

MY HALF SISTER

By ELTON HARRIS

CHAPTER II.—(Continued.)

"The L'Estrange say," she returned indignantly. "I suppose they thought it was not to inform you. As for how your stepfather died they can only conjecture, nor can any motive be given for the crime. He was found by the servants in the morning when they went to open the study, and was lying on the floor near the window—which was wide open. You know how bitterly cold it was last Easter? Well, it had been snowing hard all night, and it had drifted in and was lying thickly on his shoulders. Had any trace of his assailant been possible on the hard ground the snow had covered it, and this showed that the deed must have been done early in the night before it began. There were no signs of any struggle, nor was anything taken; and they fancy he must have been asleep in his chair, for death was caused by two terrific blows on the back of the head. Now, Mollie, I have told you all, and you must not let this depress you; or I shall feel more than ever to blame. Joyce will be delighted to have your companionship, and the White House is not so very far off, you know."

With a great effort Mollie shook off the vague feeling of coming evil that had fallen upon her, and she looked up at her friend with an attempt at a smile.

Mrs. Anstruther's face was rapidly getting kinder to her again; her voice seemed a pleasant one from the past. Even the little way she had of shaking her head to emphasize her words was the same as of yore.

She and Mrs. L'Estrange had been left widows about the same time; but while one had made the rash marriage that had ruined her life, the other had devoted herself to her two children and their interests.

Mollie had been little of them since she had been at school; for when she was at home for the holidays, they had been away; but she had happy recollections of a white-froaked little girl who was Joyce, and a tall boy who used to read them fairy tales and to be reading under some great tree.

"Thank you very much," she said, straightening herself and sitting up. "It is nice to think that I shall have kind friends near me. I—I feel rather lonely coming home like this, you see. And though I hated—that is, I hated Mr. Barlowe, still, it is a terrible thing to have happened, and there is my half-sister Kate—"

"Yes, you, of course. Well, Mollie, your mother and I were true friends, though Mr. Barlowe prevented us seeing too much of each other in later years. Come to me whenever you like, my child."

"Oh, I will," responded Mollie more cheerfully. "Tell me, Mrs. Anstruther, shall I like Madame Dubois; do you know her?"

Mrs. Anstruther moved uneasily, and drew out her watch.

"We shall be at Reversion in a few minutes now," she exclaimed almost in a tone of relief. "Of course, not having been friendly with Mr. Barlowe, I do not know his sister well; but we are on speaking terms, and Henri Dubois comes over to play tennis with my young people when he is at home. Now, here we are, and don't forget that you are to come to us whenever you like."

With the uncomfortable impression that Mrs. Anstruther was trying to make the best of things, Mollie thanked her, and the next moment the train stopped at the dear old country station she remembered so well, and she was in Reversion once more!

There was only one person on the platform—a tall and remarkably handsome woman, with a dark, almost masculine face, and piercing black eyes under heavy brows, and those same eyes fell upon the unconscious Mollie as the train slowly glided into the station, and took in every detail of the sweet little face with a strange, quick intensity. She was most elegantly attired in half mourning, that showed off her splendidly powerful figure to the greatest advantage, and as Mollie sprang out and looked round she came up quickly with a smile on her wide, thin-lipped mouth.

"Mrs. L'Estrange, I think," she said, in a loud, deep voice. "I am your aunt, Madame Dubois, and I have been greatly looking forward to your arrival. Ah, Mrs. Anstruther, how are you?"

Her aunt, Louise Barlowe's sister, turned, and Mollie's heart beat at the notion that her aunt was looking at her with a stern, nervous eye that almost made her tremble on her feet.

Then she was conscious that Mrs. Anstruther had kissed her kindly at parting while whispering very earnestly to Madame Dubois, greeting, and that she had been looking through her eyes in a way that seemed to hold a secret in its gleam, which seemed to have a consciousness of her.

her thoughts into words; and her feelings were of the gloomiest as the chimneys of Chalfont came in sight.

