

An Unexpected Confession;

Or, The Story of Miss Percival's Early Life.

CHAPTER XXII.—(Cont'd)

Esther suddenly paused in her work, an expression of perplexity sweeping over her face.

"Are you sure that the mate to this ruby is now in a safety vault in London?" she inquired.

"Yes; my friend King saw it with the other family jewels, only a short time before starting out upon his search for me. My uncle's solicitor confided in him fully, and all these matters were thoroughly discussed before he left home. But why do you ask?"

"Because," said Esther, with slow thoughtfulness, "I have recently seen another exactly like it."

"I think you must be mistaken," returned her companion, "for those ornaments were made in their style of many generations ago, and I cannot believe there is another in existence like them."

"But I am sure that the one I have seen is identical," Esther persisted.

Then she proceeded to tell him of her visit to the theatre, when she had been startled by seeing the counterpart of her ruby upon the beautiful and elegantly attired woman in one of the boxes.

"That is a very singular coincidence," Lord Irvington remarked, with a look of perplexity, "for it has long been a boast of the Irvingtons that there was not in the world another ruby like the 'twins.' They are called 'pigeon bloods,' and are supposed to be absolutely flawless; and it is next to impossible to match such stones. I should be inclined to doubt the genuineness of the one you have described; but if there is another, the possessor is fortunate to have it."

"What strange things happen in this world," Esther observed, as she came to the end of her worsted and laid her well-shaped ball upon the table beside her companion.

"There!" she added, "I will leave this for you to give to Mr. King. I shall be only too glad to have him take care of it, for it has been a great burden upon my heart ever since my father committed it to my care. And now I am sure you ought to have a rest and a nap, after all that has happened this afternoon; so, if you do not mind I will call the nurse, then run away for a while, as there is some work that must be finished before evening, and—"

"Lady Irvington!" exclaimed the invalid, in a tone of playful reproof, as he reached out and captured the hand upon which gleamed the two rings which he had placed there that day, "what is this I hear? Do you realize what this entitles you to?" touching the pain, heavy band of gold upon her finger.

"I am afraid I do not—quite," she answered, blushing prettily.

"Then I will tell you—immunity from all future manual labor, for one thing," her companion rejoined. "My dear, let there be no more talk of business when there is an abundance at your command to supply your every need and wish. No, no, Esther, not another hour shall you toil as you have been toiling; give up your business, just as it stands, to your friend Jennie, and let me have the comfort of your society during the little while I remain here."

"Very well," said Esther, with gentle compliance, "I will do exactly as you wish; and your suggestion regarding Jennie is very thoughtful, and I will gladly resign the business to her. She will have no difficulty in managing it, now that a good trade has been established, and it will give her an excellent living."

"Of course, I have no intention of chaining you here in this room all the time," Lord Irvington pursued; "if you will come to me for a few hours in the morning, and again after my afternoon nap, I shall be content. But I shall want you to go out every day for a drive in the park, or wherever you like. Then King would like to see something of the city, take in the theatres, operas, etc., and I have promised him an agreeable companion," he concluded, with a significant smile.

"You are very good to plan for my pleasure," replied Esther, with a heart-throb of delight, for the grand opera was in full swing, and she had been inexpressibly longing for a taste of it.

The nurse entered at that moment and with a farewell nod she ran away to her own room.

CHAPTER XXIII.

To Jennie our heroine immediately unfolded Lord Irvington's plan regarding the business.

The girl was deeply moved when she learned of her good fortune, especially when Esther told her that the machine, together with all out-

standing accounts—for there were a good many orders nearly finished—was to be hers, and with tear-dimmed eyes she thanked her friend for her generosity.

"But I cannot bear the thought of your going away," she said, with trembling lips; "we have lived so pleasantly together, I shall miss you terribly."

"And I you," Esther returned, adding: "But I may not go at present—I suppose it will depend upon Mr. Irvington's health."

She spoke of her husband in this way purposely, for she could not yet bring herself to assume the title with which she had been invested that day.

"Do you suppose you will go to England?" Jennie questioned.

"I do not know what plans have been arranged," Esther returned, gravely. "It is likely that Mr. Irvington would wish to return to his home if he could have the strength necessary for such a journey. Perhaps I shall learn more to-morrow regarding his intentions."

