

An Unexpected Confession;

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

CHAPTER XIX.

Esther went on her way, after parting with Donald, feeling almost as if she were treading on air.

"He loves me! he loves me!" her happy heart kept singing, and then all at once she laughed out such a sweet, musical, merry little sound that a passer-by turned to take a second look at her.

"To think of it!" she murmured, with mischievous gleaming eyes, "the elegant Donald Lancaster has actually lost his heart to the little thing, who dared to worship at his shrine nearly two years ago."

Her face was radiant when she entered Lord & Taylor's, and made her way to the counter where the goods she needed were sold.

She had purchased what she required, and was waiting for the change, when she heard a clear, incisive voice behind her exclaim: "Ah! Mrs. Lancaster, good-morning; we have not met for a long time."

"No, Mrs. Holburn; we have Marjorie with us for a few weeks, and I have been going about with her a good deal. I want her to enjoy her visit thoroughly."

"You refer to Miss Dexter, I suppose. I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting her. Is she with you to-day?"

"Yes; I left her at the ribbon counter, while I do another errand."

"I suppose the rumors which I hear are true," said Mrs. Holburn, in a playful tone; "when will the engagement be announced?"

"Hush!" said Mrs. Lancaster, warningly, "the cards are not out yet. Donald, for some reason, does not seem to be quite ready; but I hope everything will be settled within a few days. Practically, they are engaged—that has long been understood, and it will be a most desirable match in every way."

Esther felt as if she were turning to stone as she listened to the foregoing conversation.

She was sure that her Donald must have been the person referred to by the lady addressed as Mrs. Lancaster.

She changed her position and glanced back at the two friends, who were now moving on.

Yes, one of them was that handsome, youthful-looking woman whom Donald, only a little while before, had told her was his mother.

The brightness all died out of her face, and there was a look of despair in her eyes, as she turned back to the counter to receive her package and change, and then made her way through the crowd to the street.

She had been so blissfully happy, but a few moments before, in the belief that Donald Lancaster loved her and wanted to make her his wife—for she had interpreted his looks and words—his eager desire to come to her to-morrow evening because he "had something to tell her."

But now, in view of what she had just heard, she was forced to believe that he had been fooling, or flirting with her, for the amusement of the moment.

How she had been deceived in him! He had seemed so noble, so manly, so superior to such treachery and double dealing.

It did not seem at all like him, and had she not heard his own mother declare that he was the same as engaged to that beautiful girl, whom she had seen riding in the Lancaster carriage that morning, she never could have believed it.

With a heavy heart she hastened home, mounted the two flights of stairs with a sullen step, removed her hat and jacket and sat down to think, thankful that Jennie was out just then, and could not question her regarding her unhappy mood.

"He does not love me; he is only playing with me when he called me 'darling,' and held me to him with that close, tender clasp. Perhaps, even now, he is laughing in his sleeve to see how easily he fooled me. Oh! it was cruel—cruel!" she murmured, with a sob of pain.

"What shall I do?" she went on in a voice that was hoarse with repressed emotion; "having had my hopes so raised, how can I live out my life alone, desolate and unloved, with no prospect of ever having a home of my own? Will he really come to-morrow night, expecting to see me, and that he can go on keeping up the farce he began to-day? Oh, Heaven, what sport!" she exclaimed, springing to her feet, her form quivering with mingled scorn and suffering, and pacing the room with nervous steps.

"No," she exclaimed, throwing her head proudly back, "I will never see him again; I will deny him admittance; one taste of such an experience is enough for me. I

will never put faith in any man again."

Presently she heard Jennie running upstairs, humming a gay air, and not wishing her to find her in such an excited state, she went to her closet and busied herself putting away her hat and jacket while she tried to regain her self-control.

"Oh, are you back?" said the girl, coming into the room like a breeze. "You were not gone so very long! Did you get a good order?"

"Yes, a dozen housemaids' aprons, and Mrs. Van Allen wanted to know if we would undertake some caps also. At first, I told her no; then it occurred to me that you are so handy at trimming things, you could perhaps do the fancy part."

"I am sure I could, and I should like it," said Jennie, eagerly.

"Well, I told Mrs. Van Allen that I would make one or two, for samples, and if they suited, we would take an order for more," Esther remarked, as she emerged from the closet.

"Why?" exclaimed Jennie, as she caught sight of her face, "what is the matter with you, Esther? I am sure you are sick!"