It was a large, ugly, red-brick house, standing in well-kept grounds, and looked very much as she had remembered it all her life; but she could not repress a shudder as she thought of what had happened there, and in imagination saw her stepfather's tall form at the hall-door as they drew up before it.

"Where is my half-sister, Kate?" she inquired, as she followed Madame, who was talking volubly, into the drawing-room.

"I will send for her. Poor child, she is not strong; she makes me very anxious," she returned, sweeping over to the table, and pouring out tea in the energetic manner that seemed habitual to her. "You will hardly know her again, or, indeed, the place. My brother made so many improvements."

"It did not want improving," exclaimed Mollie, shortly. "What was good enough for my mother was certainly good enough for Mr. Barlowe."

Madame Dubois shrugged her shoulders. Though an Englishwoman she had many French gestures and expressions, and her black eyes swept over Colonel L'Estrange's young daughter with a lightning glance.

"You are impulsive, sweet child," she said, shortly. "But you will soon grow to like the changes, and be very happy with me and your sister."

"My half-sister," corrected Mollie, quietly. "Whom I was never allowed to love as a child, of whom I know nothing. How did she bear her father's dreadful death?"

Madame Dubois dropped the sugar-tongs with a loud clatter, and suddenly her face changed to an ashen hue, her whole demeanor altered.

"How has she heard it?" she muttered between her teeth. "Then, turning fiercely to Mollie, 'Never mention anything belonging to it if you do not wish to drive me crazy! Is it not always before me day and night, day and night!' And she sank back in her chair, as if unable to sit up, while her eyes swept round the room in a strange, cowering manner."

Astonished at the effect of her words Mollie sat blankly regarding her. Had she spoken in sorrow her tender heart would have melted toward her at once, even though she was Leonard Barlowe's sister, but there was only an odd, frightened passion in her voice and bearing, and something in her hard face repulsed and kept Mollie silent, while, before she could think of anything suitable to say, Madame had recovered herself and had suggested that she take off her outdoor garments.

Like a girl in a dream she followed the tall, strong figure through hall and passages that were the same, yet different, and finally to a room that she did not recognize at all, where a housemaid was unstrapping her trunks. And this was her homecoming, this was the way she returned to her mother's house—a stranger among strangers, where everything was altered, where not even a servant who knew her remained. Dismissing the maid, she threw herself down by the bed, dark forebodings and dread weighing down her usually bright nature, and a dreary longing for the mother with whom every spot in Chalfont had been associated tearing at her heart-strings.

Poor little schoolgirl! She fought down the choking feeling in her throat with mingled pride and resolution. Colonel L'Estrange's daughter must not give way before strangers. But oh, it was hateful to think that she was in the charge of this Madame Dubois! Then she began to reflect that she must make the best of it, and certainly tears would not help her; so she buried her head in the white quilt and prayed for strength to forgive her enemies and think no evil.

"What are you doing?" demanded an imperious voice suddenly.

Mollie was so startled that she sprang up, and, turning round, beheld a little girl, dressed in the latest Parisian fashion for children, standing regarding her with curious eyes. She was not pretty, for her small, sharp-featured face was thin and witch-like, her expression old and cunning; but Mollie noticed with relief that she bore little resemblance to Mr. Barlowe, and masses of flaxen curls, so fair as to be almost white, softened the little face.

For a minute the sisters regarded each other gravely. Mollie's beautiful pink and white face had flushed brightly, her sweet gray eyes were fixed wistfully on the child, but the latter was quite composed; her thin lips were pressed together as she looked at Mollie's half-sister from her sunny brown hair to her dainty foot.

"Well, Kate, do you remember me?"

"I don't think, Kate, you knoobed before you came in."

"Of course not," was the calm reply. "This house and everything here is mine."