It had been agreed by all who had been present at the ceremony to keep the marriage as quiet as possible, as neither the invalid nor Esther wished to have any gossip among the inmates of the house about their affairs; thus none of the lodgers or servants knew anything of what had occurred early that afternoon.

Esther rested for a couple of hours, then she went downstairs again, and read to her husband for a while.

Mr. King came in while she was thus engaged, and they had a pleasant little chat together, during which it was arranged that Esther should accompany that gentleman to the Hoffman House and dine with him, and afterward they would go to the opera to see "Fra Diavolo."

It seemed to the young bride as if she must be living in a dream; these strange experiences, which were crowding so thick and fast upon her, did not appear to be real. But, although her position was peculiar, the knowledge that her future was provided for, and she need have no concern regarding it, had lifted a heavy burden from her mind, and, in spite of the sore spot in her heart, caused by her belief that Donald Lancaster had been trifling with her affections, her face was very bright and lovely when she came down from her room dressed to accompany Mr. Humbert King to dinner.

Her clothing was very simple and inexpensive, but it was neatly and tastefully made, and becoming as well, and the two gentlemen exchanged glances appreciative of her beauty, and both felt a strong desire to see her clad in garments befitting her station.

As she was about to leave the room, Lord Irvington held out his hand to her.

"Good-night, dear," he said, as he would have spoken to a younger sister. "I shall not see you again until to-morrow. I hope you will enjoy the evening, and I shall look forward to a description of it from you in the morning."

Esther went to his side and clasped his hand.

"If you are going to be lonely, I would rather stay," she said, looking earnestly into his uplifted eyes.

"No, I shall not be lonely. I am somewhat weary, and intend to retire early. The nurse is here to attend to all my needs, so do not give me an anxious thought."

He released her hand, and, with a nod and a smile, she left him.

Esther found Mr. King a very jolly companion, and she enjoyed herself thoroughly during the hour that they spent over their excellent dinner.

He seemed to know how to draw her out in a way to make her feel perfectly at her ease, and appear at her best, and many an admiring glance from persons seated at adjacent tables rested upon the bright face of the beautiful girl who so unconscious of, yet was so charming in, her loveliness.

The opera proved to be a delightful treat to her, while she learned more than she had ever known about music and the stage, during the intervals between the acts; for her companion appeared to be familiar with all the standard operas, and discoursed most entertainingly upon them.

When the entertainment was over and they were passing out of the theatre, Esther and her attendant came suddenly face to face with Donald Lancaster, who, with Miss Dexter upon his arm, and his mother following in their wake, was also making her way out of the building.

His eyes lighted with pleasure as they fell upon Esther.

He lifted his hat, bowed and

smiled, then a look of mingled pain and astonishment overspread his handsome face when she steadily met his glance without returning his salutation, or a muscle of her beautiful face relaxing.

The next moment the crowd surged in between them, and they saw each other no more.

Esther's face was as pale as snow from the effort this meeting had cost her, but it did not interrupt her conversation with her companion at the time, and he, being occupied in making a passage for her, did not observe that anything was amiss.

She was very weary when she at last reached home, and went to rest, for so much had happened during that ever-memorable day, it almost seemed as if months had passed since morning. She was very heavy-hearted, too, in view of her hopeless attachment to Donald, and the supposed injury he had that day done her, but in spite of this she had not been in bed ten minutes when she was sleeping soundly.

When she awoke the next morning her first thought was, as usual, that she must hasten to dress and get at her work.

Then it flashed upon her that she was no longer a busy, little "apron naker," struggling for her daily bread, but the wife of a peer of England, before whom the uterine was about to open with the most flattering prospects.

But she helped Jennie to plan out her work for the day, folded and packed some articles that were to be sent away, and then made up her accounts to get them in better order before turning over her books to her successor.

Later, when she went down to Lord Irvington, she found him not quite so strong as he had been the day before. He was evidently in some distress also, for his face was drawn and his breathing labored. But he smiled an eager welcome as he held out his hand to her.

"Did you have a pleasant time last night?" he inquired.

"Yes, very; but I am afraid you cannot say as much," Esther returned, regarding him anxiously.

"I was somewhat nervous and restless, but am feeling better since I had my breakfast," he responded, adding: "Now, before you tell me about your dinner and the opera, there are a few little matters about which I would like to speak. Of course, if there was any prospect of the recovery of my health, we should eventually go to England to live, and I should know just what to do regarding your preparations for the future. But, under existing circumstances, you may have a choice in the matter. Have you thought of any place where you would like to go to pursue your studies?"

