

His Favorite Niece; OR A SECRET REVEALED.

CHAPTER III.

No two girls ever had a stranger punishment in the ignominy and solitude of a prison. Sometimes they found themselves in the quiet comfort and luxury, with apartments at the West-end and at the seaside, pointed to rifle, servants to wait upon them, the best of masters, for "accomplishments," and of governesses for ordinary teaching, the prettiest dresses, the daintiest food. Then would come poverty, squalor, common lodging-houses, confining clothing, the want of the necessities of life. There was one thing that amid all their ups and downs was never forgotten—study. No matter what happened, they always preserved their books and never missed their lessons. It was a strange life, most unusual for young girls, but it was the only one they had ever known. During their mother's lifetime they had been more settled, they had lived longer in one place, they had been more uniformly comfortable, but now they never had a home for more than three months together.

Martin Ray was very kind, and indulgent to them. He only three creatures during the course of his life—his wife and children. He shared all he had with them. When strikes were frequent, and the masses full of discontent, when the "workman's remedy" rolled in, when men invited him to come and make their discontents greater and their misery more unmeasurable by doings both in their places of colors—they had shivered in luxury, and his daughters shivered it with him. Those were the palmy days of West-end apartments, and first-class music-masters. Then "The Voice of the People" lectured in good broadcloth, wearing a gold watch and chain, and the patient, oppressed, toiling multitude gave their pence cheerfully, and never thought of the incongruity when riot and anarchy reigned which called late into fierce vengeance when man pursued master with dogged desire for ruin—then Martin Ray flourished, and his beautiful little daughters wore fine clothes and ate good food. But, when the loyal good sense of the people perished, when submission to lawless authority reigned, when the fire of discontent was extinguished—then dolorful days set in for Martin. For, instead of paying the agitators who avoided all danger while they led others into it, the workers kept their money.

Martin Ray was often, at a loss to know where his dinner or his children were to come from, yet, in spite of all drawbacks, girls grew up, beautiful and intelligent. Whenever Martin Ray did took them with him, and learned much that was useful, much that was the reverse. They were lonely and friendless. They did, alternately, in luxury and poverty, in great cities and remote villages. The men with whom his father associated were almost unknown to them, and never brought wife or sister to see them. They were lonely and friendless.

Then came a time of great trouble which they fortunately knew but little about. Leah was eleven, and Hettie ten. Martin Ray, rendered desperate by that seer to him long continued peace and order made speech which brought him under the iron grip of the law. He was tried and sentenced to three years imprisonment, and, in spite of all that friends could do, of petitions, and of agitation which spread all over the country, the sentence was carried out.

Martin Ray, who had not scrupled to use the most offensive language with regard to his sovereign, who had not hesitated to incite the people to sedition and rebellion, found

words more fierce than fire his black bitter thoughts, though he did not dare utter them, lest the law should seize him again and render him mute!

If he dared not speak in public, in private he abominated it. When the little group of men met in the dining-parlor of the dingy house in Camden Town, what horrible treason was spoken, what vile, murderous plans were suggested! The very fact that he could carry none of them out into bitter Martin-Ray the more.

An old patron took pity on his youthful children. Sir John Fairnor, a leading Radical, came to the rescue. He sent the children to a boarding-school kept by a poor native of his own, Miss Fairfax, who resided at Kew. He forbade any mention of their father's imprisonment, and the children were told that he was away from home, absent on special business, and would not return for a few years. They believed it implicitly, for their father was a great statesman, born to set the world right if they had been told that he had gone to destruction.

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