Truly this was a promising beginning. The child evidently had been taught to believe herself a person of great importance, and during the half-hour she spent with Mollie she condescendingly repeated both her aunt's and the servant's injudicious flattery, and unconsciously revealed much of the inner life of the house—revelations by no means attractive—and Mollie would have ruthlessly put the young lady out of her room by the shoulders had she not exercised great self-command. Yet it was very disheartening. Who had she in the world to love but Kate, and she craved love as a flower needs the sun. It would have made things no better could she have heard Mrs. Anstruther's comment as she entered her carriage.

"I cannot bear to think of that poor child!" she declared, impatiently. "What business has a L'Estrange to be in the care of that unprincipled, underbred woman! She is already more disliked in Reversion than her brother was, and that is saying much. Oh, why was Amy so weak!"

CHAPTER III.

"It must be two days since Mollie came in to see us," said Joyce Anstruther one afternoon, looking up from a mass of tangled wool she was sorting. "I hope nothing is the matter?"

"Oh, no! I met her this afternoon," responded a deep masculine voice from the depths of a lounge-chair. "She was going to the woods to get moss for the church."

"Oh, the Easter decorations! Why didn't she come for me?"

Reggie got up and crossed the room. He was a great big fellow, in a rough shooting suit, with fair curly hair, blue eyes and the pleasant face in the world; while at the present moment there was a comical smile on his face that would somehow have explained why he was such a favorite in the regiment in which he had the honor to serve his queen and country; why all Reversion, besides his mother and sister, loved him.

"She did suggest it," he said, blandly. "In fact, she was coming here, but I said you were busy."

"Oh, Reggie!"

"Don't get excited. Seeing her face fall—for there is not much disguise about Mollie—I stepped into the breach and went myself."

"Then I hope you did not meet Madame Dubois!" exclaimed Joyce, laughing. "For I feel sure that she would strongly object to you as an escort."

"Why?" And Reggie leaned against the wide window-seat, and stroked his mother's great Persian cat, who was sunning himself in the corner.

"Why, you old stupid! Because she intends Mollie and her fortune for her adored son, Monsieur Henri Dubois, and no poaching will be allowed."

"That little toad!" he muttered in a curious tone. "Mollie said they were expecting him today. I say, Joyce, do you really think it?"

"Mother thinks so," she replied, glancing at his ruffled face with a suppressed smile. "And certainly Madame has been most amiable to Mollie so far. She asked me the other day what Henri was like, for Madame was always speaking of him, and Kate quoted him frequently."

"Oh, it is preposterous!" declared the young fellow. "However, wait until she sees him. I shall be very much astonished if she falls in with the arrangement then."

(To be Continued.)

Fatalism of Swiss Guides.

The point of view of the Swiss guides is a singularly complex one. The ordinary guide is as brave as a Boer and his bravery has many of the same peculiarities. He has little sense of sport; he is ever conscious of the desperate danger of his calling, and, while he is willing and anxious to meet any risk which comes in the necessary course of events, he has the greatest contempt for the man who seeks the bright eyes of dangers for their own sake. He is a bit of a fatalist. "See," said one, as some travelers brought down the body of a party who had died in a place as simple as a city street, "death can come as easily on a light mountain as a difficult one." And again, when the French guides bungled at their tasks: "Those Arolla men know nothing of accidents; for me, when a man is once dead I will carry him as soon as a sheep," and so saying he put one of the things on his head and strode down into the valley where the mules waited for their burden. A guide of experience will tell you there are only three dangers in mountaineering—falling stones, sudden bad weather and the tourist.

Disparagement in Yucatan.

"Agropos of the wonderful ancient ruins in Yucatan," said a New Orleans college professor, "there is one very fortunate circumstance which has protected them almost entirely from spoliation by the Indians. It is currently believed by the natives all through that part of the country that the ruins are haunted and that devils will carry away anybody who attempts to molest them. This superstition has been encouraged by explorers, and is a better safeguard than a picket of soldiers."

The Eve of Napoleon's Consecration.