"No, I do not know much about institutions in this part of the country," said Esther, thoughtfully. "Before coming East, I had a strong desire to go either to Stanford University or to Berkeley. I have heard Vassar, Smith College and Wellesley all well spoken of, but I really do not feel qualified to make a choice without knowing more about them."

"How would you like to go immediately to England to complete your education?" her companion inquired.

"Immediately?" repeated Esther, with a startled look.

"Yes—that is very soon. There are as fine schools in London and its vicinity as can be found anywhere, and there are reasons why I think you would be happier, as well as safer, there. As I understand, you have no relatives?"

"No—I am utterly alone in the world, as far as I know."

"Then I think you can do no better than go to England with Mr. King when he returns; both he and his wife feel a deep interest in you—for my sake at first, for your own later, I am sure—and you will be welcome to a home with them when you are not in school. Then, since Mr. King will be your attorney, it will be much more convenient for you to be near him, where you can always have his counsel upon any business questions that may arise, without having to wait for letters to cross the ocean."

Esther had not as yet had time to think much about a change of residence; events had crowded fast upon her during the last day or two. She, of course, knew that ultimately she would go to England to live, but this she believed would be an event of the distant future, since she supposed it would depend entirely upon Lord Irvington's condition, and there was a possibility that he might linger for some time. He had seemed so cheerful since the coming of his friend with such good news, she had hoped he might rally and for a time live to enjoy the home which he so loved. But now his speaking of her going to England with Mr. King, and of making her home with him during her vacation, had startled her somewhat. Surely he could not think she would go and leave him, for the sake of getting into school a little earlier! Then, recalling the evident haste with which he had arranged his plans, a keen pang shot through her heart as she realized that he was momentarily expecting the last great change for himself; hence his desire to settle everything for her.

"My dear, I would not have you

do violence to your own feelings in this matter," said Lord Irvington, kindly, after waiting in vain for some reply to his suggestions.

"I know how fond Americans are of their country, and if you would prefer to remain here, for the present, until you become a little more reconciled to a future residence abroad, the very best possible arrangements shall be made for you, and I want you to feel perfectly free to express your preference."

"Excuse me," said Esther, with a deprecatory smile; "I was so absorbed in thinking of the wonderful things that have happened to me of late, I forgot you were waiting for an answer. No," she added, thoughtfully, "I have no decided preference—on the whole, I think your plan for me—that I complete my education in England—is better than any that I could make for myself, and as soon as you are able to return I shall be ready to go with you."

"Not with me, Esther; at least—"

"I could not go without you," she hastily interposed.

She would not let him voice what she feared was in his mind; yet she would not even appear to understand him, lest the depressing thought should become more firmly fastened upon him.

"My child," he returned, gently laying his hand upon hers, "you surely must know that I can never go back to England to live; even though my homesick heart yearns irresistibly for one more view of my native land—for one more look at dear, old Irvington Manor. Ah! it is a grand, a magnificent place, Esther, and I know that you also will love it by and by. I know that you will think of me sometimes, when you go there to live; I should be sorry if I thought you would not; but you must never allow any vain regrets over my having been cut off so early from my inheritance, to make you sad or gloomy. I want you to be happy there—to make it pleasant and homelike once more, where, with your family and your friends about you, you will get all that is possible out of life."

"Nay, do not do that," he went on, as a little sob involuntarily escaped her. "I know you are grieved on my account, and it is like you to forget yourself; but I could never have asked you to bind yourself to me—to pledge your hand without your heart, had I not known that the end for me was very near. I do not say that I would not be glad to live and go back to my home if I could have my health and love to some purpose. And yet the future, even under such circumstances, would not have been complete for me without the woman I loved. My Nella was a lovely girl, Esther; you will find a picture of her among the few treasures I possess. But, little woman," he said, breaking away from his sorrowful mood and smiling into her sad eyes, "we have had enough of this plaintive strain, and there shall be no more reference to anything so depressing. You have relieved me greatly by deciding to adopt my plans for your future. Now I want you to think of something else. The lady of Irvington must have some pretty things to wear; and, by the way—"

"I do not want you to ever wear anything but pretty things and bright colors suited to your complexion and youthfulness—so you are to take this, go to some first-class establishment, and provide yourself with whatever is suitable and your taste dictates, for your position. When this is gone, there will be plenty more."