"No, but I am tired, for I hurried home. Mr. Irving told me before I went out, that he would like me to get back as soon as I could, as he had something important to tell me, and now I must go to him," Esther explained.

With a weary step and preoccupied air, she left the room, and went slowly downstairs.

"Come in, Esther," said Mr. Irving, as she tapped lightly upon his door, for he had been listening for her for some time.

She entered, and the man instantly noted her pale, grave face and dejected air, which were so different from her sunny looks and animated manner when she left him a couple of hours previous.

"Has anything happened?" he questioned, regarding her earnestly.

"Yes," she responded, but smiling now to disarm him. "I have had a large order, and for something out of my regular line."

"And the burden of it has taken all the sunshine out of your face, my little friend," the invalid returned, adding: "You are too young and sensitively organized, Esther, to have such responsibilities. But sit down," he continued, pointing to a chair near him, "I want to talk with you a little about my own affairs, and ask your advice upon certain points."

"Ask my advice?" exclaimed Esther, in genuine surprise.

"Why not, little woman?" was the smiling query. "You have already shown yourself the truest and most disinterested friend I ever had, and now I am simply going to put your friendship to another test."

"Very well; I promise you I will do my utmost to serve you in any way," she answered.

"That is like your habitual generosity; but do not be too prodigal of your promises, for there is no knowing what advantage I might take of your willingness to oblige me," was the playful rejoinder.

Esther smiled to see him so unusually cheerful.

His face was brighter and happier than she had ever seen it, and his manner almost gay.

"What a cruel thing it is," she thought, with a sharp pang of inward regret, "that he cannot live to enjoy the good fortune that has come to him so unexpectedly. Oh, what a mystery is existence—the world—the universe, and the force that govern them!" and a sob almost burst from her as she wondered what the future might have in store for her. She certainly could not discern anything promising in the present.

"I did not have time to tell you very much of my good news before you went out this morning," Mr. Irving went on, without appearing to heed her sadness; "but now, if you can spare me the time, I want to tell you the whole story."

"Oh, yes, I can spare the time," Esther obligingly returned, although every moment was precious to her, and she knew she would have to make up at night the hours thus spent.

But it might be the last she could do for him, she thought, and she would not refuse him anything.

"It seems that my brother, Harold, began to carry matters with a high hand soon after I was banished from my home," the invalid resumed, "and it was not a great while before my uncle began—secretly—to fear that he had been basty and unjust toward me. The first thing that aroused these suspicions was the fact that Harold began to be attentive to a lady whom

I had loved from boyhood. I had asked my uncle's sanction to our union, just before the affair of the stolen jewels, and was on the point of formally proposing for the lady's hand when the denouement came, and my banishment fell like a thunderbolt upon me. I had long known that Harold was also fond of Nella, and very jealous because of her preference for me, and this, of course, was another incentive to ruin me if possible. Of course, my supposed crime reached the ears of Nella's parents, who at once forbade all further intercourse between us, although I feel sure she would have clung to me, if she had been left to herself.

"Then came another blow. Scarcely a year elapsed when Harold won her for his wife.

"I could never understand it, but I suppose she was influenced by her parents, who had long looked forward to an alliance with the family. But my friend, King, says she was never happy—that she began to fade almost from the day of her going to Ferndale, to the home where I had hoped to spend my life with her. I think, Esther, I should not have been quite so reckless had it not been for this. It maddened me to know how both our lives had been wrecked by the trickery of my only brother. I have told you he was not kind to her, because there were no children. He wanted an heir to succeed him, for he well knew that if anything happened to cut him off, I should step back there, by right of inheritance; and, like every traitor who wrongs another, he hated me and desired to perpetuate the injury he had done me."

"What a strange feeling for one brother to entertain toward another!" Esther here observed as her companion paused. "But I am glad that justice has been done you at last. It does not often come to people in this world."

"It has come rather late in the instance, my friend," said the man, with a sad smile. "I am not going to repine, however. But to return to my brother. After the death of his wife, some five years ago, he went abroad, leaving my uncle, who had become feeble, to shift for himself in his lonely home. I expect, though, it was a relief to him in some respects, for Harold had been getting dissipated, and often held high carnival with his cronies in the old place. He remained away over four years, then returned suddenly, with the information that he was about to marry again. He did not appear to be very happy in view of the fact, and it finally leaked out that the woman who was to become his wife was one whom you self-respecting man would wish to wed; but in some way she had obtained a hold upon him, and exacted marriage as the price of her silence. Uncle Russell was furious when he learned the truth; but his health being so poor, he seemed powerless to prevent the marriage. Later, when all was revealed, he told his solicitor that at that time he would have given all he possessed for one look into my face—for the old familiar sound of my voice, and that he had mourned in secret for years over his harshness to me. He also told them that Nella—my Nella, in spite of the fact that she was Harold's wife—would never listen to a word against upon my innocence, and had done much toward softening his heart toward me."

