

ED THEM THEN
OF SOLDIERS
SAILORS.
Liable to 1,000
Fifty Years
GO.

HIS Favorite Niece; OR A SECRET REVEALED.

CHAPTER XLV.

find any reason, Basil, in what I have told you for bringing your engagement to an end, you will be just in doing so."

The general was struck by the pain and the pallor of the face turned to him.

"I do not complain," said Sir Basil, "though I wish that had known the truth from the first, I understand your motives and respect them."

"I love one dark-haired woman," said Sir Basil. "I shall not plead guilty to more than that."

She laughed the happy, quiet laugh he was not often to hear again, and looked at him with brightening eyes.

"How happy we shall be together!" she said. "I could not have believed that so much happiness existed on earth. Ah! Basil, how much I missed my sister! I could never tell you! In spite of all the luxury and magnificence that surrounded me, I was desolate in heart until God came. I have known no desolation since."

"I would have given words to return her kind, loving words, but he could not. His lips trembled, his voice faltered, as he tried to frame some question about Hettie.

"I was sorry to hear it," returned Sir Arthur. "Affairs have changed considerably late years Martin has been like a lion with his teeth drawn, but when my poor sister ran away with him, he was a power in the land."

Sir Basil was thinking deeply. He decided that it would be much better for him not to mention that he had ever seen or known Martin Ray—much better that the whole sad story should be buried and done with forever.

Yet, as he framed these thoughts, he was dazed and blind with his great misery. What manner of life lay before him—loving one sister, marrying the other, and the one he loved always near him?

CHAPTER XLVI.

Leah had been terribly shocked at finding Hettie lying unconscious on the ground. While she had been talking to Sir Arthur in the library, one of the men-servants, who had been told to watch for Sir Basil's arrival, had come to say that he had arrived, and the general had at once sent for him.

"I will leave you, uncle," she said. "You will be more at ease if I am not here."

She went up to him, before she quitted the room, and put one arm round his neck, half hiding her face on his shoulder.

"Uncle," she whispered, "you do not really think that what you have to say will make any difference as regards Basil, do you?"

Sir Basil seemed hardly to understand what he heard—they had him at it; then they struck on his brain. Some other of the truth came to the name of Martin Ray—turn him faint and dizzy, his heart beat wildly:

"I am quite sure not," he replied. "You may rest happy and assured. I know him so well. I think myself that he rather believes a ray of light."

"I have not to be a great patriot, You are not to have the shadow of a fear."

"I shall know," said the girl. "By my first guess at his face whether the story has vexed him or not. If I thought that it would, or that his love for me would grow less, I should die now and here."

"Have no fear, Leah; trust to me." She quitted the room, and went back to the terrace where she had left Hettie. No tall figure stood by the balustrade; but she saw an inanimate form stretched on the ground. Full of alarm she hastened to the spot. It was Hettie, white, cold, senseless, her golden hair lying like a veil over her shoulders—Hettie whom she had left so short a time before, well and smiling! What was wrong? She raised the golden head and looked into the white face. Was death? Was it sudden illness? In a paroxysm of terror she kissed the sweet face. "Some one has broken her heart," thought Leah. She remembered the pathetic little love-story her sister had told her. It was that had caused her to faint. Finding it impossible to restore her to consciousness Leah hastened to him at once. She hastened out to him and touched his arm gently with her hand.

"I will," she said—and there was world of piteous entreaty in her voice. "Let me see your face."

He turned to her, and her heart strove the happiness that shone in Leon's face; yet the other face, more brown, less fair, was a thousand times clearer to him.

"Hettie will be down to dinner," continued the unconscious girl, "and then I shall introduce the two people that are best to each other. You will be all that is most kind and loving to her, Basil, will you not, for my sake?"

"I will do everything you wish," he replied.

He knew how well she loved him, and he knew also that, if ever she guessed at the truth, her life would end with her happiness. She was looking up at him with glad eyes in which tears were shining.

"I will be so good," she said. "Those whom Heaven blesses should always be good—and Heaven has blessed me. Sometimes I think I might have been selfish, but I have been less happy."

He could not help thinking how, without knowing that it was her

"that he had forgotten so momentous a conversation."