He slipped a handsome, Russia leather pocketbook into her hands as he concluded; but before she could find voice to thank him, Mr. King's voice was heard in the hall outside, and the next moment he rapped for admittance.

(To be continued.)

IMPRISONED FOR DEBT.

Committee for England Suggest Changes, Not Abolition.

That imprisonment for debt is necessary and should not be abolished is the opinion of the Select Committee which has been sitting for some time in London, Eng., to consider the question. Changes, however, in the present law are recommended.

Their report, which was laid on the table of the English House of Commons, has now been made public.

No other means of enforcing payment, the report points out, is equally efficacious.

How effective the threat of imprisonment is in making debtors pay up is shown from the fact that in 1907, the last year for which figures are available, 146,075 warrants for commitment were issued, but only 9,235 debtors were imprisoned, the remainder apparently paying their debts.

At present no warrant for imprisonment is issued unless the debtor has or has had since the date of the order or judgment means to pay, and has "neglected or refused" or "neglects and refuses" to pay; and the majority of the County Court judges, it is added, are in favor of the retention of the present law.

The Farm

PASTURE FOR PIGS.

The value of pasture for hogs is more generally recognized now than it ever was. Of course, its value per acre depends upon what kind of pasture it is. Clover pasture has been recognized longer as profitable for this purpose than any other kind, but the coming into use more generally of alfalfa in some sections has made it a favorite for hog pasture at certain seasons. Rape is also greatly esteemed for hogs because it grows so rapidly, but it requires more grain feeding with it. Any of these pastures are valuable for hogs, for it makes them very healthy and gives them rapid growth.

Swine feeding upon a pasture probably require more food than do those in yards because more energy is required in grazing than in laying around a yard. But they get more out of the food given them while in pasture than otherwise, because of the nature and likely combinations of the food and the greater activity of the digestive organs brought about by exercise.

The green food increases the digestive capacity of young pigs and puts them in a better condition for later fattening.

Just what a pasture is worth is hard to say though its value per acre is known to equal from 1,500 to 3,000 pounds of feed.

Recent experiments with brood sows on permanent pastures and upon some annual crops is virtually worth from 1,800 to 2,400 pounds of shorts.

HOW TO FEED.

The present knowledge of feeding is boiled down and summarized by Prof. C. L. Beach in the following maxims:

The more food the cow can be induced to eat the more milk she will produce. Cows do not usually consume more food than they can properly digest. The ration, therefore, should be made as palatable as possible in order to induce the cow to eat large quantities.

The larger the amount of protein in the ration, the larger the milk flow. Protein in the ration is essential to the production of the milk.

The less energy required to digest the ration, the larger the milk flow.

The richer the ration, the richer the manure. The dairy farmer must look here for a large part of his profit.

No two cows can be fed alike. Each must be studied differently. Increase the protein in the ration and watch the milk flow.

LIVE STOCK NOTES.

Begin in October to get the hens in proper condition so that there will be plenty of eggs when they bring from 30 to 40 cents a dozen.

Swine must be given ample exercise and plenty of succulent food if they are to remain healthy and vigorous. A good clover pasture should be provided, followed by peas during midsummer. In the fall rape and clover furnish good pasture. Mature animals not suckling young need nothing in addition to this green food.

To chickens we believe in giving dry grains from the start—pinhead oatmeal, millet, finely cracked corn and wheat. Some fine grit and charcoal should be placed where they can get at it. Whole corn should not be given to chickens until they are quite large; its heating nature makes it likely to ferment in their gizzards, as cornmeal will do, if eaten freely. Wheat is an excellent feed for chickens after they are eight or ten weeks old.

Every horseman knows that not one collar in 100 in daily use is a perfect fit; many will do, but a large majority of them are too wide for the neck and not adapted to the shoulders. Every horse should have his own collar to be able to do his work with comfort, and every collar should be fitted to the horse that is expected to wear it. If the collar is too long it should be cut off at the top; but if too wide and not adapted to the shoulders of the horse, don't think you must get a pad to fill in the space. Pads to the horse's shoulders in summer are about what overshoes would be to our feet—makes them tender and soft instead of firm and tough.