"One evening, only a few days previous to the date set for Harold's marriage, uncle resolved that he would make an effort to see for himself what manner of woman was about to become mistress of the home which he felt he soon must leave; and, learning that both were to appear at a select ball in a neighboring town, he secretly resolved that he would be present also. He arranged everything very cleverly, arriving at the scene of festivities after they were well under way, where he selected a remote corner as his point of observation. He had not been there long when he espied my brother approaching, with a brilliant-looking woman leaning upon his arm. She was magnificently dressed, and wore a profusion of costly jewels, while blazing upon her neck he saw the long-lost stones—the precious heirlooms which he had so long believed I had stolen, and for the theft of which he had so cruelly banished me. The sight well-nigh paralyzed him, and he at once realized that Harold had played the scoundrel from the first for the purpose of depriving me of my inheritance."

"He controlled himself as well as he could, and when the unsuspecting couple drew near him, he arose and confronted them, laying a heavy hand upon the woman's shoulder, and demanded the immediate restoration of his property."

Harold begged him not to make a scene, but allowed them to quietly withdraw from the company to some place where they could settle the matter without creating a scandal. His request was granted, when Harold confessed everything, and was instantly discredited for his treachery. My uncle sent early the next morning for his solicitor, made a new will, leaving me everything he possessed, without any restrictions, and authorizing a rigid search for me. This, as I told you before, was six months ago. Every

effort was made to find me, but without avail, and the poor old man died, yearning and sorrowing for me. Finally, my friend, King, learning of these things, and being determined that I should be reinstated, threw himself heart and soul into the quest, and succeeded in finding me last evening. This is my story, Esther, and I am sure you must be weary listening to so long a tale," the man concluded, and looking weary himself from the effort he had made to tell it.

"It is wonderful—it is dreadful! But I am glad for you," she observed, while she counted out some drops which it was time for him to take.

"Glad, and yet sorry at the same time, your face tells me," he said, smiling sadly into her grave eyes as he swallowed the potion—"sorry that I am not going to live to enjoy my inheritance. But what shall I do with it, my child, since my doom is sealed?"

"Oh, how can I tell you that! Why should you ask me?" cried the startled girl in unfeigned surprise.

"You promised you would advise me. Surely you do not think that my brother is worthy to succeed to it?"

"Oh, no! And yet I have no right to pass judgment upon him," said Esther, in a troubled tone. "Ask your friend," she added, "he is the proper one to advise you."

"I have—I have already submitted a plan to him, and he heartily approves it," Mr. Irving returned.

"I want some honest, conscientious person to reign in my home when I am gone—some one who would honor my name and make good use of what property I shall leave. Esther, I want you to have the control of it—I want to make you my wife and my heir! Will you marry me, my child?"

(To be continued.)

CARE OF A RAZOR.

How to Sharpen a Razor—Some Pointers for Barbers.

It is one of the misfortunes of the masculine element of the population that recourse has to be made to shaving. From motives of hygiene and health, the greater proportion, moreover, prefer to accomplish this operation themselves but suffer from inability to impart the requisite keen edge to the instrument in order to achieve the desired end sufficiently cleanly and safely. The setting of a fine edge is distinctly a knack, and its acquisition requires as much practice as the setting of a cutting tool for the lathe. If, however, one be but familiar with the elements of the process a considerable amount of

vaia labor and time might be saved. Prof. McWilliam explained recently before the Sheffield Society of Engineers and Metallurgists in the course of a lecture on the prosaic subject, "The Care of a Razor," this paper embodies the results of continual experiments and study of the subject over a period of some twenty years. As he had only his own face upon which to test his theories, his experience has proved a valuable factor.