Among the scenes of historic interest represented in the various apartments of the wonderful Palais des Costumes at the Paris exposition, not the least striking is that which shows Josephine trying on the robes to be worn on the coronation day, the emperor standing by, an interested and interesting spectator of the important ceremony. The coronation which attended the marriage of the Emperor and Empress is described by Imbert de Saint-Amand in his history of the period, as follows: "The preparations for the consecration being completed, and the ceremony having been announced as a magnificent one, Mme. Janet, the future Duchesse d'Angoulême, breakfasted at the Tuilleries with the empress on the 1st of December, 1804, the eve of the coronation. Josephine was profoundly affected, but happiness shone in her eyes. She related, during breakfast, all the kind things Napoleon had said to her that morning, and how he had tried on her the crown she was to wear on the morrow at Notre Dame. In speaking of this, she shed tears of gratitude."

FAMILY THAT LIVES IN TREE TOPS

In Haledon, N. J., a suburb of Paterson, there lives a family that makes its home in the branches of a tree. And this is not an animal story. The family consists of an altogether sane and respectable German laborer, his wife and five children, who all declare that a tree is the most comfortable of homes and that they would inhabit their castle in the air from choice even if it were not a necessity.

It is only a short time ago that Rausch came to this country alone and began patiently to accumulate capital



on wages of scarcely more than \$1 a day. And it was not long before he actually succeeded in saving enough to send to Germany for his family. And they came promptly—one cheerful little frau and five flaxen-haired babies.

About the time of their arrival Rausch, feeling rather more keenly than usual the responsibilities of a head of a family and wondering where he should stow the six arrivals, was approached by a real estate agent, William Buschmann, who succeeded in selling Rausch a plot of ground on what is known as the old Henry place at Kats avenue and Pompton road, in the Haledon Hills.

"You see what the deed calls for, Rausch," said Buschmann; "a dwelling must be put up on the lot within six months."

Rausch agreed. He had found it



easy to save and he believed his two older children could help him. But the months went by and the house seemed no nearer in sight. Even with the two boys working in the Cedar Cliff mills there was but a meager sur-

plus from the weekly earnings. So Rausch started to carry out an idea that had come to him.

Last Decoration day a load of packing cases and lumber was placed on the vacant lot. The next day Rausch went to the lot, chose a great walnut tree four feet through, the largest tree for miles around, and built around it with his own hands the house in which his family is now living. The frame of the house is square. No cellar was dug, and the family does not seem to need any.



From the lower room the second floor with its sleeping rooms is reached by a ladder stairway. Here the climber finds himself actually among the branches of the tree and on a most uneven though apparently secure floor. Beds and all necessary furniture are stowed away here, and there seems to be plenty of room for them. A very convenient closet has been cut out of the trunk of the tree and is entered by a most cleverly contrived door.

The house is, to be sure, not the stables of dwellings, for when the wind blows it rocks and sways like a hammock, and when it rains the family has to leave the upper floor and seek shelter on the ground. Nevertheless it is a happy family, and even the prospect of winter snows and frosts has not frightened the resourceful Daniel Rausch as yet.

JUST FOR VOTERS.

Chicago Ballots Would Reach from This City to Kansas.

About 1,125,000 ballots, each twenty-four by thirty inches, will be printed by the election commissioners for Chicago at the fall election. Although there will be no more than 400,000 registered voters, if anywhere near that many, the excess is required by statute so that no voter, owing to the accidental or designed loss of a package, need be deprived of his prerogative as a free man, to mark and deposit his ballot.

Stacked one upon another in a tower-like pile, without wrappers, the 1,125,000 ballots would reach 538 feet in the air, an altitude loftier than the topmost peak of the pyramids and almost as great as that of the Washington monument. The ballots are folded in half when placed in the packages prepared for the judges and clerks. Each package will have 100 ballots in it, and the 1,125,000 packages stacked one upon another would extend 1,300 feet high.