FARM NOTES.

The percentage of fat in cream varies from eight to ten up to six or seven times as much. Good commercial cream should have twenty per cent. or more; anything above 55 is very rich.

It is all right to do all in our power to increase the price of butter and milk, but let us not spend so much time talking about it that we lower the grade of our products. The very best way to bring up the value of an article is to make it so good that everybody will want it. Do not offer an inferior animal,

an inferior fruit or vegetable, for sale at any price, if you wish to create a demand for stuff from your farm. There may be money made by dealing in cheap stuff, but it is not the farmer who raises it that gets rich. Raise only the best and sell nothing that is not up to standard over your name. Excellence of produce is the best advertising. The cost of plant food depends on two main points; the actual cost, as applied to the soil, and the unavoidable waste through improper mixing of materials. In the common markets, nitrogen costs in one of the best forms (nitrogen of soda) about fifteen cents per pound when delivered on the soil; potash, also, in the best form (German potash salts) costs about five cents per pound, and phosphoric acid, under like conditions (acid phosphate) about five cents per pound. By this is meant that these plant food elements, bought in the form of high-grade chemical fertilizers, would cost as stated.

THE ROADS OF MOROCCO.

Tribes Plough Them Up Now and Sow Grain on Them.

There are two roads from Tangier to Fez, the one passing through Alcazar and the other following the seashore via Larache. The former is the more direct and except during the rainy season is usually chosen by the traveller, but the beach road to Larache possesses many attractions and you are able to spend a night at the old Portuguese settlement of Arzila, which is a model of the fortresses of two centuries ago.

No one has ever yet measured accurately the exact distance which separates Tangier from Fez, and I hope the next person to make the journey will take a bicycle wheel with a cyclometer attached to settle the vexed question once and for all. Roughly I put the distance at 185 to 190 miles, and it is usual to take from six to eight days on the road, thus limiting the daily march to twenty-five miles, which is quite sufficient if you want to shoot on arriving in camp.

The journey can be done comfortably in six days if your animals are not too heavily loaded, and I have ridden from Fez to Larache in three days during the heat of August, but it is an experiment not to be recommended.

Except during the months of July, August and September the climate of Morocco is temperate and pleasant. The early spring is, however, the best season for a journey, as the tropical rains which are likely to overwhelm you in the late autumn and early winter have ceased. The rivers are serious obstacles during the rainy season, as there are no bridges and no ferries except close to the coast, and consequently if the fords are impracticable you are likely to be hung up on the banks of a river for a very considerable time. The rivers are wide and shallow, but are liable to rise and fall six to eight feet in twenty-four hours. Your baggage must be carried on mules or horses.

There are no regular roads in Morocco and the tracks are often very difficult to trace and vary constantly because the tribes have the curious custom of ploughing right over them and sowing their grain thereon. Thus in the summer when the corn is ripe the old road has sometimes entirely disappeared and it is necessary to strike a new trail. As there are no roads, carts are unknown in the interior. The only wheeled vehicles which ever found their way to Fez were brought there by the late Sultan Abdul Aziz, who succeeded in adding considerably to his unpopularity by the innovation.

BREAD AS FURNITURE.

Many Uses for the Sun Dried Bread Sheet of the East.

In the land of the pyramids whenever coffee is brought in to a visiting guest, the sun cooked bread sheeting is always served therewith. It looks like so much chamois leather, and is of sweetish taste, being compounded solely of flour and the expressed pulp of sultana raisins. It is cleanly to handle and can be crumpled up in the hand without fracture.

The bread sheeting is a most important article of interior commerce, per camel caravans, among the Asiatic kalifats and bazaars. It has for thousands of years been their combined bread, cracked and cake all in one.

The bread sheeting is used in the countries of origin as minor articles of furniture and furnishings—just as the natives of the tropics make a bewildering variety of uses of the cocoanut palm and its products—as sun blinds, awnings, lanterns, cahiers for holding papers, and so on through a dozen uses. In their dry climate these uses are practicable, but in rainy seasons the goods if wetted collapse like paper almost.

Even in Manhattan among the Italian bakers you see the peculiar, trellis work hardtack bread (made in big ringed sheets about a yard square) made to do duty as temporary shelving. It will not stand much weight, but is used for drying out light articles, as the air strikes the objects both from below and above.