The cutler from whom he purchased his first razor, upon inquiry as to whether it should be dipped in hot water before stropping, replied in the negative. Similarly, one recommended a rigid and another a flexible strop; while there was a similar divergence of opinion as to whether stropping should be carried out before or after use. The Professor, however, tried all methods in turn, and thus was able to select that which is undoubtedly the best. He has found that the flexible strop, hung at one end by a nail, such as the professional wielder of the razor ordinarily resorts to, gives a strong but not a fine edge, and that oil tends to harden the surface of the strop unless frequently applied. A sealskin strop, having a smooth, pliable surface, gives the best edge, and if the razor be dipped into hot water before stropping the metal is toughened and better fitted for the production of the requisite fine edge.

The preliminary immersion in water is a vital factor, since razors possess a finer temper than ordinary cutting tools, and are proportionately brittle. It is also expedient that the strop surface should be preserved from the settling thereon of dust particles the presence of which, if of a gritty nature, may break the delicate edge of the tool. It is important to remember that the edge of a razor, being obviously of a much finer character, owing to the nature of its work, than other cutting tools, must receive special attention, and by taking to heart the foregoing simple rules, many of the difficulties at present experienced may be effectively overcome.—Chambers's Journal.

CUSTOM IN ROUMANIA.

A strange custom is still observed in Roumania. When a servant has displeased his or her master the offender takes them before the hands and places them boots in his bedroom door of his master. It is a sign of great submission, and the boots are either kicked away, as an intimation that the fault will not be forgiven, or else the servant is told to place them on his feet, which shows that he is forgiven.

THE CANADIAN NORTHERN.

Bids Fair to Shortly Become a Transcontinental Line.

One of the most interesting of the romances in Canadian development is the story of the modest beginning and rapid growth of the Canadian Northern Railway.

In 1888 Messrs. Mackenzie and Mann formed a partnership as railway contractors and nine years later they took their first steps towards the Canadian Northern.

Starting in the heart of Manitoba, with its wheat bearing lands, radiating from the City of Winnipeg, the Canadian Northern has grown to a railroad with over 3,000 miles of track in the territory to the West of the Great Lakes, and there are other integral parts already constructed and operating in Ontario and the Provinces of the East.

Viewing a map of the road with the lines already constructed, with the extensions under the contract new lines, the Canadian Northern bids fair to shortly become a transcontinental line sending its traffic from tidewater to tidewater.

Many can recall when there was no Canadian Northern Railway—when the name of Mackenzie and Mann had no great import. An analysis therefore of the railroad properties of these two men cannot but be of interest to all Canadians.

The Canadian Northern Ontario proper (from last annual report, June, 1908) operated in the West 2,895 miles. Before the close of the year 248 additional miles were completed and utilized—a total of 3,143 miles.

The Canadian Northern Ontario Railway owns a line—Toronto to Sudbury—which, with extensions and branches, totals 310 miles. The Canadian Northern Quebec Railway—an amalgamation of several smaller roads in the Province of Quebec—has a total mileage of 250. Other railroad companies are owned in the Provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. To the figures mentioned, will be added, this year, the length of the various extensions and branches of 1909 construction.

How have these men been able to construct a big railway system, and that without issuing any stock to the public? In the first place they have shown great shrewdness in choosing locations, and it is their boast that all their lines have paid from the start.

In the second place, chiefly through the shrewd and economical borrowing have Mackenzie and Mann been able to construct this big railway system. Both the Dominion Government and Provincial Government of Manitoba have lent their aid to the Railway by guaranteeing the bonds. In the later days the Province of Ontario has similarly treated lines within its boundaries, as have also the Provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Most of the financing has been done in Great Britain, that centre to which all the world turns for financial aid; but Canadians have done much for this and other Canadian enterprises. The Canadian Northern Railway consolidated mortgage bonds, guaranteed by the Province of Manitoba, are found among the assets of many Insurance Companies and other financial institutions. Of the \$16,000,000 Canadian Northern Equipment obligations which have been issued, Canadians have taken the large proportion and the United States investors have been generous in their assistance towards the financing of these loans. The credit of the Canadian Northern Railway in the world's market, stands high.

NEW CAVALRY SWORD.

Revision to the Rapier of Seventeenth Century.

The pattern of the new British cavalry sword has now been approved for manufacture. It differs from those of previous patterns chiefly in being fitted with a straight, tapering blade to facilitate thrusting, says The Pall Mall Gazette.

The guard is shaped to afford more protection on the left side, and the grip is formed to fit the hand, a recess for the thumb being cut in the back. The scabbard is a straight taper from end to end and made of steel. The weight of the sword is about two pounds fourteen ounces, and of the scabbard one pound six ounces.

