. It was one of those lazy ways of sitting down, where the entire weight of the body is thrown in. The woman was not a lightweight, and as she sat down there was a ripping of pasteboard and a crunching of straw, red flowers, lace and feathers. The owner of the bandbox let out a yell which aroused every one in the station and pushed the white woman out of the seat. But she was too late. The gorgeous hat was crushed all out of shape. The colored woman's scream attracted the police, but when they learned what caused the trouble they took no action. The hat crusher refused to give her name or address and the colored woman was so angry that she was unable to articulate distinctly.

California Flower Seed Trade.

From the Washington Star: Flower seeds are extensively grown in California, where there is cultivated a great assortment of varieties, and, while nearly all kinds flourish, there is so much hard work and close application necessary that we have not been able to successfully compete with Europe on most things. Sweet peas, nasturtiums, cosmos, verbenas, petunias and asters are quite successfully grown, and the seed trade now looks to California for most of the sweet peas and a great many nasturtiums. Southern California has some very prominent growers of fine double petunias and other plants. The rapid advance of the California sweet pea seed in popularity is most marvelous. A beginning was made in this line in a moderate way about 1885, when there was not over a dozen varieties listed. At first about a quarter of an acre was grown, now one grower alone has grown from 150 to 200 acres of them each year for the past five years, and there are no less than 125 varieties in his complete list. This grower has introduced more than twenty varieties of great merit in the last three years, among them the famous race of "Cupids." So important a factor have the California sweet pea flowers become to the seed trade that some dealers go there annually from the east to inspect the growing crops and to hunt for novelties in the sweet pea line. Flower seeds are grown in a number of places throughout the United States, but only a portion of the trade is supplied with home-grown seed. Outside of California limited amounts of flower seeds are grown.

Wheelwomen in Europe.

Wheelwomen in Europe meet with many difficulties. In Russia everything is managed "by order of the Czar," and cycling is no exception to the rule. Before a woman can possess a wheel she must obtain royal consent, and as this is granted quite sparingly, there are but few wheelwomen in Russia. France recognizes the right of the husband to be boss, and before madame can join the touring club she must first obtain a signed declaration from her spouse granting her the privilege. In Florence women cyclists must carry two bells to warn pedestrians of the machine's approach. Men are only required to have one bell.

Frogs Are Fish in Law.

A citizen of Hartford, Conn., was arrested for catching frogs in a public reservoir. He was fined and appealed the case. The Superior court has just decided that frogs are fish within the meaning of the statutes and that the accused was, therefore, liable under the law. The citizen had pleaded that the statute did not refer to frogs.

SHEETS OF BREAD.

Indian Women Bake Them in the American Desert.

If you wish to dine off a sheet of bread, you must go to the great American desert and ask the women of the Moki Indians to bake it for you. But if you are wise, you will not inquire too closely into the details of the process. The preparation of the bread, in sheets hardly thicker than a sheet of paper, is a real art among the Moki women. A corner in the principal room is set aside for the accommodation of a shallow trough, walled in with slabs of stone set on end. The trough is divided into three compartments, and in these the first process of bread-making takes place. When bread is to be made, a girl kneels behind each compartment. Shelled corn is then put on the flat stone in the first compartment, and with a coarse oblong stone the first girl proceeds to rub it. The coarse meal thus prepared is passed on to the next compartment. Here it is again rubbed with a stone less coarse, and passed on to the third stage. The result is a decidedly floury meal. With a brush which is made of dried grass bound together with a string of calico, and with which the floor is swept between times, the meal is then gathered up and mixed with water to a thick batter. Then comes in the art of the baker. She takes a single handful of the batter and spreads it over a long, flat stone, under which a fire has been for some time burning. The batter is made to cover thinly the entire surface. When one side is baked she takes the bread by a corner and pulls it off dexterously, turning it the other side up. When it is done, a long, flat basket receives it, and the baker turns the edges all around, so that the air can get at it. Sheet after sheet is baked until the basket is piled high with the blue bread, or "piki," which the baker pronounces "peka." No salt is used in the batter, and the piki has a sweetish taste. It is usually blue, partaking of the color of the corn from which it is made. It is eaten dry or in a sort of soup. When the men go on a journey they take piki made into rolls, very much as one would roll up a sheet of wet paper, the bread being of about the same thickness as the paper. The stones upon which the bread is baked are prepared by the old women of the tribe with great secrecy and much ceremony. They are very valuable, and are handed down as heirlooms from mother to daughter. The first stage in the process, so says Popular Science News, is smoothing and filling of the surface of the stone with hot pitch. It is then smoked and rubbed for many days, with an accompaniment of rude chanting. As far as a white man may know the first rubbing is with a smooth stone, the next with pieces of wood, while the finishing work is done with the bare hands. The result is a jet black, smooth surface, to which the piki does not stick in baking.

READING-ROOMS FOR BLIND.

Sightless May Enjoy the Pleasures of Reading.

A good work never stops. Since the Congressional library at Washington opened a reading room for the use of the blind—the first instance of the kind known—its example has been followed by public libraries here and there throughout the country, and the sightless are no longer deprived of the pleasures of reading. In Washington itself the work has widened in influence. The afternoon reading in "The Pavilion of the Blind," as the reading-room is called, have been wonderfully successful. There authors and singers have come to give pleasure by readings and music, and the blind chaplain of the house frequently devotes an afternoon to the entertainment of his companions in darkness. He has a softly modulated voice, and often repeats poetry of a religious character. When the Eppiscopal convention was in session in Washington, several of the bishops became very much interested in this work for the blind. Bishop Whipple and Bishop Whitehead read twice during the week they were there, and through their efforts and those of Bishop Gilbert and Dr. Samuel Hart, the prayer book was printed in the New York Point system and placed in the "Pavilion." A very encouraging thing is the interest manifested in the work by the young ladies of Washington. Amidst the distractions and demands of society they have found time to minister to those less fortunate than themselves. A committee of twenty-five have taken turns in escorting the blind people to and from the readings. Several members of the committee have learned the tedious system of writing in New York Point and Braille, and have volunteered to copy in it the leading magazine articles and stories, and place them on the reading-tables of the Pavilion. One girl writes half a dozen articles every month, and binds them in a little volume, which she calls "The Meteor." She is well repaid for her trouble by the eager pleasure of the readers when the little book appears.—Youth's Companion.

Toronto's Costly City Hall.

Twenty years ago the city of Toronto, Ontario, began the erection of a city hall, which was to cost $700,000 by the original estimate. The outlay on it to date has been $2,345,000, and it is not yet finished.

New York's Gray Hats.

The prevailing gray hat has come to be accepted as the invariable symbol of the autumn and has maintained its popularity for a surprisingly long time in New York, where fashions change so rapidly.