That does not include about 100,000 women's ballots, which must be printed. For an untraveled Chicagoan to conceive what a sheer height of 1,300 feet is like, there being no such height between the Alleghanies and the Rockies, he would have to imagine what a shaft five times as high as the Masonic Temple would look like. Two carloads of paper, weighing in all forty-two tons, will be needed for the ballots. If the paper were cut in one enormous sheet that sheet would cover an area as large as the downtown district between the river, the lake and Van Buren street. The ballots laid together lengthwise would extend a distance of 542 miles, or considerably further than from Chicago to Kansas City, Memphis or Buffalo. A strip of paper wide enough to cover a railway track and long enough to extend from Chicago to St. Paul could be cut from the huge sheet. Something like 2,000 or 2,500 ballot boxes will be needed at the 1,125 polling places within the Chicago election district. Each ballot box fills about six cubic feet of space. If stacked in one pile the ballot boxes would fill a room forty feet wide, forty feet long and forty feet high. As it is they cannot be put in any one room but have to be divided among several floors of a warehouse. Several barrels of mullage are required to seal the various packages which are delivered only stamped to the judges and clerks the night before election. The grosses of penholders, barrels of ink, and other paraphernalia, to say nothing of the six or seven thousand bulky booths, needed as part of the election machinery, will fill a good many wagonloads and Chief Clerk Isaac N. Powell, who has to ar-

range for it all, is a busy man these days figuring out quantities needed and attending to purchase and distribution.—Chicago News.

Queer Kinds of Bullets.

While lead and steel are the most common metals in use for the smaller projectiles employed in war, gold, silver, iron and even wood have been fired. At the siege of Amadanagar bullets of gold and silver were fired into the enemy's camp by order of the Mogul Princess Claude. To make such bullets more effective curses were inscribed upon them. Mr. Selous, the Africa hunter and explorer, is said to have shot lions in the north of Bulawayo in the '60s with golden bullets. Lead was scarce and it was not easy to get a fresh supply; but gold, mined on the spot, did just as well. During the fighting on the Kashmir frontier the rebellious Hunzas used bullets made of garnets incased in lead, which they fired against the British soldiers. Bullets of stone were used before the end of the sixteenth century. Iron bullets were mentioned as in use in

1550. Wooden bullets were used by some of the Spanish soldiers in Cuba, while in Mashonaland the natives converted the telegraph wires into bullets.