"Grieved me? No, Leah, not in the least." The pathos of her face troubled him. "It has neither grieved nor vexed me in the least. I assure you honestly that I shall not be ashamed of the whole world's knowing that I married the daughter of Martin Ray. After all, though some of his ideas were strangely mistaken, he was a patriot at heart. Was he not, Leah?"

"Do not ask me," she cried, with a shudder. Even to her lover she could not speak of her father. "My uncle has told you all the whole story, and you say that it has not vexed you. You do not love

me one whit the less for it. Now, grant me one favor, Basil; promise me that you will never speak of my past to me. It was horrible. I have not, as I grew older, one thought in common with my poor father—I wake now sometimes, heart sick with horrible dreams, fancying myself once more listening with a rapturous heart to doctrines and teachings I hated. I say no word against my poor father; but I can never bear to think of the past, dream of it, recall it. You know that I am Martin Ray's daughter; you love me none the less for that; I am content. You are very good to me, Basil," she said; "I will try to repay you. My uncle felt sure of your good faith, he understands you well. He told you all about my dear sister."

His face was transformed in its tenderness as the spoke of Hettie. "You will love her, Basil; I know; she is so fair, so sweet and good. I think her most beautiful, too. But you love dark-haired women best, do you not?"

"I love one dark-haired woman," said Sir Basil. "I shall not plead guilty to more than that."

She laughed the happy, quiet laugh he was not often to hear again, and looked at him with brightening eyes.

"How happy we shall be together!" she said. "I could not have believed that so much happiness existed on earth. Ah! Basil, how much I missed my sister! I could never tell you! In spite of all the luxury and magnificence that surrounded me, I was desolate in heart until God came. I have known no desolation since."

"I would have given words to return her kind, loving words, but he could not. His lips trembled, his voice faltered, as he tried to frame some question about Hettie.

"I was sorry to hear it," he said. "That your sister is ill. Is it true?"

"I'm afraid I was talking to her on the terrace when my uncle came for me; he wanted to see us. I left her well enough. When I went back, she was lying with her face to the ground."

He strangled the bitter cry that rose to his lips.

"She has had a great trouble in her life," said unconscious Leah, "and I am afraid it will be some time before she will get over it."

The words smote him like a blow. It was impossible that she could have told Leah. Yet what did this mean?

"Trouble?" he said. "I am sorry to hear it. What trouble is it?"

"I cannot tell you," she replied gravely. "I do not know much about it; but it is a sorrow that has spoiled her life, and we must be doubly kind and gentle to her because of it. Out of the greatness of our own happiness we must be most loving to her."

"Leaven be merciful to me!" she cried to himself. "I am sorely tried."

"I know you will be like a kind elder brother to Hettie, will you not, Basil? And in time I hope she will forget that trouble and love some very much—one who will marry her, she is so sweet and beautiful I look forward to such a happy future, Basil."

"And she shall have one, he vowed to himself. "I would rather die than see her made wretched."

He could not by word or look deceive Leah, who was very loving to him.

"Close your eyes and sleep; you will be better then," she said. "And I want you to come down to dinner; I have a surprise for you."

She little dreamed that it was the surprise which had almost killed her sister.

Leah slept away gently then. Her lover would be waiting for her—the lover who now knew her story; and from whose face she would learn at the first glance whether he cared less for her.

She went to the library, but it was empty and a deadly chill made her tremble. It had been disclosed and gone away? She went to the drawing-room. He was not there; but from the window she saw him walking slowly up and down the terrace, his face pale, and agitated. Better to know her fate at once. She hastened out to him and touched his arm gently with her hand.

"I will," she said—and there was world of piteous entreaty in her voice. "Let me see your face."

He turned to her, and her heart strove the happiness that shone in Leon's face; yet the other face, more brown, less fair, was a thousand times clearer to him.

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"I will do everything you wish," he replied.

He knew how well she loved him, and he knew also that, if ever she guessed at the truth, her life would end with her happiness. She was looking up at him with glad eyes in which tears were shining.

"I will be so good," she said. "Those whom Heaven blesses should always be good—and Heaven has blessed me. Sometimes I think I might have been selfish, but I have been less happy."

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