

# MY HALF SISTER

xxx By ELTON HARRIS xxx

## 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 had been these four years here," said the German governess kindly, "and you spend much money, had 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 himmell! 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 spoils her shamefully."

"What? With whom will you live 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 Debois."

"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 a 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 heather, 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 Reverton.

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 girl's 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

little fingers, her thoughts went back to her childhood days as they had not done for a long time, and scene after scene seemed to rise before her.

Mollie could not remember her father at all, for he had died when she was but a few months old, but her pretty young mother had been her playfellow, and until her sixth year, her constant companion. Then came the days when a tall, dark man was always with her mother, and that dearly loved parent was somehow not the same to her, while the dark man used to bring her sweets, and smile grimly when she put her hands behind her back, and refused to accept them.

Yes, from the very first Mollie had disliked and distrusted Leonard Barlowe, and he had cordially returned the feeling. With her mother's second marriage all her troubles began, and the child would often sob herself to sleep at night, feeling neglected and forlorn, missing the tender voice, the lullaby ever since she could remember.

Afterwards Mollie grew to know that her mother had not forgotten her, but that her stepfather, jealous and morose, resented even the affection she bestowed to her own child, and timid and clinging by nature, she had not the strength of character to oppose him in any way. Mollie was sent to school soon after the birth of her half-sister, Kate, and though she spent the holidays at home, Chalfont House was never the same place again.

Looking at the past through the softening vista of time, Mollie knew that her woes had not been imaginary.

She would have been fond enough of the little usurper, who seemed to have pushed her out of her place, had she been allowed, for she was neither jealous nor revengeful; but Mr. Barlowe, while spoiling Kate until she was unbearable, resented the least attention shown to Mollie, and the holidays had been misery, school a refuge. She gradually grew to know that her mother was miserable, that she only dare caress her in private, and that she feared her handsome dark husband more than she loved him.

How well she remembered the last time she had any talk with her mother! It was the night before her return to school, and her mother came into her room as she was preparing for bed, and, closing the door, took her into her arms as if she were a baby again, kissed and cried over her in a passionate, heart-broken way, saying that whatever happened to the future, she must never doubt her poor mother's love, that save her dead father, no one was so precious to her, no one; and that her last thought and prayer would be for her own Mollie.

It was not until her death a few months later that Mollie understood what she meant, Chalfont and a good income had been Mrs. Barlowe's private property, and she left them to her husband for his lifetime, and then to her daughter Kate, no mention being made of her elder child, save that, failing them, she would be her heiress.

This had not been her mother's wish—Mollie knew as well as if she had been told—and the fierce anger burned in her heart, not for the loss of the property, but for what Mr. Barlowe had made her mother suffer. Oh, how she hated him as she saw his fine eyes roving with an air of proprietorship round her mother's room! In her childish heart she felt that he had got what he had schemed for, and it mattered little to him that he had ruined her mother's and her life to obtain it.

They lived at open warfare during the months before she was sent to Hanover; and it was an additional blow to find that he had constituted himself her guardian in her mother's place. His motive was not far to seek. Mollie was her father's heiress, and though he could not touch the principal, a handsome allowance was made for the care of Colonel L'Estrange's daughter.

And now he, too, was dead, and she was going back to live at Chalfont House with her little half-sister and Madame Dubois! Were brighter times coming, she wondered, as, in company with the English governess, she once more set foot on her native land, or was Madame Dubois but a repetition of Leonard Barlowe?

It was a bleak March day when the governess put her charge into a first class carriage at one of the great London stations, and reluctantly bade her farewell, after carefully ascertaining that two elderly ladies in the further corner were going the same journey, and Reverton would be reached in little over an hour, where Madame Dubois was sure to be at the station. So she kissed the pet and pride of Frau Seckendorf's school with tearful eyes, and hurried away to catch her own train, while Mollie sank back in the corner of her carriage, sorry to part with her last friend, yet excited at the prospect before her.

For a little while she occupied herself in watching one familiar object after another appear, as the express left the chimneys behind and rushed

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 Reverton 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 no 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 Reverton! 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 did not know that he died like that; no one told me. Are you sure?"

Mollie could see the ladies were gazes; 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.

## 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 that 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 to 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. Boston Journal.