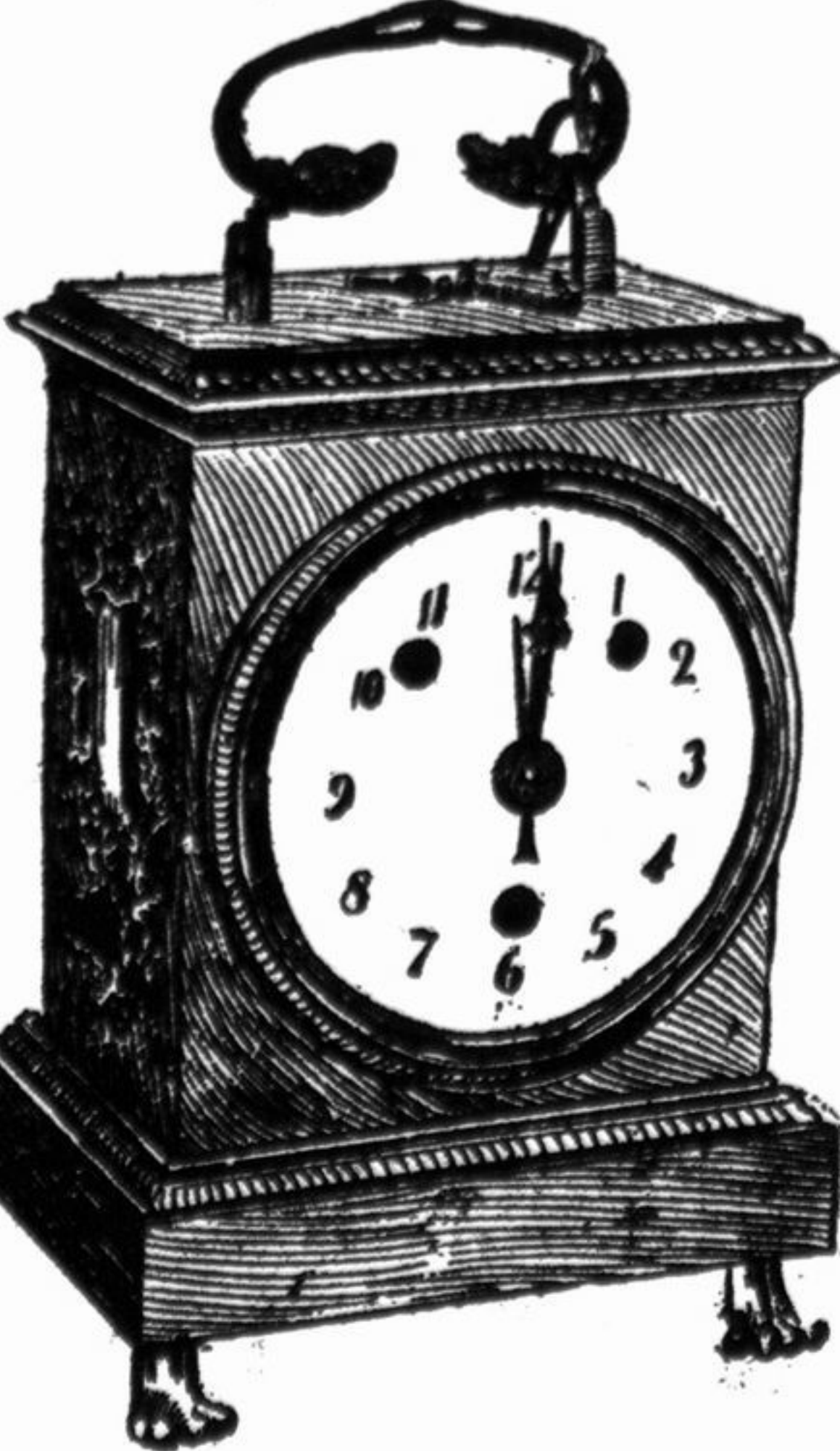
Goold Cut a Swell.

Mr. Howard Goold visited Gothenburg, Sweden, recently, and his splendid yacht, the Niagara, caused quite a sensation. After a short stay Mr. Goold went to Marstrand, a neighboring watering place, where King Oscar granted him an audience on board the Drott. Mr. and Mrs. Goold also took part in the festivities at Marstrand. There was a regatta, in honor of which the American yacht was illuminated with incandescent lamps. King Oscar took lunch on board the Niagara and afterward Mr. Goold and his company sailed to Copenhagen.

Planet Is Named Gygis.

The small planet which was discovered by M. Coggia at Marselles on March 21, 1899, No. 444, has been named Gygis.

A CLOCK NAPOLEON OWNED.



This interesting timepiece is the property of Dr. George Reuling of 103 West Monument street, Philadelphia, Pa., and cost \$300. It has had a memorable history since it tolled off the hours for the Little Corporal. It was stolen several weeks ago from the home of Dr. Reuling, and has been recovered after long search.

Caught a Monster Turtle.

Charles McCarty, Roscoe Stary and Harvey Peace caught a large turtle in the bay while fishing with a net. They hauled near the Hummocks and caught the monster weighing seventy-two pounds. Some experts pronounce it a genuine green turtle of southern waters. It is a very rare thing to catch one of these turtles in the bay.—Brooklyn Times.

How to Measure Benevolence.

We have no pleasure in thinking of a benevolence that is measured by its works. Love is immeasurable, and if its estate is wasted, its granary emptied, still cheers and enriches, and the man, though he sleeps, seems to purify the air, and his house to adorn the landscape and strengthen the laws. People always recognize this difference. We know who is benevolent by quite other means than the amount of alms he gives to help his fellow man. In speaking of this, she shed tears of gratitude.—Character.