Historically, The London Times observes, the adoption of a thrusting sword is of interest as being a revision to the single-edged rapier of the seventeenth century, the period when, according to some of our most eminent authorities, the qualities of a fighting sword were best understood, armor having practically gone out of use and firearms being still very imperfect.

Such an authority as Captain Hutton is understood to object to a sword specialized for thrusting, on the ground that a man cannot fight his way out of a crowd with it. It may, too, be objected that the sword is comparatively heavy, but that may be due to the British trooper's well-known prejudice in favor of a certain amount of weight.

WERE STALKED BY LIONS

HUNTER'S EXPERIENCE IN WILDS OF AFRICA.

Dr. Aurel Schulz, Stalking Hippopotamus, Followed by Lion.

"In the wild state one seldom sees a lion, either in repose or majestically alert," writes a correspondent of the London Times. "A glimpse the hunter may get of him, standing magnificently rigid when suddenly disturbed in early morning at his kill of overnight; and more seldom it has been given to a man to watch one, himself unobserved, gazing from an eminence at the grazing herd. But the lion is a nocturnal animal, possessing an extraordinary capacity for making itself invisible in the dim light. Many a sportsman has testified to the experience of being unable to see a lion on a night not altogether dark, though it was so close that its breathing was plainly audible; and many a native of Africa has fallen victim to the sudden onslaught of what, as he passed it a few feet away, he took to be only a small bush or the blot upon the darkness made by a tussock of grass."

BLOOD-CURDLING INCIDENT.

"The literature of big-game shooting contains perhaps no incident more blood-curdling than the experience of Dr. Aurel Schulz, who, when with his gun-bearer he was stalking a hippopotamus at night, found that a lion was in turn stalking him. By chance the gun-bearer noticed that a bush behind them had a queer way of being always about the same distance in their rear. In spite of the moonlight they could not be certain that it really was a lion; but when, to test it, they turned upon their tracks, immediately the shadowy thing swept, dim and noiseless, in a wide semi-circle, so as to plant itself again behind them. So, one going backward, with his face always to the lion, the hunted hunters made their way back to the camp—hippopotami having ceased to interest them."

EAST'S MORAL CHARACTER.

As to the moral character of the beast the same writer continues: "It has been said of the lion that he attacked only those who withstood him, scorning to strike one who fled or sued for clemency; whereas in real life if you run from a lion he will chase you. Moreover, that full-grown men only were his enemies, that he would not harm babies. But in the lion-house one may see any day the eyes which look so indifferently on the men and women who come and go before the cages, light up with sudden savagery as some small child toddles alone across the floor. The lion has learned that men and women are not for him; but this smaller creature—nice antelope size, soft and helpless—presents itself to the royal mind as easily killable."

QUEEN WAS PEACEMAKER.

Wilhelmina as Child Calmed King's Wrath.

A pretty little story comes from The Hague of one occasion upon which Queen Wilhelmina acted as peacemaker. The late King of Holland was, as is well known, a man of ungovernable temper, and when he was annoyed over anything it was quite useless to attempt to argue with him. On one occasion he was very angry over the manner in which one of the Dutch newspapers had criticized his actions. He refused to see his Ministers, and stamped up and down a corridor at his palace, storming and gesticulating as was his wont. The Cabinet was becoming desperate, since some important papers demanded his immediate attention. It was left to one of the ladies of the court to solve the difficulty. She sent little Princess Wilhelmina, then about five, into the corridor to meet her father. She watched him for a moment unnoticed, and then imitated his actions, stamping backwards and forwards, with her fists tightly clenched. His Majesty caught sight of her, and was unable to help laughing, as he paused to watch her. Half an hour later the Premier found the King seated on the floor playing contentedly with his little daughter, to whom he was devotedly attached, and quite unruffled.

THE SNEEZEWOOD TREE.

The remarkable sneezewood tree is a native of Natal and other parts of South Africa. Its funny name was given to it because one cannot see it without sneezing violently. The dust of its wood has just the same effect as the strongest snuff and is so irritating to the nose that workmen are obliged to sneeze even when they are planting it.

If a piece of the wood of this tree is put in the mouth it is found to have a very bitter taste, and no doubt it is this bitterness which prevents insects of any kind from attacking the timber of the sneezewood tree. The fact that insects find so disagreeable makes it wood very valuable for work that is required to last a long time.