# TAKING THE FORTS AT TAKU

One of the thrilling incidents of the bombardment and reduction of the Taku forts occurred after the northwest fort had been taken under the fire of the British gunboat *Algerine*. That ship then moved down the river and proceeded to reduce the north fort. Owing to its position the British gunners had some difficulty in getting their range, and it became imperative that the exact position of the guns be discovered. In this situation the German gunboat *Itlis* steamed along, passed inside of the *Algerine* and drew

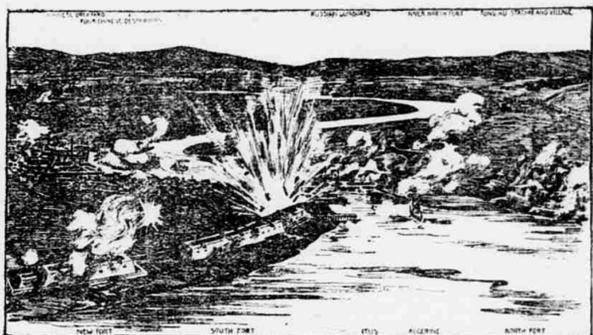
don *Graphic* by Dr. Peacock, the chief engineer of the British warship *Alacrity*.

Toward the beginning of the action the *Fame* and *Whiting* had attacked and captured the four Chinese torpedo boat destroyers lying off of 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

severely, the *Itlis* 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 *Alacrity*, *Barfleur*, *Centurion*, *Orlando*, *Aurora* and *Endymion*, in command of Commander C. Craddock of the *Alacrity*.

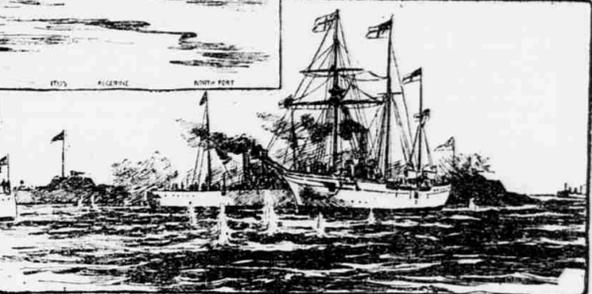
Small unarmored gunboats were pitted against the strength of eight very powerful modern forts and batteries, armed with the latest guns and supplied with all the improvements for facilitating rapid fire which make modern war such a grim business. The capture of Taku under these conditions is an achievement 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 it 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 *Itlis* 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 *Itlis* 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 *Itlis* 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-



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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.

# CHINESE INTOLERANCE

At Ichang there was until lately sad trouble about the visitation of the servants of darkness. The city is built on the north bank of the Yang-tse just below the entrance to the grand succession of gorges, and opposite to it are a range of hills, called the Pyramids, on account of their curiously pyramidal formation. It was found by the local professors of the great science of Feng-shui, or knowledge of light and air, that the evil spirits sailing down the river rebounded from the hill, canoned off the Great Pyramid on to the city and brought bad luck with them. This was an intolerable grievance, and resulted in the sacrifice of a Christian church and many worshippers. The prejudices and superstitions of the Chinaman have had uninterrupted growth of at least 4,000 years, so to speak, in a ring fence. Small wonder they excel even those of rural Europe.

Except in the rich province of Szechuan, the peasants and yeomen dwell in small villages, modeled in every particular of their squalid narrowness upon the plan of a regular city, without its encircling walls. Mutual suspicion, if not actual conflict, is the habit of life, and to live in quick-set village communities is to carry out the obvious and convenient principle. Chinese society rests upon a basis of mutual guar-

antee through family and neighborhood, and to lead an isolated existence is to run counter to the main current of national instinct. From the mean and tortuous alleys that fringe the riverside men and women pour out at daybreak to the labors of the field, and, save in time of flood, allow themselves little time to rest their weary limbs. When the flood comes, their ramshackle habitations, run up of mud and reeds, are either swept away or utterly waterlogged for the season. That is as nothing to Chinese equanimity. The house is put together again, and the mishap is set down to the inevitable malignity of the river god, who has not been sufficiently fed and pampered at the shrine hard by.

The late Duke of Edinburgh gave it as his opinion that Shanghai was the wickedest and fastest city east of Suez. Certainly there is in Shanghai more glaring disregard of all the laws of God and man than can readily be found in other parts even of the Celestial empire.

As one approaches it along the Hwang-poo, or Wusung river, the stream becomes crowded with anchored vessels, and shipyard hammering and the noises of industry fill the air with a deafening din. Factories, and mills,

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, bustling, 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 soon reassure one.

### Heard the Corn Grow in Iowa.

L. K. Hilliard 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 16,587,643, 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 fourteenth 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. Orlov, 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. Orlov 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.